

Leading by Example

One man's journey as USA Dance volunteer and ballroom competitor

Written by Helen Wright

Ron has always had a love for ballroom dancing. He first got hooked when he happened to be at a north side Indy night club and would watch the dancers who would come in late in the evening. He later found out that they were dance instructors. I think that was the moment he decided that he wanted to learn to dance like them. He got friendly with them and began going to the studio and later took lessons. He didn't realize it but they were grooming him to be a competitive dancer as he had that competitive spirit and they recognized that about him. Ron competed with his pro-partner twice at Louisville at M.U.S.T. (Mid United States Championships) and twice at the Ohio Star Ball. He won a top student award in 1985.

About this time the Heartland Chapter of USABDA was established. It was exciting to now have an organization which would be devoted to encouraging ballroom dancing to the general public. Ballroom dancing was beginning to take hold and DanceSport TV shows were beginning to be televised. The Ohio Star Ball for one. Well, being a leader and an organizer Ron couldn't sit by and just wait for things to happen. He put his talents to work by running for office. He became a Heartland board member and began his historic journey. At this time we were having twice monthly dances and taking lessons together as I decided not to let him have all the fun.



We were learning routines so that we could compete as an amateur couple at the Nationals. All and all we were pretty busy. We had four children and we would often bring the younger two along. The kids would be interested for a few songs but then would get tired of the whole thing. Our youngest used to amuse everyone when he could be found under a coat rack fast asleep.

Ron's volunteer efforts went beyond that of the local USA Dance chapter. Over the next decade, as Ron became more involved with the Heartland, he also became interested in the Y.C.N. (Youth, college, network) - the third branch of the USA dance. He was asked to get involved with the International DanceSport Championships held in Daytona Beach, Florida and was alternating every two years with Weymouth, England. Ron would become vendor coordinator for the Championships. While in England, Ron became close with many of the college kids from



Cambridge and Oxford. They made him an honorary member of the Oxford Ballroom Dance Club and presented him with a Logo sweater. Sadly the IDC is no longer. Lack of participation and funds caused its demise.

Meanwhile, back at Heartland, the club became more involved with the local community events



(Penrod Arts Festival, Nursing Home exhibitions, Mall exhibitions, WYMS Lifestyle Expos), and Ron was right in the midst of it all. Ron became the Chapter Vice-President and then the President. The club had been successful in holding our first National Dancesport Championship in 1998, and actually made a large profit for the Chapter. Ron was a Vendor coordinator for that comp.

Our children grew up, we became grandparents, and we began doing what most grandparents do, BABYSIT. Only instead of quitting the club, and the dancing, we brought our granddaughter with us. Her name is Cori, and now she is a young woman of 24. Back then though she was 8-9-10. She started dancing with Ron and they both had a great time. Cori took some lessons and even did some exhibitions with Ron. When Cori entered college, during her first year at Purdue she joined their

dance team. She competed in Ohio where the college kids that want to dance just put their name on a sheet of paper and a partner is matched up for them. Cold turkey. Cori was excited to dance with a senior and actually won a placement in Ohio. Unfortunately, we can't say that were just as successful in passing the dance bug to our other grandchildren. Although they did attend occasional dances with us, they did not really get interested. But we will keep trying...





Back to Heartland: Many organizations began to become aware of the Heartland Dance Chapter and requests for couples to do exhibitions for their events began to come in. Ron was always willing to volunteer and to get other couples to do likewise. Using his outgoing personality, Ron was always looking ahead and trying to build community relationships between the Heartland and the other organizations.

He has continued with the Board of Heartland Chapter for many years, serving as officer and volunteering whenever he was needed. He has been co-chair of several dance events including the Heartland Classic. He has been facilities' Coordinator as well as vendor coordinator. When volunteering for a non-profit organization, one learns to wear many hats. He has also traveled to Las Vegas, and Atlanta to assist the club President when they were presenting a bid for our chapter for Nationals.

One of Ron's latest efforts has been with the collegiate division at the Ohio Star Ball. If you've been to the Ohio Star Ball in recent years, you most likely have seen him as a volunteer at the door taking tickets and interacting with the college kids. Most of our competitive friends have come and gone (except for Rog and Amy Greenawalt); we no longer compete or do exhibitions, but we will never lose our love for ballroom dancing and Ron will always have a soft spot for the Heartland Chapter of USA Dance. He has acquired many dance friends over the years, and those who know him also recognize that he has willingly contributed his time and talent where he hopes it did the most good. It has been the most rewarding career. A lot of hard work but definitely worth the effort.





Ron and Helen Wright on the Judging panel at the Greenfield Fundraiser for Homeless Shelter, May 2014