

Campus Life

Prof Spot: Deborah Davis

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Dancing is the ultimate exercise... disguised as fun. At least that is what adjunct professor Deborah L. Davis teaches her students at PSH, Harrisburg Area Community College, and at her Lewisberry studio, Ballroom Break.

She and her husband, Frederic Shipley founded the studio in 1988 when, according to their website, they felt Harrisburg was in need of quality dance lessons at an affordable price. Registered with the National Dance Council of America and certified by the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dance, they have more than 50 years combined experience in teaching, competing, and judging ballroom dance.

Davis's work has her listed in Marqui's Who's Who in American Women and the National Register's Who's Who in Executives and Professionals.

Despite her impressive dance credentials, Prof. Davis did not start dancing as a child as one might expect.

"I started late," admitted Davis in a recent interview. She started in her mid-20's while working at an ice cream distributor.

"It was the (19)70's. Disco was so hot that everyone went three times a week," Davis adds. "We all started with the Hustle, everyone in the business, my age, started with the then."

She started her dance education at Freeman's School of Dance, a studio that sadly closed following the instructor's death. Davis moved on to a chain school where fate introduced her to her future life and business partner Shipley.

Following success in the dance world, fate dealt a life-threatening blow. In 1998, Davis complained of flashing lights and feelings of fatigue. After a year of the symptoms, doctors diagnosed her with eye cancer. Davis spent approximately a year and half of her life legally blind, battling the melanoma.

While some would think a blind dance instructor would have to sit out a few dances, Davis used the experience to become a better follower on the floor.

"I had to feel," she said, "had to depend on my other senses and my dancing greatly improved."

Four years of treatment at Will's Eye Hospital in Philadelphia cleared Davis of the cancer. Her previously 20-20 vision was only slightly impaired following the

brush with then potentially fatal cancer. Still she smiles as she points out that she only needs occasional reading glasses after being legally blind.

Currently, Davis teaches a class in either ballroom or Latin dance every semester while still maintaining her studio and judging competitions. She also plans to bring PSH a ballroom dance club and/or a college formation team that would compete and exhibit at dance events.

As for her favorite part of her job, Davis points to the people she meets. From students to world-renowned professionals, her career has given her opportunity to meet many interesting individuals. Some have even gained mainstream fame in the form of *Dancing with the Stars*.

As for her favorite dance, Prof. Deborah Davis says she's learned to like all the ballroom styles but points to one for a very special reason.

"The Hustle—It started it all," she says fondly. "I just really like the music."



WHAT THE FOTO



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