



Forty Arroyo

Where were you or what did you see that made you say, "I want to do that!!"

Actually, in 1991' I was seeking out an activity I could do "solo" and came across a small group of women who danced "Country Line" in a local community hall. I was never a "Country" music aficionado, but when I heard the Country songs they were dancing to - void of that "twangy" sound I remembered as a child - I was hooked. I remember my first time on the dance floor. After following effortlessly, one of the ladies told me that "line dancing" was not for me on account that I moved too "darn" much. That didn't stop me though - the music was that good and I thought, "What a neat way to exercise". I incorporated my Latin moves into every dance - from the Elvira to the Boot Scootin' Boogie - everything got a little "hip" action. It was at the Bear Mountain Inn in NY that I first saw over 100 people dancing in unison - all smiling and having a grand old time – I knew then that I wanted to be a part of the line dance "thang".

How did you get started with dancing, or DJ or producing videos or whatever?

I have always danced. I was born into a festive family in a home where music was always playing and dance was the natural thing to do. I minored in dance in college and have been teaching off and on for over 37 years – from the hustle and mambo/salsa in the 70's to freestyle in the 80's. In the 90's to present – it's been line dance, private salsa lessons and most recently ZUMBA and patterned partners. After seeing how much fun line dance can be and the many people it brings together, I thought it would be a great way to raise much needed dollars for the Hospital I worked for. So I convinced the vice president of development to let me start a line dance program in the hospital cafeteria. He agreed and the program ran for 8 years('95 to '03); During those 8 years I attended many weekend events which exposed me to top instructors/choreographers such as Jo Thompson, Scott Blevins, and Max Perry. Also, I took lessons from many talented NY instructors who contributed greatly to my

WORLD LINE DANCE NEWSLETTER



involvement and evolvment in the line dance arena; There was Kathy-Sharpe-Arrant who paid me the biggest compliment when she used my choreography in a televised dance presentation at the Wild horse Saloon in Nashville TN and invited me to teach her class on occasion, Janet Humphrey-Wilson who showed me how to put the “funk” into my country, Rich Focht- my first line dance instructor - taught me the patterned partner classics and Lee Mansfield always made it fun.

What made you want to continue?

Dance is my “yoga”, my choice of exercise and recreation. I find that line dancing offers the diversity in music that I enjoy, not to mention all the talented dance instructors, choreographers and the people from different walks of life it brings together worldwide. It is forever evolving and ALWAYS fun. I love teaching, especially beginners and seniors; seeing folks excited over a new dance, as they master their first challenge, is indeed very gratifying – it makes it all worth my while; I will do this till I drop.

What type of dancing/teaching do you do?

I teach Line Dance to people of all ages at all levels in Sturbridge, Ma and neighboring towns. My “senior gals” and I traveled to assisted-living homes all over Worcester County Ma spreading a little cheer, showing-off our “senior” moves and encouraging people of all ages to join the family of line dancers. Still very much the salsa lover (or salsaera), I love to get “in” a Salsa every chance I get. Now I also teach ZUMBA where I get to release the LATIN in me.

What dances have you choreographed that you are most proud of (because I know some of you will have a zillion of them)?

Choreography is a special process for me. My dances are like “my children” – you love them all. But if I were to favor a few, they would have to be Syncopated Kiss (still popular – and won 1st place in ABC at the Showdown in 2006), Basilon' (1st place winner – non-Country Division – 2009), Gigolo Masculino (1st place Showdown 2010), Dance Sista, Baila Volare, my newest The At Last Blues and Raindrops for Perfidia.

What has been a real thrill for you related to dancing?

I am thrilled every time I successfully bring together members of the line dance community to raise dollars for charitable organizations such as the Arthritis Foundation Ma Chapter & the Lupus Foundation. It was a HUGE thrill when Good Samaritan Hospital in Suffern NY announced that its Line Dance Program had raised over \$42,000 – a program where I taught line dance for a nominal fee and all dollars were donated to the hospital's Cardiac, ER and Home care Departments. In the past five years I have continued my fundraising efforts at the Hayloft Barn in Sturbridge Ma; Thus far and with the help of the dancing community, line dance benefit events have raised over \$27,000 for the Arthritis Foundation and over \$1,500 for local benefits. My biggest “Dance” thrill, however, was when I was led in a mean, fast & furious salsa by Anthony Lee (director of the Big Apple) at the 2000 Nevele line dance blast - WOW!!! Tony, we've got to do it again.

What hobbies and interests do you have outside of dancing?

Although I have slowed down a bit, I still have hopes of taking my mountain bike and roller blades out for a spin – two of my favorite activities. I enjoy writing poetry and jingles and on those rainy days, I like nothing more than curling up with a good book – love re-reading the old classics like “The Old Man and the Sea” and “Wuthering Heights” – my favorites. I also enjoy quality time with family and friends. No longer a NY gal, I miss the Theater - partly due to distance and partly due to lack of free time; however, I discovered a nearby community theater that somewhat satisfies my palate.

WORLD LINE DANCE NEWSLETTER



Where do you consider "home"?

In 2003 I moved from New York to Brookfield Ma where I shared a beautiful home on 28 acres with my sister Lucy and brother-in-law Arturo. The move was based on my desire to live closer to my Mom, Casimira. I've since moved to Dudley MA – now living about 50 miles from Mom. At present I devote a great part of my time to her care – I call her my Queen.

What type of job do you do or dream of doing (if you would like to share it)?

My dream job would be to own and operate a rest home where seniors would be recognized and treated like the treasures they are.

Share information about your family (if you would like to share it).

I am one of 18 children from a Spanish & Filipino Father and a Puertorican Indian Mother (now you understand why I call her my Queen – she gave birth to an empire). Due to many interracial marriages, my family is a beautiful mix of Spanish, Filipino, Indian, Afro-American, Uruguayan, Polish, Irish, Chinese, Dominican, Portuguese, Italian, Cuban, German, English, Colombian and French – oh my!!! Albeit no children of my own, God has blessed me with 66 (and counting) nieces and nephews - this includes grand and great grand.

Who have been mentors in your dance career?

I don't think I can say I had a mentor; There are many folks that I admire greatly, that have inspired me and from which I have learned from over the years - simply by watching them and or attending their workshops; among them local instructors such as Janet Humphrey-Wilson, Kathy Sharpe-Arrant and Lee Mansfield; In the 90's (before she cut back on touring) I had the privilege of attending annual workshops with the ONE & ONLY Jo Thompson in Oneida, New York. Her talent and grace, for both teaching and dancing, reign supreme and what a personality. We continue to pray for her complete recovery and cannot wait for the day when she is back to us in full swing. Max Perry has been a favorite throughout the years. I've learned much from just watching him and attending some of his classes at weekend events; To this day I enjoy watching him "glide" across the dance floor. Scott Blevins has also been a favorite to watch – love his choreography. Other favorites who continue to inspire me are the consummate dance professionals/ entertainers/ choreographers - Barry & Dari Anne Amato.

Just give us a general overview of you as a person and a dancer.

I love to dance but, more than that, I love to teach. I work hard at bringing folks into the line dance arena - targeting my community and neighboring town – and creating affordable dancing opportunities. I do not take myself too seriously and just love to laugh!! To find out what I am up to at the Hayloft Barn just go to www.fortyarroyo.com (presently under construction).