

## Memories of a Dancing Friend – Maureen

For those who don't know me, my name is Diane Rooney and I first met Maureen over 30 years ago in St Andrews, at Summer School in 1988. I am going to share some of my thoughts regarding Maureen and Scottish Country Dancing. I am sure you will all have your own special memories and like me, you will be thankful for the kindness, friendship and support that we all enjoyed through knowing her.

In the 23 years she was married, everyone said what a blessing it was that Maureen had entered Derek's life and as a result, how much more agreeable he was as a person, dancer and teacher. During these years Maureen shrugged off any compliments on the virtuous effect she undoubtable had. As a GPO engineer Derek had an impressive repertoire of risqué jokes but Maureen would quell him with a look if he was about to embark on one of these stories in sensitive company

To say Maureen had the patience of a saint would be putting it mildly and she often acted as a buffer between Derek and the classes he taught. Just so you know we were all terrified of Derek. It was a full time job for Maureen and she did it with consummate skill. At the beginning of class with injuries making it difficult to take part in step practice, it would be Maureen we went to with our various tales of woe and she would intercede on our behalf and apologise for sprained ankles, sore legs and the aching backs which were going to make it difficult for us to dance our best.

In those days Maureen was a perfect demonstration partner for Derek – making even the trickiest dance exercise look simple. She understood how intimidating Derek's classes could be and would always look for the newest dancer to partner. As well as providing support for someone less experienced it also helped with the pace of the dance lesson and spared the whole class the wrath of himself from descending on us. It was always great to have Maureen in the set especially if you were unsure of a dance. While the rest of us might be shouting helpfully **Right Shoulder**, Maureen would just smile and indicate with a little nod of the head or gentle indication of an arm & the direction we need to go in would be crystal clear

During this time she was often asked if she taught. Her constant reply would be "one teacher in the family is enough!" and sad though it was when Derek died in 2005, it allowed Maureen to come out from underneath his shadow and become the great teacher we all knew her to be.

Trevor will be telling you more about Maureen's skill as a teacher but I think you should know that when she taught at the prestigious Dance Societies Summer School, Robert Mackay one of most important and experienced pianist we have, said her coaching of the advance class was amongst the finest teaching he'd ever seen.

Maureen's devotion to Derek was evident when as a fitting tribute and legacy she set up The Derek Haynes Annual Scholarship. By now at least 12 young dancers from around the world have benefited from Maureen's thoughtful and generous gift and actions.

Whereas Derek with his extremely high standards would never take a team to the Leeds Dance Festival, Maureen with her Scottish approach of, just dance and enjoy it, delighted the local dance classes when she took over coaching and preparing two teams each year, to take part in the Festival.

Although an excellent teacher we all knew Derek didn't have the patience to tutor candidates through their Teaching Certificate, but Maureen did a fantastic job of tutoring a wide range of candidates and again you will hear more about this from Trevor.

### Trip to Canada

In 2007 Roger & I were going to the TAC Summer School on Vancouver Island and this included a trip around Canada. I knew Maureen was interested in our travel plans and asked if she would like to join us. I did most of the travel arrangements and sometimes we had separate rooms, but to keep the cost down occasionally we shared. Not a problem in Canada since one room over there is practically a suite of rooms in the UK. Whatever type of accommodation we had, Maureen slept badly and eventually we arrived at the most expensive of our hotels at Tofino, a 2 night stay on Vancouver Island. The resort looked out over the Pacific Ocean and our room had its own spectacular viewing deck. However I was horrified to find that unlike all the other generous and spacious accommodation this room was small and the third bed was a pull out sofa with an incredibly thin mattress. Other rooms in summer are difficult to come by and Maureen being her usual stoic self said, it's fine we'll just make the best of things. We used the quilt off the double bed folded up and put it over the springs and under the thin mattress for Maureen to sleep on. I did not sleep a wink – being responsible for all the booking and planning, I was completely mortified and whatever the cost I was determined to find somewhere more suitable. Imagine my astonishment the following day when Maureen said it was the best night's sleep she'd had in the whole trip!

Maureen was always cool, calm, unruffled and composed. In fact the only time I can ever recall seeing her flustered, was at one of our annual New Year dancing events at Higham Hall. Derek was confined to his room with a severe bout of measles & drank Calamine Lotion instead of liquid Gaviscon. Maureen who had taken charge of the whole dance event was suddenly involved with telephone calls to the NHS information line and the evening's ceilidh was thrust none too gently

into my bemused hands. In the chaos that ensued Maureen in a complete flap dealt with Derek's emergency and I created havoc in the ballroom. To rub salt into the wounds, we presented Maureen with a bottle of whisky for Derek which a creative dancer had modified so that the label read Macalamine instead of Macallan! For those of you interested in this event there is a dance in the 6<sup>th</sup> Carnforth book subtitled "The Gaviscon Girl"

There may be family and friends here who know nothing about the little Carnforth dance books, whose proceeds went to Cancer Research UK. These wee dance books were written by Derek with Maureen's occasional help. The dedication to "A Celtic Border" in the fifth book makes me smile. It goes like this - "I am indebted to my wife Maureen for suggesting the last 16 bars as an improved ending to this dance" and I can just hear her saying "keep it simple Derek, keep it simple!" Maureen put together and issued the final book after Derek had died. For the last 15 years she has continued to self-publish all 6 books, packing them up and sending them all over the world resulting in the donation of many thousands of pounds to charity.

I am going to omit my last sentence and say to everyone, but particularly to all the family, that as long as we all dance, Maureen's memory will never die, she will continue to live in our hearts and be with us on the dance floor.

(Maureen was that rare talent, a true inspirational teacher, tutor and friend whom we shall sorely miss.)