

ADELINE DUNCAN

“Mrs. D” as she was fondly referred to, was born in Victoria, BC Canada. Her father, John Grant was from Grantown-on-Spey and her mother, Ann MacDonald from Fortrose, Inverness-shire. Both actively encouraged their daughters to be involved in their beloved Scottish culture, Adeline in Highland dancing and her sister, Lillian in piping. Adeline started dancing lessons from an immigrant Scot in the early 1920’s and she continued her passionate interest until near her death at age 95.

Adeline was a very successful competitor at Highland competitions and Games but her very real contribution and accomplishments were through her teaching. Her dancers were consistently at the top in competitions world-wide and included two World Champions, Jennifer Lindsay and Angus MacKenzie as well as numerous winners of Canadian, BC, North American, Scottish, Commonwealth, British and other Championships and competitions. However, her real legacy is in the many outstanding teachers who have benefited from her expertise and who are now continuing to teach with her anecdotes and superb teaching methods to guide them.

The Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing recognized Adeline’s achievements by bestowing her with the appointment of “Honourary Member”, the first Canadian to be so honoured. She was further delighted in 2004 to be the recipient of the prestigious and beautiful Atholl Clasp, which she wore proudly, for her outstanding services to Highland dancing world-wide.

“Mrs. D” had a philosophy, which is well worth passing down to Highland dancers and teachers today. “No matter how many workshops or lectures you attend or who they are conducted by, you can always learn. Never believe that you know everything about Highland dancing. Like everything else, it has changed over the years and it is your responsibility as a teacher to keep up with those changes.”

Adeline died peacefully in Victoria in 2009. She leaves behind a lasting memory to her daughter, Heather and her grandniece, Fiona Lee, who continue to uphold the family tradition of keeping the culture of Scotland alive and well on the west coast of Canada.

Written by her daughter Heather Jolley