



George Lloyd and Margaret Batiuchok at the 1983 Harvest Moon Ball.

Profiles of Original Lindy Hoppers: George Lloyd

by Robert Crease

Two styles of Lindy Hop grew out of the 1930s and 1940s, one oriented to performance, one oriented to social dancing. George Lloyd is one of the finest dancers of the social Lindy, who has an especially keen sense of rhythm and balance.

George was born in Miami in 1921, where he learned to dance at the two local dance halls for blacks, the Rockland Palace and the Harlem Square Club. He visited New York in 1940--"just travellin' around," he says before entering the service in 1942. The last two years of the War he danced in USO clubs in France and Germany, and won a dance contest at a Paris USO party.

Upon his return to New York in 1946, he began to hang out at the Savoy, on 141st St. and Lenox in Harlem. The heyday of the Lindy, when Whitey's Lindy Hoppers performed in shows and movies, was over, and avantgarde jazz musicians were turning from Swing to bebop. Nevertheless, the Lindy continued to be the dance at the Savoy, and George joined a group of social dancers there.

"They were called the 400 Club," says George, "and they were the best dancers around, really. They'd form a circle in front of the bandstand, and one couple at a time would enter. You had to be really good to get in that circle."

Soon George became regular partners with Barbara Bates, another 400 club member. In the summer of 1957 Barbara asked George to enter the Harvest Moon Ball with her. George refused at first, but finally consented. Unfortunately, they thought they were too late to register as Savoy dancers, and listed themselves as from the Apollo. (As it turned out, Savoy dancers didn't have to register ahead of time.) This put them at a disadvantage, because the Savoy dominated the Ball (Savoy dancers won 14 out of the first 16 contests). Despite doing 13 aerials in 3 minutes, they lost--that year and the following year.

"I was just very discouraged," George says. He didn't enter the contest again for 25 years, although he continued to dance wherever he could, even after Barbara died in the 1960s. One day in the spring of 1983 he was approached by Margaret Batiuchok at City Limits, a now-defunct club just north of Sheridan Square. The two became regular partners. That summer Margaret tried to get George to rehearse and enter the Harvest Moon Ball with her. (The 1983 Ball would be the last that included a Lindy contest.) Once again, George demurred--but relented a week before the semifinals. They placed in the finals, and won the Ball itself.

"We didn't practice at all," says Margaret, "we just went out and danced. Oh, we did practice one move--a simple aerial--where I would jump up and sit on his knee. George said it would make a great ending, but he didn't do it. Good thing, too, because we would have been disqualified--

they didn't allow aerials any more!

"What's special about the way George dances," says Margaret, "is his fluidity and timing. Instead of picking his feet up, he keeps the sole of his foot very close to the floor. He also has very good balance, and the result is that he looks like he's sliding on glass."

Although George never appeared in a show or movie, has never taught formally and has no desire to, he is one of the most creative and original Swing dancers around. "I'm strictly a Swing man," says George, "and I swing as well as anyone." Anyone who has seen him at the Cat Club will certainly agree.



photograph by Gabrielle Winkel

Happy Birthday NYSDS

May 18, 1986: The New York Swing Dance Society celebrates their first anniversary dance with Swing Fever on the band stand and a birthday cake.

From left to right, members of the Board of the Society: Amy D'Aiuta, Michael Clancey, Jerry Goralnick, and David Wend.