

# **Resume**

## **Jo Anna Kneeland**

### **(1997)**



Jo Anna with her Husband at  
"The Royal Poinciana Play House"

which they built and opened together. It was considered the most exclusive theater in Florida. A sample guest list would have included such names as the Kennedys, the Rothschilds and the Pulitzers, just to name a few of the regulars.

While still only in her teens in Durban, South Africa Jo Anna was admitted into the prestigious Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, London, England. Because of her youth, special rules had to be instituted so that she could be licensed as an "Associate Member."

During the WW II years she trained two dancers who became world famous ... Nadia Nerina, who succeeded Margot Fonteyn as Prima Ballerina of the Royal Ballet of England and Michael Maule, Premiere Danseur with all the major companies of the U.S. and currently the head teacher at the famous Julliard School in New York City.

Jo Anna was so multi-talented that in 1946 when she immigrated to the U.S.A. she was able to sustain not just ONE but SEVERAL successful careers. She became the first woman golfer (who was a non-American,) to gain an L.P.G.A. Tour card and was the personal protégé of Tommy Armour and the equally famous "Babe" Didrikson Zaharias—all in her second year of playing the game.

Under the management of the famous William Morris Agency, she combined playing the golf tournaments with the performance of her nightclub act in the evenings. She even opened for comedian Joey Bishop.

This "uniqueness" led to many appearances on leading television shows of the early fifties, such as "The Don Ameche-Frances Langford Variety Hour" and "The Laraine Day Show" where she met and married its producer Ted Kneeland, who proposed to her within 24 hours of meeting her for the first time.

A car accident which shattered the bones of her left wrist forced her to give up golf and return to her first love, the performing and teaching of dance, with accent on classical ballet. When hubby Ted became the silent partner of entrepreneur Frank Hale and built the beautiful Royal Poinciana Playhouse in Palm Beach, Fla. Jo Anna formed the Palm Beach Ballet Company of which she became the Artistic Director, Prima Ballerina and Principal Choreographer.

In 1957, (before the advent of video tape,) Jo Anna conducted on 16mm film a frame-by-frame study of the world's most famous dancers. When she observed the incredible differences between what they actually did with their bodies and what was taught in the classrooms of the world or advocated in existing books, she developed what is called today "The Kneeland Method of Training."

It took enormous courage to oppose over 300 years of traditional thinking, and at first her theories were considered revolutionary, but today they have been accepted as proven fact. (Lydia Joel, Editor-in-chief, Dance Magazine.) This achievement also landed her a position on President Kennedy's board of health and fitness, where she helped train our Olympic athletes.

Wealthy heiress Rebekah Harkness allocated half a million dollars to bring the Kneelands to New York City for three years to institute Jo Anna's techniques into the training of her company... "The Harkness Ballet." Jo Anna functioned as Ballet Mistress until David Howard, (formerly soloist with the Royal Ballet,) was sufficiently trained in her techniques to take her place. Howard later became the most celebrated teacher in New York City, and in "People Magazine" (Nov.15, 1982,) surrounded by the stars of

American Ballet Theater, Natalia Makarova, Cynthia Harvey, Gelsey Kirkland, Peter Fonseca, Patrick Bissell, etc. He recounted how he had imparted the Kneeland methodology to all of them, and how much they appreciated it!

His sensational pupil 14 year old Katherine Healy became the only American female to win the International Ballet Competition in Varna, Bulgaria, which is considered "the Olympics of the Dance world". She was awarded the same gold medal formerly won by Nureyev, Baryshnikov, and Makarova. Healy was invited to the White House by President Reagan and when she danced at the Hollywood Oscars Night, the audience gave her a standing ovation. Howard again graciously declared that she was the product of the training methods he had learned from Jo Anna Kneeland.

All of the above was extremely pleasing to Jo Anna because although she had already personally trained 10-year-old Claudia Cravey who had been recognized as the youngest ballerina in the world, it was now proven that her training methods were truly based on scientific facts and

could live forever through not just herself, but through other teachers as well.

In 1957, in order to showcase Claudia's talents, Jo Anna had written and choreographed "The Princess" which is the ONLY full-length classical ballet ever created in America. She has since rewritten it as a musical fantasy, adding dialogue and lyrics. It was recorded with such stars as Peter Sellers, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Terry-Thomas and Gemma Craven. Animation on this much-acclaimed work is expected to commence within the year.

She was concentrating on an exercise book, which will bring the knowledge of kinesiology that she gained by working with dancers to the general public. It will be entitled

**"EIGHT MINUTES TO A YOUNGER YOU."**



**This was taken at Jo Anna's the last professional performance as a ballerina before retiring to become a full time teacher. Jo Anna played the roll of "The Doll" from the ballet "Dr. Coppelius". She was 44 years old and 4 months pregnant with her first child at the taking of this picture. That child was Frank.**

**For Additional  
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