



Carol Craven's Newsletter is quite simply a worldwide phenomenon. For those of you who have never read it, Carol's newsletter is a daily e mail and a compilation of world wide line dance information. It can be a new dance from a choreographer in South Africa, a report from a major dance event in the USA, what some teachers are doing back here in the UK or where you can have the time of your life in Europe. Reading the newsletter each day makes you realise what a strong community line dance has and how close its people are despite the miles separating them.



Carol & Stacy Garcia

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A Lady Of Letters

or marketing but rather a compendium of points and facts that are relevant to line dancers wherever and whoever they may be.

As a letter can contain ten or more messages that have all to be vetted, approved and sometimes corrected, this can take some time. Carol used to own a court reporting firm. This means she can work extremely fast and more efficiently than anyone could. But even that good, she still needed someone to help.

She found that someone in Stacy Garcia. Stacy has now become Carol's right hand woman, the person Carol credits for most of the success of her website www.worldlinedancenewsletter.com where you can find the newsletter and many more goodies besides.

"Stacy works extremely hard on the website and has always tried to keep it simple. After devising simple methods for people to send their information, she is able to maintain it quickly, I think it is a work of art. I couldn't have done it without her." Again, Stacy's dedication to the site and letter meant that during her darkest hour last year, Carol knew that no matter what, the newsletter would be available each day to her subscribers.

I ask her how she gets people to vote on a weekly basis and how she controls it. "Voting is always something I have to monitor. I would say only about 10 percent of my readers vote and it's kind of a shame that so few people speak for so many. I would love to have one week when 50 percent of the readers would vote just to see what would happen."

Carol is wise though and adds "After doing the survey for so long, I really can tell when people are trying to pad the vote and that REALLY upsets me. I know you can never control anything 100 percent but my readers are pretty smart and they ask questions when a dance suddenly appears out of nowhere and gets a lot of votes. I also understand the temptation of new choreographers to try to get some attention for their dances. Sometimes I hear complaints about not being recognised because someone

may not as yet have a name, but the reason why "names" tend to get noticed faster is because they have been able to write successful dances again and again. To me, that is what sets choreographers apart. A one-shot wonder is a nice thing but to be able to repeat success is a sign of someone's true talent."

The Carol Craven Newsletter is open to anyone, whether just to read it or share some information with like minded readers. Though Carol feels a sense of responsibility as a "positive voice for linedancing" and has got herself to be known far from the boundaries of her own community, she keeps very modest about the letter and site achievements.

"The dancers ARE the newsletter" she says, "I am just the messenger. It always amazes me that people are so diligent about sending in reports from events, what they are teaching and how their classes are responding to the dances, discussions about all kinds of things, questions, and just interesting points they want to share. I get the nicest notes from folks all day every day thanking me for doing it but I really need to thank them for reading and contributing to it. It truly is a joint effort by thousands of dancers all over the world."

And as for her new life without Bucky, Carol tells me "I just know that if it weren't for my dancing friends and friends from other parts of my life, it would be much harder than it is even today. Going to the Marathon this year was hard for me because it was the last line dance event we attended before his accident. I will never be able to thank all the people who have been there since day one and continue to be there for me. Since my tragedy, so many people have written me in their time of despair because I think they knew I would truly understand their feelings. I think so many times about how people cope when they do not have the great support system I have. I don't know how I would have made it through and continue on this journey without all of you and I thank you from the bottom of my heart."



Carol & Bucky

A Lady Of Letters

So who is Carol Craven? And why did she start what must be a huge time consuming task?

She was born and raised in Pensacola, Florida and met her husband Bucky in 1966. After a whirlwind romance of just a couple of weeks, he proposed, she accepted and the rest as they say is history. They shared a passion for dancing from the very start (almost every night) and Carol says she soon realised Bucky was the right man for her "because I knew I couldn't marry someone who didn't like to dance". They raised a son named Justin who is now 35.

In 2000, the newsletter was born. Originally designed for a handful of friends it is today sent out to over 4000 people on a daily basis throughout the world making it one of the biggest line dance information pools available worldwide.

In 2001, Carol decided to add to it a weekly survey (or questionnaire) about top dances inviting readers to vote for their favourites. This would mean that everyone who read the letter would be aware of those favourites and learn them all over the world.

Carol says "It gives me such a thrill to go to a seminar or event or club and see so many people doing dances that we all know. I sometimes hear complaints about having too many vote surveys available but I just smile.

I remember the days when we didn't have them and I KNOW they all make a difference in how much fun people can have dancing now no matter where they travel."

Then last year, Carol's life was changed forever. On June 16th, 2006, Bucky had a terrible road accident and died some weeks later. During that time, the newsletter was still sent every day and those who read it then will never forget the sense of dread and hope experienced each day receiving and opening it to find out what had happened in the last few hours. As time went on and it became more obvious how desperate the situation was becoming, Carol's messages got more difficult to read and I am sure more difficult to write. And yet, line dance facts kept coming, the dancers votes always up to date, the letter still sent each day of the week.

Carol says "I could not imagine getting through last year without all the people who supported me and Justin. I get notes weekly from people checking up on how we're doing and I would like to say everything is back to normal but that will never happen."

Carol is a lady who does not mince her words. She is totally honest, and will tell it "like it is", a rare quality and one I am convinced that has made the letter gain its popularity. You know when you read the newsletter that its purpose is not about self publicity

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