

KSDCA SCHOLARSHIP STIPEND REPORT 2010

I attended the 2010 National Teachers Association for Country Western Dance (NTA) Dance Camp from February 12 through February 14, 2010. It was held at the Holiday Inn Northeast, 7333 Parvin Rd., Kansas City, Missouri. Thanks to the KSDCA's scholarship, Gene and I took advantage of staying at the hotel the entire weekend. Not having to commute certainly allowed me more time to concentrate on my studies and afforded me a little more sleep! It was a great opportunity to interact and get better acquainted with top line dancers and country western dancers from across the United States. At some camps we have international dancers.

In a world of callers and round dance cuers, you may wonder, "What is NTA?" To better acquaint you with the NTA, I offer the following excerpt from their website:

"The NTA Accreditation Program was established to help country-western dance teachers become better dancers, better teachers, and more knowledgeable in the technique of country-western dance. The program is intended as a form of certification that enables country-western dance teachers to further their education in dance and dance teaching.

The NTA Accreditation Program provides country-western dance teachers with a means of increasing their knowledge of country-western dance and dance teaching. It is a rating system that ensures students that NTA accredited teachers have a certain level of knowledge, skill, and ability. This is accomplished by putting teachers into one of three levels: (C) Fundamental, (B) Intermediate, and (A) Advanced. Teachers attain these ratings by studying the manuals, attending workshops, and completing a series of practical and written examinations. Once the teacher reaches the top level (Advanced), they are eligible to become a member of the Dance Council."

At past camps I have attained accreditation in Dance Fundamentals (DF) Levels I through III. My goal at this camp was to participate in DF Level IV, test on it and pass. Each day's workshops began at 9:00 a.m. and concluded at 5:00 p.m. Friday morning Gene and I arrived by 8:30 a.m., allowing us time for registration and orientation. Yes, Gene participates right alongside me! However, he does not test. Testing is everyone's option. The DF Level IV did not begin until 2:00 p.m., allowing us the opportunity to participate in a couple "fun" one-hour workshops, which were not NTA testing workshops. We began by taking Mike and Heather Salerno's fixed pattern partner workshop where they taught us a cha cha routine. Pattern partner dances are very similar to round dances, only you don't have a cuer; you just have to memorize the routine. Mike and Heather (since they are NTA Directors) teach a lot of dance technique as they teach their routines. We also participated in another couples' room where they were teaching west coast swing. "Dance" is "dance," so no matter what kind of dance instructor you are, you can apply dance techniques to your type of instruction - be it lines, rounds and even square dancing. We had time for a one-hour session, where they taught a beginner line dance, before my DF Level IV began. At camp we learn some of the latest line dances being done across the country. By the way, anyone can attend these dance camps. They are not just for instructors.

DF Level IV is a 3-hour workshop, which includes an understanding of timing, rhythm, footwork for the basic pattern (man and woman's part) for the 2-step, triple 2-step, waltz, polka, east coast swing, west coast swing, mambo, salsa, samba, nightclub 2-step, Charleston, plus knowing

number of weight changes in how many beats of music for each dance, Cuban motion, (American and International), Nanigo motion, rise and fall (body and ankle), difference in spatial structure of dances, etc. If you take the workshop and choose to test on it, you pay your \$40 to the instructor who administers the test. First you take a written test. If you pass, you take a practical test where you demo the dances (including spins and turns as instructed) with proper foot and arm positions, plus body styling, counting the pattern as you perform. The conclusion of the exam is teaching the examiner a line dance. The step description for the dance is handed to you just minutes before "the teach". They did not have time to test me at the end of the workshop, so I had to wait until Saturday. The same workshop was offered again Saturday late morning, so I did a couple one-hour workshops to learn some new line dances, and then took DF Level IV again -- hopefully, to give me a better chance of passing. And it worked! I PASSED later that day! I went immediately from DF Level IV to Mike Salerno's DF Level V, another 3-hour workshop on music as it applies to dance. Being able to identify what type of dance to do to a certain song is part of the course. Naming and defining the parts of a musical composition were taught. He also taught dance accents, knowing which counts of a dance received the accent. Phrasing in songs is important to know when choreographing a dance.

At that point in time Saturday was spent, and it was time to eat supper. That was very important to me, as I had not had time to eat lunch! After supper and time to clean up, Friday evening's event was repeated -- an evening filled with dancing, laughing and having a delightful evening. Everyone had the opportunity to demonstrate their new found skills on the dance floor.

Sunday morning brought another exam for me on DF Level V - something I had not counted on, but Mike talked me into testing on it. Fortunately, I did not waste my testing fee, as I passed that one, too! Cramming Saturday before bed and Sunday before breakfast paid off. This test filled the morning, and dance camp was over - all but the memories and dance skills acquired.

Even though there are just five levels of dance fundamentals offered -- and I have now passed them all -- the NTA offers nine levels of School Figures (SF), so I will continue on in my dance education next August and attempt to pass SF Level 1. Workshops are offered all over the United States, even internationally, but I will probably stick to the ones held in the Kansas City area for now.

Many thanks to the KSDCA for helping to fund this opportunity! I did learn a lot and, hopefully, I will demonstrate it on the dance floor.

Sincerely,

Judy Broers, Line Dance Instructor