

You too can dance like a star

Written by CAROL POMEDAY

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With TV shows like “Dancing With the Stars” serving as inspiration, a lot of people are interested in ballroom dancing. But sometimes those who have two left feet feel intimidated.

Bill Krumenauer of Cedarburg, who wears blue jeans and looks like he could work in construction, offers non-threatening classes in places without mirrored walls and fancy dance clothing. He is a popular instructor who competed professionally in Latin dance for six years until an ankle injury ended his career.

“That was when I was svelte and good looking,” he joked. “Now, I’m only good looking.”



His classes are light-hearted with a lot of joking, teasing and laughter.

“Dance should be for everyone and not just those who dress up. I enjoy watching ‘Dancing With the Stars,’ but that’s high-end. Competition is all choreographed and planned,” Krumenauer said.

“I stress the social aspect. My goal is to have people have a good a time. If people enjoy themselves, then it’s a good thing. I’ve had people who took it so seriously they didn’t enjoy it. It should be fun.”

For the past five years, Krumenauer has taught group lessons for beginner, intermediate and advanced dancers at the Landt-Thiel American Legion Hall in Saukville. Prior to that, he taught for 15 years at Memories Ballroom in the Town of Port Washington and seven years at an Arthur Murray studio. He also teaches private and group lessons at Dancesport in Cedarburg.

Krumenauer teaches the moves for all types dances — swing, waltz, foxtrot, tango, rumba, cha cha. His speciality is Latin dances.

Many of his advanced students started as beginners at Memories and followed him to Saukville.

Krumenauer emphasizes the lead-and-follow approach, letting the guys be as creative as they want as long as their partner can follow.

“For guys, he’s the best teacher,” said Denzil D’Cruze of the Town of Port Washington. “He

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gives me confidence. and tells my wife it's the one place I'm in charge. His whole method is just go have fun."

Ivy and Tom Shaw of Thiensville are self-proclaimed semi-professional dancers who take two private and two group lessons a week. The others tease them when they make a misstep.

"We decided to do routines so we could learn faster and really liked it," Mrs. Shaw said. "We got talked into performing at the class Christmas party last year. I shook through the whole thing, but everyone applauded.

"I just love dancing. It's a happy feeling and you meet a lot of fun people. Now, we have something to do in winter. There are dances all over. It's a reason to get all dolled up."

"He's also a marriage counselor," Mr. Shaw said in jest. "We started as beginners, and we did more fighting in the beginning than anything else."

Marilyn and Bill Smithyman come from Milwaukee for classes. They started as beginners who wanted to dance at their wedding reception and are still taking classes.

Linda and Peter Kolbach of Port Washington met at a Fred Astaire dance studio and danced competitively when they were younger.

"It's fun, relaxing and good exercise," Mrs. Kolbach said. "It's fun to get together with other couples and not worry about other things."

Last week, advanced dancers learned the spiral turn, a seemingly casual turn and glide of the foot that looks easier than it is.

"Spirals are not easy, but it sharpens that look," Krumenauer told the group. "You watch two couples dancing doing the exact same patterns. One attracts your attention and the other is just OK. It's things like this that make the difference."

Krumenauer said he gets the most satisfaction in seeing a couple enjoying themselves, whether they're beginners or advanced students.

"I use a variety of music to teach, not just ballroom music," he said. "I'm very eclectic in the music I like. I believe you should be able to go to the corner pub and dance to the jukebox and look good. The history of dance was not the upper crust. It was the common people, so I like to approach it that way."

The first dance moves Krumenauer learned as a kid was hip-hop and break dancing from his grandfather. He always wanted to learn more dances. When he was discharged from the Army, he enrolled in a class at an Arthur Murray studio in Eau Claire. By the second year, he was teaching and competing on the professional circuit.

His favorite dance partners now are his wife Rachel, who learned to dance from someone

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else, and daughter Katie, a high school freshman who has been dancing with her dad since a toddler. The couple also have a son Ryan, who is in second grade and knows some good dance moves.

Krumenauer is an at-home dad who teaches Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights, with occasional afternoon classes.

Mrs. Krumenauer is a music teacher in the Mequon-Thiensville School District.

Image Information: Bill Krumenauer danced with his daughter Katie. Photo by Sam Arendt