

He's happy to be alive and dancing

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der. There was a lot of swelling. I had severe numbness for months. But the movement is there," Douglas said, referring to his ability to dance like before.

And with the pluck of a healthy dancer, Douglas is busy overseeing final construction on the new dance studio on Orchard Lake Road.

"A total dance program," is on the agenda, he said. "Ballet is the top dance form, but it is not the only form of dance."

Douglas will offer instruction to students 3 years and older in ballet, tap, jazz, Tahitian, Hawaiian and ballroom dancing, and creative movement, yoga and dance aerobics. Gymnastics classes are planned in a year or so.

Five instructors will assist Douglas, people chosen for experience and ability. "They range from a young ballerina with a degree in dance, to an old tap dance teacher who holds no degrees. They're all very talented."

Due to construction glitches, however, opening day at Danceart was postponed by a month, to Oct. 1.

"I have good student registration and nowhere to teach," Douglas quipped. "We're litchin' to go, especially the advanced students."

MANY OF those registered at Danceart are former students at area dance studios where Douglas has taught the past four years after a five-year stint of professional dancing throughout the United States and Canada.

Douglas decided to "come home" for many reasons. "Once you're pushing 30, unless you are well established as a dancer, it's hard to work regularly."

More important, Douglas feels he has something to contribute to "dancing in the Midwest."

"Dancing here (as compared to that on the East and West coasts) is as different as driving on a street or in the Indy 500. We sell a business in the Midwest. The technical training, the motivation, everything is different. We teach how to move to music. Not how to dance."

"I came back to train dancers," he said.

DOUGLAS FIRST realized he "had more than a cold" when swelling in his throat did not respond to either antibiotics or dental treatment.

A biopsy was scheduled on the day he turned 32, May 12, 1986. A malignant tumor was discovered in a lymph gland.

"I was stunned. I'd always been healthy," Douglas recalls.

Surgery removed the malignancy and additional biopsies of the stomach, esophagus, lungs and sinus showed the disease had not spread.

"If you consider having cancer as lucky, then I'm very lucky," Douglas said, because squamous carcinoma is a "traveler" and oftentimes spreads to other parts of the body.

Douglas attributes the quick recovery from surgery and follow-up radiation treatments to his excellent conditioning from years of dancing.

White in the hospital, dancing students gave him symbolic gifts, which he now wears on a chain around his neck, including a Jewish chat for the image of a dancer in pose.

The figurine was custom designed from an earlier photo of Douglas performing a jazz routine. Jazz and adagio, the art of lifting in dance,

are Douglas's forte.

HOW DID it all start? Walking down a street one day in the "tough" Detroit neighborhood where he lived with his mother, sister and brother, Douglas passed a store front and heard music. He looked inside. People were dancing. The 12-year-old was duly impressed.

From that moment on, Douglas danced every chance he had for the next six years, taking lessons to "escape" life on the streets and learning ballroom technique from his mother by accompanying her to local clubs.

The dancing ended in 1974 when he married "a woman who didn't dance. Therefore, I didn't dance."

When the marriage ended five years later, he danced daily for "therapy. Life wasn't exactly nice then."

Eventually, Douglas began to dance professionally, obtaining work on cruise ships, in lounges and by entering dance competitions.

"I made a lot of money," he said simply.

Now, however, since the bout with cancer, making money is secondary. Other things are more important, like "10 fingers or hearing the birds."

"PEOPLE DON'T appreciate the little things in life," Douglas said. "Neither did I until I got sick. Now, I'm much more laid back. The frustration is definitely out the window for me."

"Death is always around the corner for all of us. I just thank God for being able to be here today. I don't know what's beyond and I'm not rushing to find out."

Couple quakes

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"It's amazing how quick that thing (earthquake) comes and goes. We didn't have any fear. We thought, 'Let's get the heck out of here,' Alex said.

And that was no easy task. The hotel lights were out and the elevators had stopped. When the Keurejans called the hotel's front desk, they were told to stay in their room.

"My wife wouldn't stay in the room. She said, 'There's no way I'm staying up here,'" Alex recalled.

Adrenaline took over. The Keurejans dressed and made their way downstairs. Even when they'd reached the halfway point, and it appeared the tremor had stopped, Lili Keurejan wasn't about to trust the stillness. "She said, 'Just keep moving,'" Alex said.

ELEVEN FLOORS later, when the Keurejans had reached the hotel lobby, employees had provided coffee for the 15-20 people who thought it wise to leave their rooms.

"My wife wouldn't stay on the 11th floor. So we went up and got the bags. The lowest floor we could stay on was the sixth. So we found another hotel where we could stay on the ground floor," said Alex, who has been traveling back and forth to California for the past 30 years.

Though the worst was over, tremors could be felt all the next day. The whole experience was enough for at least Lili Keurejan to yearn for Farmington Hills. And, she admits, it's going to be awhile before she contemplates another trip to California.

Fund raiser is scheduled

Members of the two choirs from North Farmington High School are planning a fund-raiser for Friday, Oct. 16, when they will sponsor a showing of "The Princess Bride," a family movie.

The showing is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. at the Old Orchard Theatre, on Orchard Lake Road between 12 and 13 Mile in Farmington Hills. Admission is \$3 per person at the door.

Their students will be attending the movie; the event is also open to all interested people in the community.

According to vocal music director Amy Jackson, "The Princess Bride" is "a highly rated family movie, with interest for everyone."

Arthritis Today
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However, exercise is useful for arthritis. Such activity helps stretch muscles, which because of pain, are in a prolonged state of contraction. Also, exercise increases the blood supply to the muscles, tendons and ligaments that surround the joint. The resulting increased warmth and further removal of toxic substances help the joint overcome inflammation.

If you have arthritis, the best exercises are those that move the joints and muscles without weights or other artificial strains. You can reach this end with stretching movements repeated 5-10 times and a total exercise time that lasts no more than 5-8 minutes per session.

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