



VRRDA Hall of Fame 2019

LINDA SMYTH

Linda's first Rock'n'Roll dance was over 30 years ago, in 1988, where she recalls being too afraid to get up and dance, but just knew that she HAD to learn how to rock. She went to her first rock'n'roll dance lesson in 1989, and Linda, along with some other beginners, were given a spot in the corner to practise their 'step, step, rock, step' and were forgotten for most of the night...an experience that Linda would probably rather forget too.

Feeling frustrated, Linda went along to a PWP Rock'n'Roll dance class on a Sunday afternoon, and although there wasn't much happening for beginners, there was social dancing after the class. **After the dance, a group of people would go back to Linda's place for a cuppa, and end up dancing in her lounge room.** As is often the way, the ladies outnumbered the men, so Linda tried doing the lead part, and to her surprise, found it came quite naturally. She thinks it might be linked to her being left-handed!

It wasn't long before she was asked to show friends some dance moves, until eventually, Thursday nights became a dance night at her place. Following a comment made that 'you are making cups of tea and coffee, feeding people, and wearing out your carpet!', she looked for a space where she could teach. That was the Olinda Creek Hotel in Lilydale, and her classes ran on Monday night. **This marked the beginning of Linda's Rockers!**

For Linda's first class, she arrived on the Monday night (this was when hotels used to be closed on Mondays), carrying a small cassette tape recorder (remember those?), with about 20 songs, no cash tin, and no microphone. To her surprise, she had over 40 people, and it grew each week...and then it was time to get a bigger hall.

Linda fondly remembers Just Rock that ran in Kilsyth. For her, it was a social hub, where she met lots of lovely people. **She describes it as an AWESOME club!** She was also asked to help teach there on some Sunday afternoons.

Over the years, Linda has held classes with Gayle Linden, Les Clendenning, and David Peck. Some of the people she has taught over the years include John Payne, Peter Crank, Paul Wan, Marj & Brian Coates, and Stuart & Janine Smith.

She has also judged competitions at Rock House, Mordy Rock, Coburg, Bendigo, and some for the VRRDA.

Linda also taught at Mooroolbark Seniors for a year as a community service, and has often helped charities such as McDonald House, Olivia Newton-John's Cancer Centre, Wandin CFA, and Diabetes Australia, **by holding fund-raising dances, or performing dance demonstrations.**

Linda's aim has always been to look after the up and coming Rock'n'Rollers. Her Beginners have been, and still are, the most important to her. **Last year, she introduced a massive 350 NEW Beginners to Rock'n'Roll** (as she has done in most recent years). She has always aimed to teach well, link people together, form social groups, and have fun, all of which, I'm sure you would agree, she has managed admirably!

Other dance styles that Linda has learned over the years include Ballroom, Latin, Ceroc, Swing (with Pat Noakes, and also Swing Patrol), Cajun, Country Partner Dancing, Line Dancing, which is still one of her favourites.

At the age of 38, Linda was diagnosed with Breast Cancer. She was determined to beat it, and she **believes that focusing on her dance teaching played an enormous role in her recovery**, along with the support she received from so many friends during that difficult time. During the past year, Linda has taught from the side-lines, following knee surgery, and not fully recovered, had a bad fall where she fractured her spine. She is still on the mend, but is thankful to her students for their support, and to numerous braces that keep her upright!

Some of Linda's greatest achievements:

1. Being involved in Rock'n'roll for 30 years.
2. Through her teaching, **introducing over 350 new beginners to Rock'n'Roll last year**, as in most recent years.
3. **Linda LOVES her Beginner dancers!** She believes it stems from the early days when she wanted to learn and no-one was interested in spending time teaching them. **'Someone needs to do it, and I'm glad it's me!'**
4. Supporting many dance schools over the years by attending with her students at Coburg, Mordy Rock, Rock House, Red Hot Rockers, Little Maria's, Alley Catz, Triple F, and Flipside.
5. Being able to continue her classes over the past year, from the side-lines, through the support of her many students, following her knee surgery and spine fracture. That shows true dedication as a teacher!
6. And from Linda, **'Rock'n'Roll is my life, and I've loved every minute of it!'**

Ladies and gentlemen, the VRRDA is honoured to induct Linda Smyth into the 2019 Hall of Fame...

Annette Niven
VRRDA Secretary