

BALLROOM

Winston and Lilly Chow

Redwood City, California
Photo by Peter H. Chang

To watch Winston Chow dance with his wife, Lilly, is to witness a deep intimacy expressed in grace. It's also a glimpse of champions readying to defend their 2007 national title in Senior III (over-55) Standard Ballroom Dance. But perhaps most of all, watching the Chows glide across a ballroom floor in a gravity-suspending foxtrot is to appreciate what dancing together can do for a couple, and for a marriage.

Although the Chows had each taken a little ballroom dancing as college students, their life as a couple was filled with raising children and maintaining careers. Only when the last child left home did the Chows confront a suddenly quiet dinner table. "We looked at each other," Lilly says, "and wondered what we should do."

"We decided to start trying to enjoy each other's company," Winston adds. Instead of golf or tennis, the choice of many of their peers, they went back into the dance studio—together. "With ballroom dancing," says Winston, "we could hold onto each other."

This would already be a dreamy ending for a long-married pair, but the Chows were no ordinary couple. Teachers who saw their natural flair and skill encouraged them to train for and enter competitions; in April of 2001 they danced their first dance for judges—and survived, jokes Lilly.

Over the next six years, the Chows rose from ardent beginners to national champions. With a new season of dance competitions looming, the Chows dance five nights a week, working the five dances in the Standard portfolio: waltz, tango, slow foxtrot, Viennese waltz, and quickstep. Do they have a favorite? They won't commit—except, of course, to each other, and the delicate balance of two bodies in motion.

