

WEST KENDALL

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Jeanne Sands, 88, dances her way through life

By ED GORIN

At age 88, after a lifetime of dancing, Jeanne Sands decided to hang up her ballet slippers and retire to the Palace Suites in Kendall.

Except now she's thinking that maybe the residents of the Palace Suites might like a ballet class.

It's hard for Sands to sit still. She owned six ballet studios in London before moving to the United States at age 50, in 1969, to be with her son, Peter Loney, who owns Peter of London hair salons near The Falls and Town & Country malls. She has another son and grandchildren and great-grandchildren back in London.

She operated the British Ballet Academy in North Miami Beach for 17 years.

"I tried tai chi," she says, "but it's too slow for me." Is the Palace Suites ready for ballet? "When I taught ballet for seniors at the LIFT center," she said, pondering, "no jumps, only one turn."

Born in the United States to British parents, both musicians, she moved to London at age 3 and won a scholarship to the Royal Ballet. She and her friends entertained troops during the Blitz of World War II.

"We danced while the bombs were falling," she recalls. "The hard hats they gave us were too big, so we put saucepans on our heads. We thought each day would be our last, so we would have wonderful parties."



Palace Suites resident Jeanne Sands with her son, Peter Loney, owner of Peter of London hair salons.

Married at 16, Sands found herself "with two kids when I was 19. We were very hungry," she remembers. "We liked the American cans of food." She would pretend that she had lunch, and gave her share to the children.

She has been married three times, and says she "isn't looking." But in an interview several years ago, she complained to the Miami Herald that the downside of being an

84-year-old dancer is the lack of male partners.

Sands says her family is descended from Sir Thomas Wyatt, the British poet credited with creating the sonnet in the early 1500's, but better known to historians as the lover of Anne Boleyn. "The family has his love letters," she says. Anne Boleyn is best known for having her head cut off. The second wife of Henry VIII, she offended the king by

having a daughter instead of giving him a male heir.

Sands also likes to cruise, and has been on 53 of them. For several years she led a troupe of dancers who entertained on cruise ships. She is planning on attending cruise number 54 later this year, when a group from the Palace Suites heads to sea, one of the many social activities for residents of this luxury independent living community for seniors.

"I came to the Palace Suites after thinking about it for two years," she said. "I knew about it because some members of the LIFT Center lived here, and also Peter does the hair of some residents."

She didn't think she was ready to move, but says now she's sorry that she didn't move in sooner. "It's half cruise ship, half five-star hotel," she said, "and I'm having the best time of my life!"