

An open letter from Tom Sanders

Hello, Tom, I would like a Center Stage to focus on you, your love of dance and where you get your creative inspiration for the articles each month. Thanks. Marta

Hi, Marta, thank you for thinking of me. I will try to answer the best way that I can.

Growing up, I hung out with a bunch of guys who were taller, slimmer and better looking than myself. When we went to clubs, they seemed to attract the girls pretty well. I needed an equalizer.

The music always gave me a natural high. I didn't need to drink or get high by other means, so I started to dance. Soon it was me that went home enjoying the night while they sat at the bar and wondered what they were doing wrong. I learned with a little charm and rhythm each club night could be a joy.

One cold January night, I decided to go without the entourage. The night club's name was Cloud 9 A Go-Go and, as you may know, that's where I met the love of my life, my beautiful wife, Jo. Our stories differ about this chance meeting. You see, I say that I gave this beautiful girl, holding too many pocketbooks, a chance to dance with me. My wife says she wondered if this little fat boy could dance and decided to give me a try. Needless to say, we both made great decisions that night and have been together 44 years since that chance meeting. Yes, dance has been very, very good to me! Our love for dance led to many recitals for Jo and the stage for me, and many subsequent showcases and dance shows.

As life moved on we continued enjoying dancing but our positions and careers demanded travel which kept us apart much of the time. Our first retirement, and move to Daytona, opened up an opportunity. We wanted to make up for all those times apart. So, 8 years ago we began dancing together a minimum of four nights a week; and it has only increased since then. Dancing was our way of re-connecting and making the perfect marriage even better.

Then, you walked into our lives and taught me comfort, poise and confidence. Jerry gave us patterns and partnership and Kevin instilled the Latin fever and reminded us of our showmanship. My love for dance increased exponentially and I had to take it to the next level. Jo encouraged, and you guided, me to qualify as a Distinguished Gent (dance host). I dabbled in teaching and then suddenly classes at my church fell into place. We also qualified as a Ballroom Dance Duo and recently Caleb Young has welcomed me to the staff of Absolutely Ballroom. What about dance is not to love!

In the midst of all this, you asked me to write Center Stage for our chapter newsletter. Writing was always something I enjoyed. What makes it more fun is that I fall in love with my subjects. Each of them has a story to tell, emotions to share and a glow about them that you can only capture by being in their presence. My job is to find the right words to try to explain the thrill that I receive from them as they recall cherished memories, outline their hopes and dreams and express the pride and love for what they have accomplished. My job as a writer isn't difficult. It seems that the story they tell writes itself and the aura around them inspires the title.

The payback is experiencing their 15 minutes of fame through their eyes. Writing Center Stage has given me the pleasure of getting to know the most incredible people: Ed Lometti, Rose Juneau, Clarence Pan, Geoff and PaoChen Davis, Henry Eure, Jean Krupa, Aida Albarracin, Jean Bell, Joe Mounts, and Mary Mosley. How can I not become inspired!

When I wasn't writing about people, it was about an event or subject that interested our dancers: The History of Dance, What It Is Like to Dance Host, The Birth of a Ballroom, Performing at the Mall Ball, Daytona – A Mecca for Dancers. The story was there; I welcomed the opportunity to tell it. Just like one of my favorites articles which had the theme of just go out there and do it – I Would Love To! That goes for writing Center Stage too!

Yours, Tom