

## Honorary Member - Karen Josephson



I started dancing at the age of seven. The year before I had debilitating polio, which affected most of my body. The doctor recommended dance lessons to strengthen my muscles, and I haven't stopped since. There is not a dance form that does not interest me, including that of the trees, birds, water, etc. Somehow SDG caught my radar in the early eighties and began sending me information about themselves. The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary festival was being held in Berkeley, California in 1983, and I wanted to go to California, so I registered.

What I found was magical! Of course I became a member of this diverse group of deeply religious and spiritual people who loved their bodies as a vehicle for expression. There were daily dancing worship services, technique classes, workshops, evening dance concerts, and marvelous people. It was difficult for me to attend these invigorating festivals for several years because of my own performing dance ministry of concerts, workshops and dance clinician responsibilities at summer conferences.

But I read the Journal, drooled over festival news and became the Regional Director for Connecticut. This ended many years later when I returned to Berkeley as a student in Religion and the Performing Arts at the Pacific School of Religion and the Graduate Theological Union, where I received both a Master's and a Ph.D. degree. Again, it was a magical time. There was Carla DeSola and Cynthia Winton-Henry and Doug Adams and our Random Dancers and so much collaboration with visual artists and musicians and poets.

I had promised Joann Flanigan, then SDG President, that I would join the Board after I finished my degree. I was immediately appointed Vice President, and became President within six months (much to my chagrin) due to unforeseen circumstances. It was a time of scrambling to learn all that went on besides a festival. But again, SDG people could not have been more generous with their patience and help over the next four years. A few years later I stepped into the Presidential dance shoes again for a year during some restructuring.



Life with SDG is beyond adequate words. It's a family that gratefully takes the gifts you have to offer and lovingly challenges you for more. It's a family that takes you in no questions asked. It's a family that extends your boundaries and shows you new horizons. It's a family that will always be near, ready for the next pas de deux.

I was and continue to be enormously grateful and humbled by the opportunity to chair the '96 festival in Berkeley, and contribute to several others through workshops or planning. Being named a Living Legacy in '08 was astounding, and being an Honorary Member is an enormous

honor. I couldn't be more grateful to my polio doctor for the gift of dance, or to SDG for the opportunity to dance the sacred with so many others through the years.

Today I consult with clergy and priests about the use of the arts, and particularly dance, in the life of a church or parish. Directing and choreographing youth theater is rewarding in so many ways, as is teaching world religions in an area university. And I am very much looking forward to the March Culture Festival in Boston, the July Festival in Michigan, and dancing with all of you.

