



Students in Milone's pre-ballet class
... serious performers start at an early age

DTW/Keith Quintarelli

The Many S of Danc

Former dancer gives young students support, patience and encouragement

By TODD WELLS

If a success is a woman who makes a living doing what she loves to do, Barbara Bounds Milone is a success.

In 1952, she founded Bounds Dance Studio and has since been its receptionist, bookkeeper and principal dancer.

Dancers preen like wading birds at dusk—theirs is a discipline that demands perfection and, sometimes, fosters arrogance. Milone is not like that. She is unassuming and exuberant.

She dressed in blue leotards and pink tights, no longer lithe, but fit and still graceful. Her features are mobile, her eyes, at times, playful. Awash in a steady stream of pre-schoolers in tights and tutus, Milone talked of her art and of her 29 years in Chapel Hill teaching ballet.

"I love the physical activity," she said. "Ballet is a nice, clean high. I was always involved in sports as a girl—I liked the physical movement. Ballet is a refinement of that."

Milone began lessons at age 5 in her aunt's studio in Seattle, Wash. But at age 15, a crucial age for a dancer, she was a "ballet drop-out."

"It was during the Depression, so there wasn't much money for lessons," she said. "At that age, a girl needs two classes a day if she is serious about performing."

Outlets for performing dancers were also scarce.

"There were only two performing companies in the country then, and of course, Seattle, in those days, had nothing," she said.

Thoughts of what might-have-been haunt even the most accomplished people at times, and Milone is no exception.

"If I could have stayed with it, I might have been a per-

former instead of a teacher," she said. "It can make you cry sometimes to think of it."

But Milone is more than a dance instructor. She is mentor and confidante to her students, taking considerable pride in their accomplishments.

"I am interested in seeing my students progress, and I enjoy seeing them 'make it,'" she said. "But even if a student can't be a classical dancer, that shouldn't stop their interest in ballet."

The list of former Bounds students who have 'made it' is impressive. And starting early is the norm.

Four-year-old Sara is typical of the pre-ballet students at the studio. She came in, puckish and shy, attached to her father's finger. Her gravity dissolved to Christmas delight when Milone showed her the pink tutu that is the standard garb for the children's classes.

"We teach them fundamental movements and then dance to nursery rhymes and stories," Milone said. "It's unstructured and designed to be fun."

At 7½, a child can begin classes in classical ballet, where lessons are more structured and demanding. But classes at Bounds Studio are not limited to pre-teens.

Sue Anne Harrison, a teaching assistant in French at UNC, has taken intermediate and advanced classes at the studio. She talked about Milone.

"She's very relaxed, very professional," Harrison said. "She demonstrates every exercise at the barre and gives a lot of encouragement."

"I've had other teachers who were condescending and quite mean," she said. "Milone is supportive and patient. She has a good rapport with her students."

Sara summed it up as she walked out the door. "Daddy," she said, "I want to come every day." 

Todd Wells is a contributor to Spotlight.



Carol Richard
UNC dance instructor, member of The C