



DanceBeat

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Millennium to Manhattan

Coverage in this edition.....

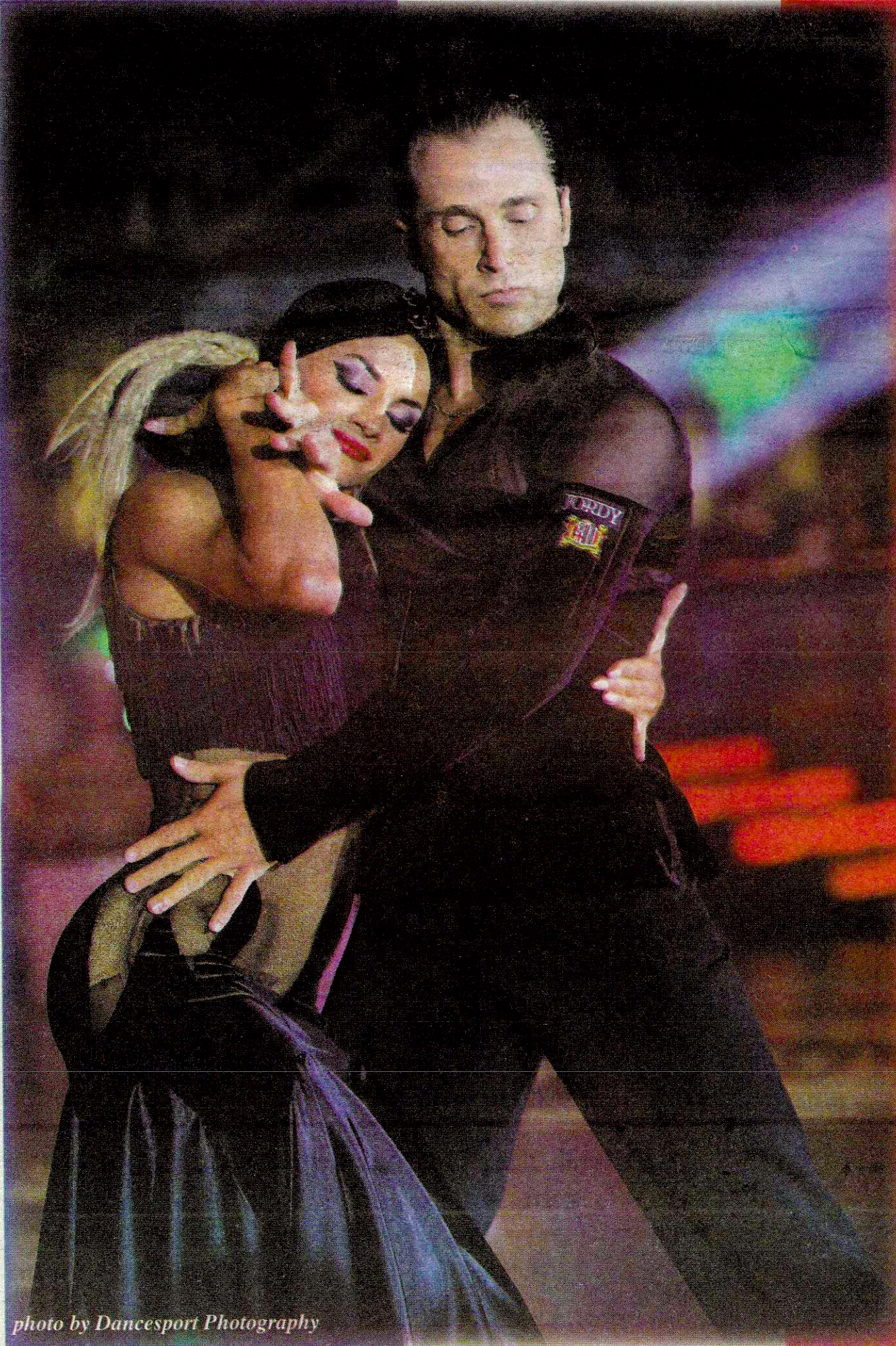
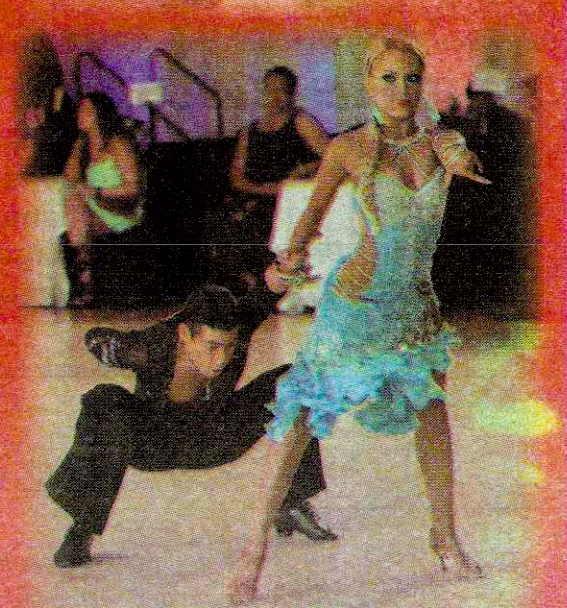
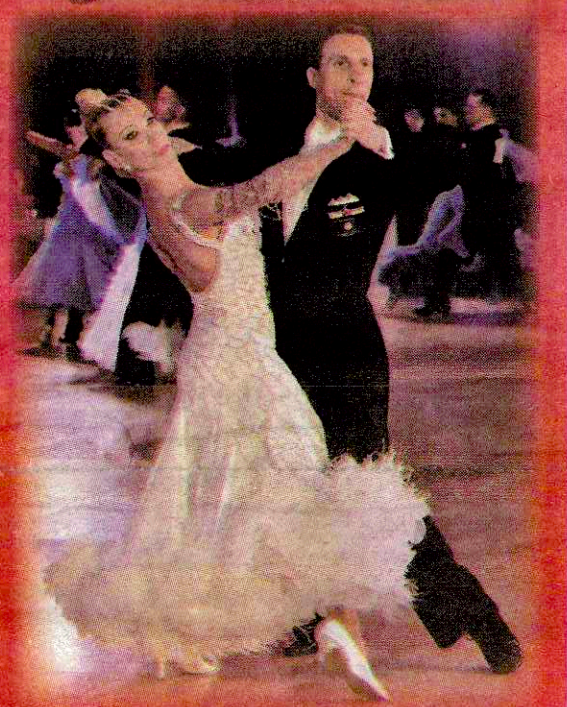


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Pro-Am Spotlight Charlene Proctor

MOMENTS OF JOY AND EMPOWERMENT



This month's Pro-Am Spotlight is the Reverend Doctor Charlene M. Proctor who tells us how to take the positive path, in the ever-changing world of ballroom dancing. In 2015, she was a U.S.D.C. National Rising Star Smooth Champion and an Ohio Star Ball Rising Star Smooth Champion. Her reflections on how to manifest success while finding joy in the ballroom will help you on your own personal dance journey.

LIFE OUTSIDE OF DANCE

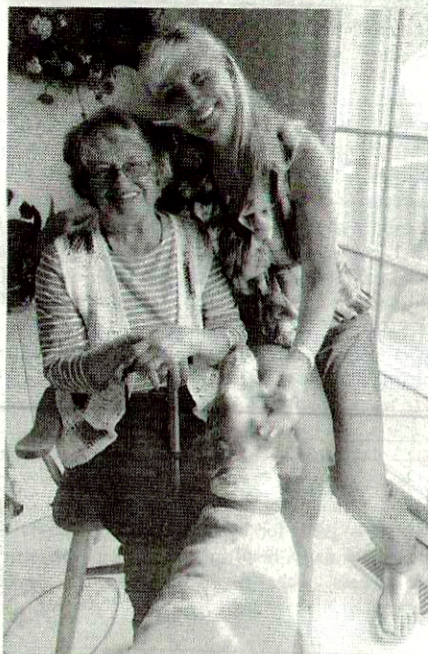
I have a very close family. My children Jason, Vaughn, and Shenghan Bai are all recently or nearly out of college, and my husband Tom Proctor is at the helm. Currently, he is an L-39 formation pilot and instructor, and flies many aircraft for the World Heritage Air Museum. My house in Michigan is Grand Central Station. It is constantly filled with family, friends, dance partners, coaches, employees from all of our companies, (both Tom and I moved our businesses home several years ago), along with our Brittany Spaniel, Proctor's Bird Buster aka, Goo Goo Baby.



My father Rudy "Ludomill" Chalko, (Milovnik Ludi) was Ukrainian. None of my relatives from my dad's side spoke English, they spoke Slovak, and my mother was one of seven Silesian children. The family base was in Chicago. Food was a symbol of prosperity and love, and the center of family gatherings. Hence, I have a kitchen the size of an aircraft carrier because it is where all our silly stories are shared, our drama, dreams, joy, politics, and sorrows. It is where the grocery list resides, which is always a mile long because we never know who is staying for dinner. Proctor Family Translation: Cook like you mean it and think big, which is one of our family's practical philosophies that applies to all areas of our lives, including ballroom dancing.

ENTERING THE WORLD OF BALLROOM DANCE

My mother, Veronica Margaret Victoria Czerná, encouraged my brother and I to be musicians, and explore the arts. We were raised on a heavy dose of musical theatre, ballet, acting classes, and we traveled to many competitions with our jazz band and orchestra when we were young. We were taught to have an incredible work ethic, strive to be educated, provide ex-



ceptional hospitality at home, and appreciate our good fortune to be in America. As an adult, I was an athlete in a number of sports, and raising two boys seemed to

put me on the football or soccer field. As they matured, I went back to dancing. I took lessons with Tom and then all of us at Fred Astaire Bloomfield Hills attended the Holiday Dance Classic nearly seven years ago. I was mesmerized by competitive dancing and that was it.

GETTING THROUGH DIFFICULTIES AND STRUGGLES

From the beginning, I thought it would be interesting to keep track of the amount of times (heats) I danced on the floor. It became a habit after I was asked to calculate this for an article long ago. So, I kept track after each of the 103 competitions

I have attended. I have danced with seven different pro instructors, exactly 23,850 times. When I walk on the floor, and question my abilities or feel my courage waning, it reminds me I have been there before, and most likely, will be there again, and all is well.

I've seen the inside of more hotels in the U.S. than I can remember, and I have been in airports for Mother's Day, Father's Day, Easter, birthdays, family get-togethers, and anniversaries. There is personal sacrifice from being on the competition circuit all year, but it is the

people and what you learn in relationships in the ballroom world that make the experience special. When



I'm 90 years old, enjoying nature and perhaps playing Mahjong and reminiscing about life, I will say it was worthwhile because of what I have learned. I've watched my colleagues and the professionals dance thousands of times, and still love the skill and art of ballroom dancing.

When I go to a competition and walk into the vendor area, I'm excited to see the ballroom. The sparkle is still there!

PREPARING FOR A DAY ON THE FLOOR

I always pray before I go on the dance floor, and I'm sure many people have seen me pray. I'm always in the on-deck area when I do. I call forth the essence of Spirit and thank God for the love, light, and protection I am about to receive. I harmonize with Source, knowing I am protected and guided. I ask to be a vision and expression of grace on the floor. And I ask the same for others.

EMPOWERING MOMENTS

I remember dancing in San Diego when I was in bronze, and smooth was a relatively new style for me. I was leaning against the wall in the ballroom with

five ladies: Two of them were top pros, a prominent smooth coach in the industry, and another competitor. All of us were at least six feet tall, dressed in gowns, and we stood within inches of each other. Wendy Johnson walked by, looked at our line-up, grinned, and gave a nod of approval. "Ah," she said, "There are my American Smooth girls!" It was a simple and



empowering moment to be in such classy company. It felt great.

One of the most endearing parts of our industry is the support of many coaches, who constantly encourage us to expand our dance vision. From their teachings, we strive to think like champions, and be that, no matter our level. When they say "Job well-done!" after the competition, it feels magical.

DANCE CHALLENGES

I have danced with many different pro instructors over the years, and commuted thousands of miles for practice. Long distance arrangements are very challenging, and everything in our household revolves around The Dance Schedule. I could not do this without the genuine support of my family. Currently, I am dancing three styles with three different pros, in three cities: Viktor Tkachenko, Smooth (Fred Astaire Bloomfield Hills Michigan), Hayk Arshakian, Latin (Fred Astaire Wisconsin), and Igor Kiselev, Standard (Atlantic Ballroom, Baltimore). Each of these men brings a unique teaching and perspective to my life, and our team is very positive.

Hammer Nutrition is our sponsor, and all of us are working to maximize our physical bodies in order to bring our best to the floor.



INSPIRATION TO KEEP DANCING

I enjoy the relationships, of course, and the hugs and humor when dance seems overwhelming. Ray Rivers always says, "Everything is simple. Nothing is easy" and I am still learning to apply this philosophy after many years of practice and competing. Patience is not my strong suit, and it has been difficult to switch pros so often, but lives and people change and I just have to accept that as another part of the experience. Over the years, working with my coaches has been one of the most consistent and enriching aspects of my dancing. Also, the welcoming vibe of the Fred Astaire family has been wonderful.

Last year I was invited to dance in the team match at Millennium, and by the end of the evening, those on the team who had been on the floor all day were dazed. Janice Gonzalez, who is one of the funniest people I know, kept me in stitches goofing around in the on-deck area that night. I laughed so hard at absolutely nothing. I think my dress split open at the sides. We were like silly children. Those moments in the ballroom, when we remember to play and be in the moment for the joy of it, are always among my favorite experiences at competitions. They remind us to be part of a greater community, no matter the score. We can still have a good time when we don't take ourselves too seriously. Those occasions are good food for the soul.



Charlene Proctor contd.**LIFE CHALLENGES**

Because of the amount of travel on the circuit and the numerous training hours, it can be difficult to keep my nutrition in check (yes, we all fall off the wagon at times). Sometimes I overdo it in all areas, resulting in injury or sheer exhaustion.

Balance is a constant challenge. Moving up to the higher levels invites stress because it is yet another goal or milestone. The bar is raised to win, and it becomes more difficult. All athletes go through periods of questioning their potential. Like others, I wonder, "Have I reached my potential already? Is this as good as I'm going to get? Is it time to readjust my objectives and goals?" And so forth.

In our private lives, those who are outside of the ballroom dance world see what we do as a glamorous mystery, and often remind us to dance with joy. To ENJOY and take it all in at its fullest moments and be proud to be there. To be FULLY PRESENT. It is challenging when we establish a goal of being a U.S. Champion or winning a scholarship at a major event, and when it doesn't happen, we must return home and get it in perspective. My mother is 92 years young now and in a wheelchair, and can't attend any more competitions to watch me, but all the times she did, she said it was a privilege to dance. It's truly special. That's why it is important to get grounded after an event. When I walk into the kitchen after being on the road for days and things didn't go very well, words of encouragement from my family to keep striving toward my potential are what gets me back on the practice floor on Monday mornings.

positivity, manifesting abundance and prosperity, and I seek to teach others the importance of a positive outlook. The challenge with ballroom dancing is that it comes from such a deep place inside of us. It LIVES inside of us. Dance is emotional and heartfelt; it is a private place. Thus, we tend to question our abilities, and we forget who we really are: we are spiritual beings here to learn and help each other evolve.



My greatest challenge in my ballroom career is to follow my own advice. To balance the joy of dancing and my athletic, competitive nature. I strive to be positive and affirm the best in myself even when the chips are down. Dance is not a quest for perfection, nor is a score a reflection of who you are as an individual. We can never dance perfect, there will never be a perfect round, or a perfect day on the dance floor. Adopting a

champion state of mind, as Stephen Knight says, is projecting your inner soul outward and fusing the totality of everything you are at the moment and surrender to being present. That alone takes a whole lot of practice, both on and off the floor.

I choose to be an inspiration to people who are beginning their dance journey. And I want to say to them that when we fall short of our own expectations, we cannot let it assault our positive self-image. Dance is an experience that contributes to our own self-development as human beings because we are learning many lessons that have nothing to do with dance. We are learning to express grace, pray for other's success as much as our own, and be more loveable people. We think we are learning the Jive but we may be learning discipline, or how to relate better to our pro, or patience, or math, or any number of other things. It is an interesting environment. Overall, we must learn to be magnanimous and learn to manifest a positive vision of our own success, and help others do the same.

DANCE PHILOSOPHY

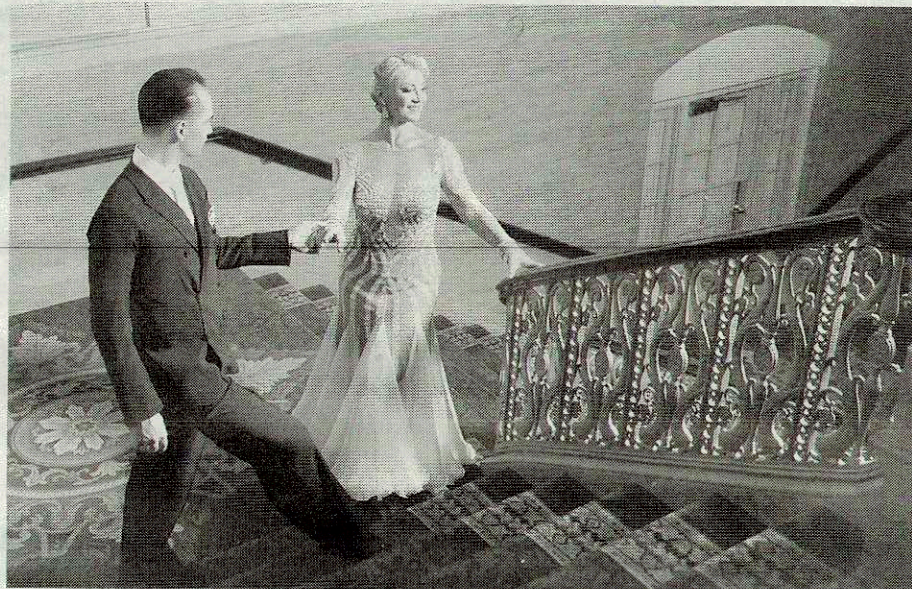
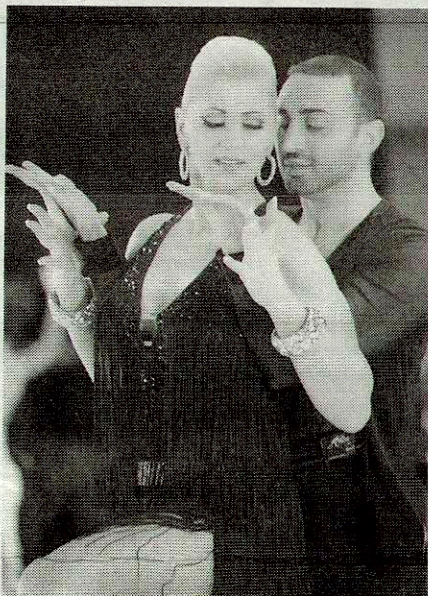
To be generous toward others is important. It expands us. It makes us exceptional. It allows us to cherish one another and sets the tone for individual and spiritual growth. In such turbulent times where much of the world lacks peace and prosperity, we, in the ballroom world, can nurture our basic human desire to be loved and appreciated by bringing our own unique rendition of dance to the floor. We truly are one musical body of light when we all get it right.

I do not ever forget to thank God for my ability to participate in the world of dancing. Gratitude for everything I have in my life is ever present even after a hard day on the floor. We must remember to dance with bliss, excitement, and celebration and fill ourselves with courage and joy. We must believe we have abundant talent and are fearless, powerful, confident, and strong. These are the empowering thoughts that make a champion and drive us collectively to success.

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**BEING AN AMBASSADOR**

I am a Ph.D., an interfaith minister, and have five degrees. I have studied in India, Fiji, written several self-help books and articles, and have done numerous programs to help empower women from all economic levels of life. I have done TV and radio shows on joy,



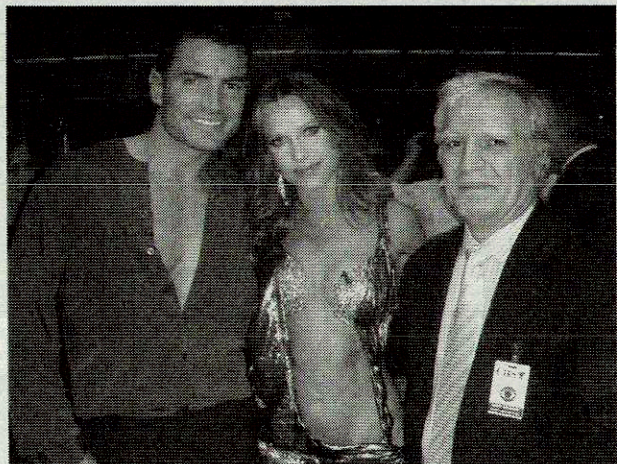
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