

LIVES WE LEAD

Sue Sloan, our Zumba Teacher

Compiled by Judi Coulter, Winter 2014 Program/2020



Sue - a "few" years ago



Sue - a couple of months ago

Sue Sloan would probably be a chameleon if she had not been born a human. She has reinvented herself many times but we at GSAC are lucky that her most recent reinvention has been as a Zumba Teacher.

Sue "decided" to enter the world on her parents' House Moving Day. Her father was a Human Resources Consultant who frequently was transferred to various communities across Canada. The family was expert at moving house every few years and "wander lust" must have permeated her mom's uterus. Or perhaps the ruckus of packing for yet another big move got Sue in a hurry to see what was on the "outside"? In any event, her early arrival set the tone for the many sharp right-turns she would encounter as she progressed through life. Of course, when she was a wee sprite, Sue had to move when her parents did. But she grew up fast and took on major responsibilities very quickly. Her paternal grandparents owned a lovely farm in Apple Hill, in North Glengarry Township, Eastern Ontario. Although her mom and younger siblings Todd and Andrea always preferred city life, Sue and her father were true country folk preferring the more bucolic country life. They spent long holidays in the summer helping the elder Sloans on the farm. Sue became adept at pitching in-- feeding the chickens, gathering eggs, and cleaning the hen house. When Sue's grandparents became too old to farm, Sue's uncle took over.

Sue spent the academic year, 1979/1980, at Cambrian college in Sudbury where she studied journalism and photography. Her plan was to eventually complete the program and find work at a small newspaper. But in 1980, when she was still a teenager, Fate tragically intervened. Sue's uncle was involved in a horrific car accident and had extensive incurable brain injuries. Sue moved to the farm to run it completely on her own. Literally overnight she was responsible for all aspects of farm management, including the twenty-six cows and four hundred chickens. The barn had minimal electricity and running water but the farmhouse had none. There was no plumbing whatsoever in the house and having the use of only an outhouse certainly ensured that she didn't drink any water before bedtime!! She did have a couple of milking machines but had to milk some cows by hand. The milking machines, with their many small and large parts, had to be meticulously cleaned after each milking. It was especially ironic that Sue, with so many of her duties now being "cow-related", had been lactose-intolerant since baby-hood!!

After a year Sue's family managed to sell the farm. Sue moved to Alexandria, also in North Glengarry Township. She started out as a cashier for an IGA Grocery but very quickly became the manager of their instore bakery. Her work was so exceptional that she was noticed by a large Bakery Firm (Riches) based in Buffalo. They offered her a Sales and Teaching job that involved extensive travel. She travelled far and wide across Canada from Iqaluit, to Labrador, to British Columbia, visiting the bakeries that were being supplied by her employer, and giving courses to their personnel. She did this for twelve years while living out of a suitcase.

Sue was finding the "regular commute" from Alexandria to Ottawa Uplands Airport overwhelming. So she moved to Ottawa and eventually purchased a house in Orleans where she lives to this day. But at that time huge corporate grocery companies were undergoing vast changes. Sue's job suddenly disappeared. Luckily she was given a six-month severance package. However she knew she would have to "reincarnate" herself yet again. It was the early nineties--a time of huge growth in Computer Science industries. What better field to enter? Sue enrolled in a Business Applications Software program at Ottawa's Academy of Learning. She soon realized that if she were to get a job in that field, academic courses would not be enough. All companies that were hiring insisted on applicants having end-user work experience. (You know, that old catch-22: no job unless experience and no experience unless a job!!)

Sue's six-month severance funds were evaporating quickly and she could see the "writing on the wall". But she is nothing if not assiduous and managed to talk Academy of Learning management into "hiring" her as a volunteer. That way she was smart enough to attain work experience.

She worked for the Academy of Learning for three years. Then..(wait for it!!)..they sold the franchise! There was no severance this time. She already knew to play to her strengths (and versatility). For many years she had been a volunteer at various organizations. So she applied for Manager of Membership services at Volunteer Canada and obtained a one year contract. There she assisted in the drafting of proposals for funding and managed their Membership and Client databases.

When that one-year contract was over, Sue did some navel-gazing. She realized she had had quite enough of the corporate world, thank you. She joined a locally owned Curves gym and, there again, became a manager within six months. She spent eight years at Curves during which time the company partnered with Zumba Fitness. She had herself accredited as a certified Group Fitness Instructor and Personal Trainer as well as a Zumba instructor. Now Sue works at the membership desk of the Ruddy Family YMCA in Orleans and also teaches various Zumba classes throughout the city. As well as at GSAC, she teaches Zumba at two YMCA locations, at Jan's Workout in Blackburn Hamlet, at The Good Companions, and at the Rockcliffe Seniors' Residence.

We at GSAC are hoping that Zumba will remain popular for quite some time yet so that Sue will not be tempted to "reinvent" herself again!! Zumba is lots of fun: exercise for both the mind and the body. Music (especially the lively Zumba music) is terrific at helping us to forget our various aches and pains. Seniors who engage in Exercise Classes will maintain their mobility and muscle strength longer than those who gravitate towards a more sedentary lifestyle. Some of the benefits of Zumba (from the Huffington Post) are: it burns lots of calories, it is great for body toning, it is **so, so** fun (as the teenagers would say), it is possible for all ages, it is a wonderful stress reliever and it will make you **so, so** happy. Even the noon hockey players are so "jealous" that we get to do Zumba (and they don't!!) that they wave to **us**, which makes us go into gales of laughter!!

Remember that GSAC policy is that you can try one class for free before deciding whether to sign up for a session. If you think you might need a chair for a rest during the class, let Management know and this can be arranged. We are always encouraged to go at our own pace. So please come out and enjoy the fun!!