

A man with short brown hair and a goatee, wearing a black suit and a necklace, is sitting on a wooden bridge. The bridge has a traditional Japanese railing. In the background, there is a traditional Japanese building with a grey roof and a pond. The sky is blue with some clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Scott Blevins is a name that defines Line dance. He belongs to this unique class of dancers and choreographers that have changed Line dance through their careful use of technique and inspired choreographies. Scott is used to being applauded by dancers all over the world but the reality is that he remains a very discreet man. Martha Ogasawara, a good friend of his, secured this exclusive interview for Linedancer.

Private Dancer



Martha O: Hello Scott. Thank you for talking to me. Now, you've travelled all over the world. Do you know how many countries you've visited through dancing?

Scott Blevins: Let's see. I'd need to think about it. In Asia I've been to Japan, Taiwan, China, Korea, Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, Malaysia, so that makes eight countries. As for Europe, I've done more of Europe than I've not done. I've been to all of the UK, Wales, Scotland, England, Ireland, then there's France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Malta, Greece, Switzerland, Austria and Germany so that makes 19 countries in Europe. Then of course there's the US and Canada, also Mexico, Belize, Honduras, oh and South Africa! But I haven't been to South America and Australia yet. Those are two continents I'd like to go to. So to answer your question, a lot! And I have to tell you, it's all because of Line dancing. I never thought I'd get to travel outside of the States but I've been everywhere. I feel very lucky to be able to go to so many places and also very grateful.

M.O: What was the first country that you travelled to overseas?

S.B: That would be Japan. It was in 1996 and a fabulous lady by the name of Martha Ogasawara brought me over. (Laughs) My wife Deborah and I went over together. It was fantastic but also scary. We had to get a passport for the first time. That was my first international event. And here we are again, doing this interview.

M.O: And you're a full-time dance choreographer and instructor, correct?

S.B: Yes, that's right...teaching since

1989! That's all I do, although I also have a degree as an accountant.

M.O: Tell me about some of the other jobs that you did before you became a dance instructor?

S.B: Well, I worked as an accountant for a trucking company. I was a cook at a restaurant. I worked at Wendy's (a chain of fast food restaurants in USA). In high school I was both the manager and cook at a restaurant in my small town. Then I was an assistant to a veterinarian because at the time I wanted to go to veterinary school. I also worked at a department store in a mall. Phew!

M.O: Weren't you also a deejay at a dance club?

S.B: Yes, that's right. I guess I consider that part of my dance career but I did that for several years, and even won several awards from the Country Dance Music Association in 1996 as a deejay and dance instructor, plus the club I worked at, Little Touch of Texas won an award as well.

M.O: Tell me more about your childhood. You're from Texas, right?

S.B: Yes, I come from a very rural part of Texas. We had to drive over 20 miles just to pick up our mail and we didn't have any neighbours nearby. We raised cows and horses and I grew up on horseback. I was a real live cowboy. It was a fun way to spend your childhood but I don't think I could live that far out again. To give you an idea, my girlfriend in high school lived 40 minutes away but she was part of the same school district. There were kids who came from 20 minutes further away than that, and yet despite the large size of our

school district we only had 48 people in our graduating class. That gives you an idea of how sparsely populated it was.

M.O: How did you get to school?

S.B: By school bus when I was little and then I was able to get an early driver's licence called a 'hardship licence' because my mother worked and so I started driving myself at the age of 14 and a half. I had my own pickup truck from the age of 15, which I needed to get feed for the cattle and horses and to carry hay etc... Plus I showed cattle and was in the marching band and played sports in high school, so I had to be able to get around by myself.

M.O: So... Tell me how you started dancing?

S.B: Well, I can't remember a time that I didn't dance. I can actually remember when I was four and we were visiting a bar and my mother put me up on the bar to dance.

M.O: So you were a bar dancer early on then?

S.B: Yeah (laughing), I guess you could say that. In Texas, everyone dances couples dancing - two-step, waltz, swing, polka. We belonged to a local Elks Lodge and would go there to dance to live bands. George Strait even played there before he became famous. So I grew up two-stepping with lots of ladies of all different ages. That was just part of our culture. Also, my mother worked for a local clothing store, and the owner's daughter ran a dance studio next door. That's where I was first exposed to other forms of dancing, starting at about the age of nine. Since I was a cowboy, I didn't



actually join the ballet class with the girls but that exposure helped further my interest in dancing.

M.O: There's a stereotype of young boys being embarrassed about liking to dance. Was that ever true for you?

S.B: No, I don't think so. As I said, everyone in Texas danced and I always loved it, so I never thought anything of it. It was a masculine thing for a cowboy to want to dance with a lady. The rodeo was part of our country lifestyle and with the rodeo comes country and western music and with that comes couples dancing. It was just part of our social environment. It might have been different if I had been raised somewhere else though.

M.O: What other kinds of dancing have you done?

S.B: Well, I used to compete with the UCWDC in couples dancing and so through that I was exposed to latin, ballroom and swing. That's been most of the drive behind what dancing I've learned and how I went further into it. People comment that my choreography doesn't always look very 'country'. I've always loved country and western music and I first got involved in Line dancing during that big explosion of country music in the late 80's and early 90's. Before that I listened to mostly R&B music, and when Rap came out I really liked it as well. In university I actually belonged to a Step Dance fraternity. I was the only white guy in it and we had to learn a lot of choreographed routines that we performed in lines while we chanted. I really enjoyed it, and it's probably influenced my choreography as well.

M.O: You don't choreograph a large number of dances. Is there a reason for that?

S.B: Yes, I think that there are already an awful lot of Line dances out there and I don't feel a need to over flood the market. Hopefully, by not putting out so many dances, if the ones that I choreograph are good, they're not so likely to get lost in the shuffle. Also by letting my creative mind have a rest between dances, I am able get more variety in my choreography.

M.O: Do you ever feel pressured to choreograph more dances?

S.B: No, I don't. I try not to cater my dances to those people who go to a lot of events, since I may see them four or five times a year. Instead, I try to teach each dance for about nine months, as I think that most people prefer to be able to learn the dance from the choreographer themselves whenever possible. If I feel the need to have more dances to teach at an event, then I often try and find a really good or not so well known dance by a choreographer that's not there at the event. Over the last 20 years, I've put quite a few dances out on the circuit that weren't my own choreography and many of them have gone on to be big hits. They may or may not have been noticed without me but rather than force the choreography when I don't feel the inspiration and put out a dance that I'm not happy with, I would much rather find someone else's work that I think is amazing and spread it around.

M.O: I think you have a very good eye for choosing other people's dances. I know that many people are influenced by what you teach.

S.B: Do they? Well, I take that as a compliment.

M.O: It is! How do you find the dances that you choose? Is there something specific that you look for in a dance?

S.B: Well, I guess it's the same way that I find the songs that I choreograph to. Somehow, they just always come to me. It's like someone shopping in a store. Certain things simply catch my eye. There's no way of knowing what dance is going to be the next big hit. You just run into things and you like them. I don't feel threatened to teach other people's choreography. I'm genuinely happy when a dance I teach becomes a big hit at an event, even if it occasionally overshadows my own. I'm just glad to have people enjoying themselves dancing. That's how it should be.

M.O: You're very much a family man. Can you tell us more about your family?

S.B: Yes, that's true. Even though I spend a lot of time on the road, I can never wait to get home to my amazing wife and amazing son. My son Blaine is now 23. He works for the Apple computer company, and is going to get his graduate degree. My beautiful wife Deborah is a business woman with a legal background. When my son was younger and I was often on the road, I always tried really hard to be home for his sports events and theatre performances etc. I'm also very close to the rest of my family, my mom and my aunts and we usually spend our holidays together.

M.O: I cannot thank you enough Scott for this chat. It has been great!

S.B: Thank you! It has been my pleasure.