

Baby Maureen grows up and settles family in Acton

Because her parents followed doctor's orders several years ago, Maureen Gibson became a nationally renowned dancer in England.

Now, she is living in Acton, married, and the mother of two sons ages 15 and 20. She is a long way from the theatre and her radio and television studios which helped make her famous, but she is still very much active in the Canadian dancing world.

Her married name is Maureen Shone, and she is a dance teacher and choreographer at Sheridan College, Oakville.

Her career began when was two and a half years old. She had foot problems, and her doctors prescribed dance lessons to help the problem. Not long after, Mrs. Shone appeared in her first recital, billed in the program as "Baby Maureen". She remembers the evening well, she says.

After this stage debut, Mrs. Shone "got the bug". She loved dancing, and never had to be coaxed to "take her medicine" and follow doctor's orders.

When she was a mere ten years old, Mrs. Shone turned semi-professional. Although she did not receive wages for her dancing, all her expenses were paid. This was the beginning of her real career.

When she was in her early teens, she started thinking, as all teenagers do, what she was going to do with her life. Mrs. Shone decided she would be a professional dancer. She concentrated on recitals and competitions, combined with her dance exams, and her regular school work. It was while she was labelled a "Semi-professional" that she appeared with well-known radio star Tommy Handley in Liverpool.

Her proudest moment, Mrs. Shone recalls, was at 12 years old, when she received her first stage pass. She realized this meant she had "really made it".

At the age of 15, young Maureen Gibson went on her first tour abroad. She packed up her dancing shoes and headed for Los Angeles, California. There she joined a group of dancers and made her North American debut. Three months later she headed back home to Liverpool.

Turning point
A few days before the upcoming star was to take her final dancing exam, a very important step in her life, something happened which changed her whole career.

She broke her ankle. It did not happen while practising, or even during a concert, but rather the break occurred while playing football with her family. Someone tackled her a little too hard!

Mrs. Shone was immobilized for some time, and she had to face the fact that she would never be able to pursue her career in classical ballet. Her ankle did not heal properly, and she found it very difficult to do the ballet points for very long. Because most ballets require two or more hours of dancing on the stage, she knew her career in ballet was finished.

However, while recuperating, Mrs. Shone thought seriously of other forms of dancing. She realized that she enjoyed dancing in plays just as much as ballet. She was able to find parts in plays which did not require the full use of her poor ankle and her career resumed. (She tried her test three years later, and passed.)

Mrs. Shone was one of the first people ever to dance on radio. The sound of her feet in tap shoes served as the sound effects of a train during a play, as she tapped out the engine noises.

The man who produced this show came up with the idea of putting the young dancer in a light orchestra. By doing this, no percussion was needed, as Mrs. Shone's feet did all the work.

As her theatre career got under way, Mrs. Shone soon learned she would have to become an actress. The only parts available in plays were those in which the dancer also had lines, and was part of the script. So—an actress she became. She never did a straight acting part however. She only acted in plays where she could dance.

Stars in film
In her late teens, the well known dancer/actress, starred in a film documentary about hairstyles down through the ages. With the styles, were also the various dance steps. Mrs. Shone went

through the eras, both getting her hair done several times a day, and learning several ages of dance steps.

Although her work was very steady, as her name and reputation were well known across England, she still found time to teach dancing, and give dance workshops at the University of Liverpool. She was also guest teacher once at the school which she attended, St. Catherine's School of Dance and Mime.

She also had the pleasure of working with Reg Varney, who was a regular in the British television series On the Buses. Her roommate got a starring role in the series. Their show was on Canadian TV a few summers ago. She also worked with George Formby, another well known British actor.

Mrs. Shone was in popular demand by this time both on the stage and at home. She took a few years off to become a mother. Before she was married, she and her fiancé sat down and discussed her career. Although he was not in the theatre business he loved watching performers. He was understanding, and encouraged her to continue her career after their marriage.

However, when the family came along, Mrs. Shone decided to go into semi-retirement until both boys were in school.

During the ten years or so she was "retired" she found alternatives to her road tours. She was able to keep up her career in a nightclub act, and on Liverpool radio and television. Her name was not forgotten.

Once the two boys were settled in school, Mrs. Shone took to the road and became just as popular as before.

Emigrants
In 1967, however, she and her husband both felt they were "in a rut". They decided to leave England, and go live near Mrs. Shone's parents who moved from England to the United States.

Before settling in the



Maureen Shone

States, the family visited Canada, where they decided to make their home rather than south. They found an apartment in Willowdale and settled into a normal family life. Although it was tough to pick up her career in a foreign country, Mrs. Shone was able to get jobs as choreographer, something she had been doing for years while on road tours, and teaching dance.

It was through these efforts that an instructor at Sheridan College saw her work, and invited her to teach at the institution. That was five years ago, and she is still there. Last spring, Mrs. Shone won an award for best choreographer in a play, something she is very proud about.

It was while out on a Sunday drive two and a half years ago that the family discovered Acton. They liked the convenience to the city, and the look of the town. Cobblehill Estates was being built at the time, and they fell in love with one particular house with a full, unobstructed view of Fairy Lake. They never want to leave here, just as Mrs. Shone never wants to have to give up dancing entirely.

Mrs. Shone looks back onto the years with fondness. A scrapbook helps her recall

numerous recitals and shows she performed in.

As a young mother in Liverpool in the early 1960's, Mrs. Shone also recalls how Beatlemania swept the globe. The four shaggy-haired musicians were from Liverpool, and as they set the world on its ear, their home town glowed in pride. Mrs. Shone explained that the foursome, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr and George Harrison were very well-known in the city, and have many many friends. Everyone was happy for the singing group, and Mrs. Shone remembers how a friend of hers, and coincidentally mother of George Harrison, beamed in pride as her son became world famous and idol of thousands, if not millions.

She laughs when she remembers her father once

hired a young boy by the name of Richard Starkey, alias Ringo Starr. At that time, Mr. Gibson had no way of knowing the young lad who did so poorly in the timber business, would alter the world of music and behaviour so immensely it will never be the same.

Whether it be the Beatles, or Reg Varney, or Baby Maureen, Mrs. Shone recalls them all as part of her past, with her future in Acton and at Sheridan College.

Her career is far from behind her, and as she sits in her living room gazing out at Fairy Lake, one must wonder how many untold stories she has in her mind. The places she has visited, and the honors bestowed upon her are all too numerous to mention, and Mrs. Shone in all her modesty keeps them to herself.

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Sugar and Spice . . .

(Continued from page 4)
probably just get a glass of water in the face.

But even the women are a long way from being out of the woods, when it comes to hypocrisy. And many of the biggest hypocrites are "surface" feminists. They want all the perks of the new freedom, and all the treats of the old "essence of woman."

Oh well, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."

I'm certainly not talking about me and thee, gentle reader. But aren't you a little sick of them—all those hypocrites?

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