

WORLD LINE DANCE NEWSLETTER



Ocala Workshop January 2009 with Marilyn and Ray McNeal

Well, Ray and Marilyn did it again!! This seminar sold out this year at over 190 people. Why is it such a success? Well, because it's one of the best seminars in the State of Florida!! The drive to Ocala, Florida is nice from where I live in Clearwater (there was a beautiful sunrise when I left and beautiful sunset on the way home -- see the pictures), and Ocala is kind of a special little Florida secret. As you approach the seminar area there are beautiful horse farms with miles of white fences and magnificent race horses grazing and playing in the fields. It feels like you're in Kentucky. If you ever visit Florida, you should make an effort to go visit Marilyn's class at the MIDNIGHT RODEO club in Ocala and tour the area while you're there. Ray and Marilyn have a home in the countryside in Ocala with a wonderful, real dance barn, complete with full kitchen, large dance floor, and everything they need to throw their yearly parties for dance and non-dance friends. Ray does most of the cooking for the parties and the seminar and all of us who always go can just say YUM!!! We had pulled pork sandwiches, baked beans, salad, pasta, cakes and other goodies. Thanks, Ray for doing such great cooking. Morning coffee and donuts and lunch are included in the weekend pass. I'm sure Marilyn would love to have you visit the MIDNIGHT RODEO club and will be happy to fill you in on all the best places to visit and dine in their area.

So who are Ray and Marilyn?

Marilyn has been teaching dance for 18 years, all levels of line and couples dance, in local dance clubs, schools, community centers, private studios, workshops, weekend dance festivals and cruises! She is the house instructor at Midnight Rodeo in Ocala, Florida, and Line Dance class on Thursday nights and Couples class on Friday nights. Day classes include Line Dance for Munroe Regional and Ocala Regional Hospitals' wellness programs. She has also had the privilege of teaching all types of social dance to youngsters at Junior Cotillion of Ocala for 7 years.

Ray and Marilyn also teach 2-Step, Waltz, Swing and Pattern/Partner dancing. They started their dance life together in 1990 and spent several years competing in sanctioned UCWDC (United Country Western Dance Council) events all over the country, winning many First Place awards in 2-Step, Waltz, Polka and Swing, culminating in winning the 1996 World Championship (Silver Division), in Nashville, TN. In the mid 1990's, they also choreographed and directed an exhibition dance team of 16 guys and gals and competed in UCWDC Team Events.

Marilyn is invited to teach at many events around Florida and around the country and world and her yearly workshops are always well attended every year, as you will see from the attendance at this year's event. I always know she is going to pick good dances to teach so I always pay attention to what's on her schedule.

A LITTLE INFO ABOUT OCALA:

Here's a little info from this link if you want to read more about the Ocala area of Florida:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ocala,_Florida

Ocala was established in 1846 near the site of Fort King, a military outpost of the Seminole

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Wars. Ocala is a derivation of the Timucua word "Ocali" which is believed to mean the "Big Hammock".[7] Hernando de Soto passed through a Timucua village or province named Ocali or Ocale near the present site of Ocala during his famous expedition through what is today the southeastern United States in 1539. Greater Ocala is known as the "Kingdom of the Sun".[8]

Horse country

In 1956, the Ocala area Thoroughbred industry received a boost when Needles became the first Florida-bred to win the Kentucky Derby. In 1978, Marion County-bred and -raised Affirmed won the Triple Crown. Today, Marion County is one of the major thoroughbred centers of the world, with over 1,200 horse farms in total and about 600 thoroughbred farms. Ocala is well known as the horse capital of Florida.

This is also where John Travolta and his family have a home built on an airplane runway development.

MICHAEL BARR AND MICHELE BURTON WERE THE GUEST INSTRUCTORS:

The guest instructors for this seminar were the much-loved and enthusiastic MICHAEL BARR and MICHELE BURTON. Their classes wherever they teach are always large and fun and this one was no exception. I know you have seen them at events but you probably don't know much about them outside of dance so here's a little background.

Who is MICHAEL? Internationally known choreographer, Michael Barr, brings his own kind of energy to the dance floor—an energy that connects, inspires, and engages all who are present! His teaching techniques display a deep love for people which makes him perfect for the job. Along with choreography, Michael believes that teaching enables him to grow as a person. In his words, “There are so many lessons to learn about people interaction. We all have our own particular way to learn and it is part of the teacher’s job to find which method will work the best.”

Michael comes from a show biz family. His father was a pianist and his mother was a dancer and singer. They met during the heyday of Broadway.

Michael works part time in an administrative capacity in an architectural firm. He loves to join Michele in tending the landscape of their home and the fish in their favorite place—The Pond.

Who is MICHELE? As testified by her smiling face and unique choreography, well-known choreographer, Michele Burton, loves to dance! Immediately after being introduced to line dance and couples dance in 1990, Michele’s interest grew. With a twelve year background as a high school drill teacher / advisor, the task of developing a line dance team and composing team

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choreography was natural to Michele. Her line dance choreography skills also developed and opportunities opened for her teaching in various communities, states, and countries.

Michele has been a high school teacher for the past 33 years. This year she will retire and looks forward to the new routine. She insists there is a common bond between teaching teenagers and teaching line dancing: both provide her with the opportunity to interact with people, stay young, learn new things, and never get bored! Her love of dance (and life!) is shared with her partner, Michael. Both live in Corning, California where they enjoy the garden, feed the birds, and watch the fish in The Pond.

BACK TO THE SEMINAR:

Everything was organized to perfection from the beginning of the day to the end. Many people came for Friday night dancing at Midnight Rodeo and stayed to dance Saturday night. I had to get home so I missed that. Be sure and read Marilyn's report about all the goings on before and after the seminar on Saturday. Ray and Marilyn invite people to come to their house for breakfast on Sunday morning and that's a special treat to visit their home and see the great "barn" with a full dance floor and kitchen and outdoor space. I always imagine them both collapsed in a heap after the weekend and not only that, they went into Midnight Rodeo the week before the event and painted the bathrooms so they would look all nice and fresh for all of us. Now THAT is above and beyond the call of duty!! LOL.

The morning started off with coffee and donut holes for everyone and we had a few minutes to get situated and just visit with friends before the seminar started. This seminar sold out at over 190 people so it wouldn't be too crowded and it was a good sized crowd for the club. They also had extra floor they laid down in front of the dance floor area so that was nice. We did a few open dances before the lessons started and there were vendors selling neat things like jewelry and tee-shirts and just dance stuff and I always enjoy having that at events.

I heard lots of people who said they were really looking forward to meeting Michael and Michele and they certainly didn't disappoint them. There was a good variety of dances taught and they promised to send me the videos (hopefully today so I can include it in this report). There was a dance for everyone to take home with them and they always have an upbeat way of teaching and interacting with the classes. That could be why their classes are always some of the largest at events. Now that Michele is retired from teaching, I'm sure we will be seeing much more of her in the coming months and years. You can keep up with what they are doing on their website <http://www.michaelandmichele.com/index.htm> and they also host the BOOGIE 'TIL THE COWS COME HOME event in California. Looks like this year is sold out, according to their site.

Marilyn was nice enough to send me the list of volunteers -- and this is a great group. They greet

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you with a smile and are always around and asking if there's anything they can do to make your day even more pleasant than it is already:

Behind the scene were Nancy, Steve, Diane, Carol, and Karen, along with Bill, Linda, John and Gayle. David, Tommy and Jesse do whatever needs doing. Jeff was our great photographer. Darlene and others helped at the clock ticked. The work involved before the doors open is incredible. These people have no agenda other than being really, truly, good friends. There were more who pitched in that I didn't even see and we appreciate all of you hangin' in without question as the countdown began! There was not one apparent glitch! Thanks to all those above plus Jan, Brenda and others I didn't see, who stayed to put the club back in perfect shape at the end of the day.

There were lots of great prizes given away in the raffles during the day. It was fun to watch everyone so excited about winning some of these prizes:

Weekend passes by calendar year were, The Villages Workshop, Line Dance Marathon (2), JJ Jam Classic, Florida Fun in the Sun, WOW, Windy City, Tampa Bay Line Dance Classic, JJ Jam and WORLDS. Wow, that was quite a few trips that people will be enjoying this year. Donated local prizes included Renny's shoe charms, Lindy's T-Shirts, Sandy's dance bags, and many items Ray and Marilyn contributed. Congratulations to all the winners!

DANCES TAUGHT:

AMERICAN POP -- one of my all-time favorites. It was like riding a bike. It all came back to me. If you have never learned this dance, you should get the sheet out and learn it so you can do it at your next event. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIL2KngohMg>

ANOTHER NIGHT IN PARADISE. This music is by the same artist that did Funkified Blues, "Another Night in Paradise," E.C. Scott. It's upbeat and fun to do. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Akx1_ZIP1JE

IF THE SHOE FITS, fun west coast feel to this dance. Music is "If I Had No Loot" by Toni Tony Tone on the Sons of Soul album.

IT'S LINE DANCE DAY, This is a phrased Novelty dance that would be great for performances. It's long but easy to learn and has an East Coast feel. It's one wall so is perfect for audiences. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NU4pUlp7Big>

ONE LOVE, to "One Love" by The Amazing Rhythm Aces. This was my favorite of the day. It's a good West Coast dance and would go to lots of different music. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnG8gtD5LFQ>

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PRIMO WALTZ. This is by Sue Hsu and Kathy Chang and would be a wonderful, easy little waltz for a wedding or anniversary party or any class.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AilfISxb6N8>

WHAT'S YOUR NAME, "Why Me," by Delbert McClinton, one of my favorite artists. I just love to dance to his music. This is an older dance but fits the music perfectly.

Stacy will post the videos on our website as soon as we get them and we'll add them to this list so you'll have them all in one place.

THANKS!! Once again, Marilyn and Ray and Michael and Michele and all the volunteers for this not-to-be-missed seminar in Ocala each year. I love seeing "The twins" (their granddaughters) helping out every year and growing into such lovely young women. They were manning the soda and water station in case you didn't know that's their grandchildren. I had a great time, as I always do, and look forward to next year. I hope you have a little while to rest and catch your breath. YOU DESERVE IT!!

Be sure and look at the pictures!!

Carol Craven