

VRRDA Hall of Fame 2014

LITTLE MARIA

Little Maria always enjoyed music, but can you believe, she hadn't even seen a live band or gone to a Rock n Roll dance until she was almost 49! However, that was the start of many wonderful things to come. Now she is rarely ever at home!

The first Rock n Roll dance that Maria went to was at Petrones in 1997. Imagine this. She walked in by herself, and just sat in a corner. She didn't know anybody, and in her own words, couldn't dance for peanuts. However, she thoroughly enjoyed the band, and went home very happy...and tired! Some girlfriends had initially taken Maria to Petrones on a Sunday night for a Disco, and while she was there, discovered that they had Rock n Roll on Wednesdays. She didn't miss many after that, and it changed her life.

Maria is basically a self-taught rock n roll dancer. **Her one and only dance lesson was in 1997 with Nikki and Barry Slater and Carol and Kevin Ross of Fourmost,** and it was held in Cheltenham. Not long afterwards, she met Nathan Firmin who was 14 at the time, and never had another lesson again. Nathan went on to win the State Title in 2002. Maria didn't know how to dance rock'n'roll, but she made sure she got up on the floor as often as she could, determined to make up for lost time. She also entered several competitions over the years, always in the best spirit.

Maria loved going to the dances in Coburg held by Teresa Miletta, or Rockin' Teresa. She **was inspired by Teresa so much, that she wanted to 'give it a go' herself.** At that time, her partner, Michael, encouraged her also, **and so began a long history of rock n roll dances held by Little Maria.** She began holding fortnightly dances on a Friday night. **Her first Rock n Roll dance was held on 23 June 2000.** She initially held dances at a reception centre in Cathies Lane, Wantirna South, then moved to the Whitehorse Club, on Burwood Highway, East Burwood. She enjoyed running the dances very much, and introduced theme nights where people could dress up. This was an extension of her own personality, and we would always expect to see Little Maria in some outrageous costume on those nights. Maria also held dances on New Year's Eve, which were always packed to the rafters, and the best fun.

Maria believes her biggest gamble was taking on Good Friday, when she ran a dance to raise money towards the Royal Children's Hospital appeal.

These dances were very successful, and she held them for many years. One of her favourite moments, among many, was having the Fourmost dancers perform their Mickey Mouse Club floorshow. She thought it was one of the most amazing floorshows she had ever seen at a dance. Of course, Little Maria got into the act, dressed up as Minnie Mouse.

Maria continued her dances from June 2000 until 28 December 2013. Over a period of 13 years, she has enabled thousands of people to enjoy the opportunity to listen to live bands, get up on the dance floor, and have fun!

Some of Little Maria's greatest achievements:

1. Creating an opportunity for people to enjoy rock'n'roll through her fortnightly dances
2. Being able to meet so many wonderful people, and see the smiles on their faces, because that's what dancing does to you
3. Raising money through her dances at Easter for the Good Friday Appeal
4. Being able to turn her hobby and passion into a reality
5. Connecting with so many people from all walks of life
6. And sharing the fun of rock n roll...

Ladies and gentlemen, the VRRDA is honoured to induct Little Maria into the 2014 Hall of Fame...

Annette Niven
VRRDA Committee