Dussich Dance Studio

1980 - 1989

As exciting as the prior decade was the 80’s, without a doubt, was equally exciting and challenging in many ways. As the 70’s came to a close and the 80’s began, a number of events occurred that impacted the business and the studio. In the early 80’s, the enrollment at the Cocoa Beach Elementary Schools went down and Freedom Seven was closed and combined with Cape Canaveral. In spite of the cut backs, we still had six young men studying with us. The graduating seniors in 1980 were **Reggie Jones, Cindy Termine, Teresa Teague and Maggie Balado.** The Brevard Dance Company was asked to perform “*Boutique Fantasque*” with the Brevard Symphony. **Mona Clifford,** former soloist with American Ballet Theater, joined our staff and was a tremendous assistance with the company. Modern Dance classes were added to the schedule in 1981, taught by **Mary Gayle Ingle**. She also worked at the Cape and on weekends worked with **Firethorn Modern Dance Company** in Tampa. **Dan Hindy** who worked with Al Packard at Patrick Air Force Base, also came on board in 1982, to assist with a boy’s acrobatics class. **Cecelia Slowinski and Catherine Alexander** were added to our faculty and **Debbie Armstrong (Perkins)** became one of the first teachers to teach “**Jazzercise”** in the area and taught until she had triplets and then relocated north in 1987. The graduating seniors in 1982, were **Anna Bevilacqua, Cynthia Rodgers, Billy Glenn** and **Pam Gay.** Liz’s youngest daughter, **Anna,** along with **Molly Glenn, Greg Martinez** and **Tina Koby** went off to Oklahoma City University to study with **Jo Rowan. Candice Feldman** became our first full time office manager behind the front desk.In 1982, Al Bevilacqua sold the building at 124 N. Orlando Ave. and the studio had a new landlord. **Candice Feldman** moved back to Miami to return to school and **Peggy Atkins** (she had helped Liz in the early years) took over the helm of the front office and designed and made the recital costumes that year. **Brynel McDaniels** came on-board to teach acrobatics when **Bill Bevel** left due to conflicts with his work schedule. Even though enrollment was going down, we realized that the parking facilities on the beach were not sufficient and started to look else where. With great luck and help from Kay Florentino, in the spring of 1983, we found a home on Merritt Island, which was then the PVC Plumbing building. As soon as recital was over that year, we started to pack and prepare for the move. Once again, with our great nucleus of parents, headed up by **Elsa Soukup**, **Barbara Koby, Shirley Hill** and the studio staff. Classes officially started in September 1983, with approximately 150 students. Unfortunately, we only had one large classroom. The Brevard Dance Company was able to do its final year in the new facility. With the able assistance of **Theron Wilson** (former dancer with Alvin Ailey), we obtained the rights to perform parts of Alvin Ailey’s signature piece, “*Revelations*”. Al Packard made his final appearance with the company in that piece as the Juba Man. The faculty expanded with the addition of **Bobbi Jo Phillips** and **Chris Therber**. **Anna Bevilacqua** was back in the area after two years in Oklahoma City University and worked as an assistant teacher. The 26th Annual Recital in June 1984, was the first recital produced from our new home in Merritt Island. **Mrs. Gay** joined us full-time in September 1984, to take over the front office from Peggy. **Robert Hill** had gone off to New York in early 1980. **Susan Soukup** graduated and began performing at Disney World and the Brevard Dance Company decided postpone their performances. The recital in 1986, “*Dance for Fame*”, saluted all those students that had gone on to pursue their dance career. **Debbie Byrd, Kent Gladden, Melanie Hodges, Katherine Jones, Reggie Jones, Leslie Pozsonyi, Jenny Roberts, Mike Rosenberg, and Kim Plogstedt Talbert** all went on to pursue their dance careers and did well. In 1986, **John Scott** graduated after recital and went to New York following the others. He performed in several shows, including “Chorus Line” when they came to the Bob Carr Center in Orlando & The King Center in Melbourne. By 1988, we had graduates **Kristie Balado, Jo Ann Delaney** and **Dara Fischetti.** Jo Ann Delaney temporarily joined our staff as an assistant teacher before pursuing a career in the cruise line entertainment industry until she married. Dara went on to dance at Walt Disney World.

We closed the decade in 1989 with another look back with Dancing Through Time as the recital theme. This gave us another chance to see what had happened to our “kids”. Many had done very well although not all pursued dance. **Jamie Heimberger**, who designed our 1980 recital program cover, became a very successful commercial illustrator, and others like **Patricia Laflin** opened their own successful dance studios.