

# Resident has links to the stars

By Terri Likens  
STAFF WRITER

What does Verde Lakes resident Leon Raper have in common with Mini-Me, the Hulk, Jerry Springer and Daisy Duke?

These TV and movie personalities are all people Raper has booked appearances for.

Raper, who serves on the town's board of adjustments and dabbles in local politics, also has a celebrity-booking business.

A Phoenix native who spent much of his career in California, Raper founded a talent agency there that specialized in bookings for soap opera stars.

The business evolved, and when Raper moved back to Arizona in the mid-1980s, he concentrated on celebrity bookings for special event producers.

Now, after more than 25 years in the business, Raper operates the Vegas Celebrity Booking Service.

Raper says he doesn't have that much face-to-face contact with his clients, but adds, "I have their home phone numbers."

His regular customers include Verne Troyer, the "Mini-Me" of Austin Powers fame; Lou Ferrigno, "The Hulk"; and Steve Wilkos, the bald-headed bouncer on the Jerry Springer Show.

Other clients include World Wrestling Federation personalities, such as "Rhyno," a.k.a. Terrence Gerin; Mick Foley, "The Commissioner"; and Mark Calloway, the "Undertaker."

Other personalities range from February 2002 *Playboy* centerfold Anka Romenski to talk show host and scuffle-starter Jerry Springer.

Besides being a broker in talent, Raper has plenty of his own.

He is a well-respected dance instructor.

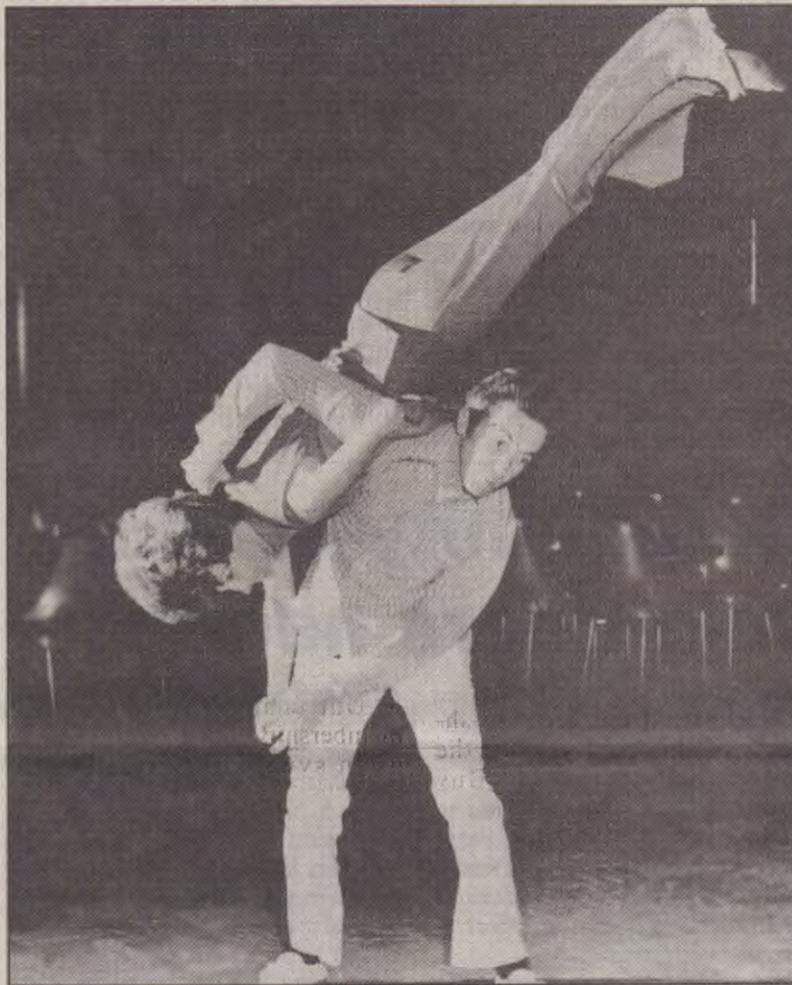


Photo courtesy of Leon Raper

**A YOUNGER** Leon Raper displays the athleticism and grace that is part of swing dancing. He has danced in more than 400 swing-dance contests, including the 1973 World Championships. He also teaches dance in the Verde Valley.

Raper has danced in more than 400 swing-dance contests, including the 1973 World Championships.

He's a dance instructor for the Greater Phoenix Swing Dance Club and also teaches in the Verde Valley.

He also teaches the lindy hop, the hustle, the two-step, waltzes and Latin dances, including the rumba, mambo, samba and tango.

"I feel the desire to dance is a highly contagious disease for which I hope they never find a cure," Raper says. "The more you dance, the worse the disease gets, and the more it spreads to others."

Raper has a number of Web sites that focus on his efforts. The one for his booking business is [www.celebs.com](http://www.celebs.com). Raper's Dance Corner can be found on the Internet at [www.dancecorner.com](http://www.dancecorner.com).