

**Posted in the World Line Dance Newsletter, July 29, 2014; 30<sup>th</sup> birthday party was held on Friday, June 27, 2014 at the Swiss Park Dance Hall, Newark, CA (DJ's Evelyn & Denny)**

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**SUBJECT: BOOTS 'n' BUCKLES 30th BIRTHDAY PARTY**

**From: Judy**

Maybe 30th is no big deal but in linedance years that's when you get the reserve seat in front of the bus. For seniority not senility, mind you, for the club shows no signs of slowing down. So last Friday on what seems to be the hottest night of the century, we gathered at the place where Boots n' Buckles was born, on the dance floor of Swiss Park in Fremont, California to mark the momentous occasion. We celebrated with a "Bootsn'Buckles 30th Birthday buttons for everybody and of course a birthday cake. Gracing the event was one of the founders who flew in from Oregon, CHARLOTTE SKEETERS, as the honored guest.

To get a sense of history and perspective, I gave Charlotte 10 questions to answer. Here's the Q&A:

JR: Tell us about Charles W. Parker and what motivated him together with you and Neil Hale to start BnB. Where is CW Parker now?

CS: CW Parker was a country western dance instructor with some ballroom background. He taught both line and couples dances. I started taking lessons from him in 1984. He put out a monthly newsletter called the "Kicker" and a semi-annual directory of country western night clubs, dance clubs, classes, instructors and radio stations. His motivation to start a country western dance club was to find a place dedicated wholly to linedancing. In clubs like the South 40 (which no longer exist) we always had to compete with Rock n Rollers and they were not very polite. The birth of BnB took place at a meeting in 1984 when CW invited Niel Hale and I and a few others to form a linedance club which would eventually be called Boots n'Buckles. After handing over the classes at Swiss Park to me and Neil, he moved back to the Midwest. Back in those days he/we always taught a beginner, intermediate and partner dance in each class.

JR: Can you remember favorite linedances that you did at BnB during that time, 30 years ago?

CS: Travellin' 4 Corners was huge back in the beginning when I started, it was actually one of the first dances I learned. Others were Tush Push, Slappin' Leather, Wild Wild West, Southside Shuffle, Flying 8, Chocolate City Hustle, Zydeco Lady. Partners: Drifter, Wooden Nickel, Horseshoe Special, Ten Step, Wanderer, Cowboy Cha Cha, Continental Cowboy, Whiskey Wiggle and so on.

JR: What was the prevailing attire then?

CS: Western skirt/blouse or dress w/belt and western boots for females. Western shirt, belt w/big belt buckle, western hat and western boots for males.

JR: What was the average Friday night attendance at that time?

CS: In the beginning it wasn't many, just the students who took the classes but word traveled fast and Swiss Park became THE place to dance. There were no other private dance halls in the early days, most country western dancing was done in clubs. I can remember well over 100 people dancing on a Friday night, 60-80 people was not uncommon. Linedancers in the middle of the floor and couples dancing around the outside.

JR: What was the first dance you taught at BnB? How did you choose what dances to teach and how did you come by them?

SC: In the beginning, Neil and I were protégées of CW, learning our craft through instructions from him so he picked the dances we taught for awhile, until we got the hang of it and could judge a beg. dance from an interm. dance. I couldn't tell you what dance was my very first teach but I do remember a few I did early on – Stray Cat Strut, Cowboy Boogie, Ukiah 20.

JR: Who was the DJ then?

CS: CW did all the music in the beginning.

JR: How was the playlist decided upon?

CS: Play List? Ha....there was no real play list as we know it today. He'd just write down the dances he/we taught in class and added other popular ones being done in the area....San Jose, Hayward, Sunnyvale, Concord, etc. (eventually the West Bayers ventured over the bridges to dance with us).

JR: How much was the entrance fee at the time?

CS: I think \$3.00 or \$4.00.

JR: What was then the biggest challenge as a teacher and dancer?

CS: Teaching back then was soooooooooooooo much easier than now. There were not too many choreographers so not too many new dances. We danced and taught the same ones over and over again. Maybe one new dance....yes, I said "one" new dance would pop up every couple weeks or so. EVERYONE who attended the BnB dances knew the dances played....not like today where there are dozens of new ones each week with a million choreographers out there.

JR: What do you think is the biggest and most profound change in linedancing from 30 years ago and today?

CS: There are two (2) very prominent differences from early days to now. 1) The music - in the beginning it was Country Western music only. 2) The volume of dances.

Thanks Charlotte for taking the time to answer the questions. For someone like me who came into linedancing and became a member of BnB at a much later time, it was good to have an idea of what it was like at the beginning and marvel at how much it has evolved to encompass all genre of dance from country western to ballroom, to hip hop to ballet. It is a testament to the incredible talents of our choreographers that keep linedancing constantly fresh, engaging and exciting.

It would be great to hear from other areas – when they started, how they started, where they are now before we at BnB start beating our chest and yelling Tarzan-like aaaaaayeeeahhhh as being the oldest continuously running linedance club in the country if not the world. Not that "who cares" is not discounted or that you'd be jealous or anything ..you know...just sayin'....

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