

Janet Leonora (Baril) Giesbrecht

- Born: October 9, 1938 in Reading, Berkshire, England
- Immigrated to Winnipeg, Canada in January 1946
- Passed Away: October 10, 2017 (age 79)
- Predeceased by her parents and son Michael Baril
- Survived by husband John, sister Francis, daughter Laurette & family, son Raymond, many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Those who knew Janet will remember a vivacious, energetic, positive person who loved Baton Twirling and her students. She gave everything she had into her coaching and always went above and beyond for each of us. Besides being a talented, innovative coach, she loved every student as if he/she were her own child, never had “favorites” and gave individualized attention to each student making them feel special and important.

Before CBTF was created in the early 1980's, Manitoba ran NBTA events and Janet was an active member of the provincial body. In 1963, she formed the Rhythmette Baton Corps – one of the first members was Karen (Paulley) Gratton. The group became a very successful baton corps and travelled all over Western Canada and the northern States including trips to AYOP and Calgary to participate in the Stampede Parade. Cyndy Park of Winnipeg (former MBTSA Chairperson and mother of Kim Park) was also one of her students. Janet was also a well-known judge and competition director. Ron Kopas, Maureen Johnson, Wendy Pritchard, Linda Boyd, Joyce Ormshaw and Donna Jones were friends and fellow corps directors and, with all that talent, corps competitions were truly exciting!

Janet lead a very full life filled with activity and people. She belonged to the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, and Ballroom Dancing with Westview Dance Club With her husband John, Janet traveled extensively and loved going on cruises.

Karen Gratton writes:

I was one of the first members of the Rhythmette Baton Corps in 1964-66 and my fondest memories are of crowded, all-day Saturday practices at Melrose Community Hall – a small, low-ceiled community center in Winnipeg. Wow, we were awesome thanks to Janet's coaching skills, patience, infectious energy and ability to draw the very best from of us.

When my family moved to Calgary, I was heart-broken to leave baton and Janet. I did find another coach that first year but had decided that an Edmonton competition in April would be my last. The morning of the event, I walked into the hotel restaurant to find Janet having breakfast with Robert Eklund. I was ecstatic – she had surprised me by accepting a judging assignment! I told her it was my last because I couldn't find a coach as wonderful as she was. She convinced Robert to take me on as a student even though he was only accepting advanced twirlers – he had just moved to Calgary himself & was about to begin teaching band classes at Central Memorial High (a success story in its own right!).

If Janet hadn't “gone to bat” for me, I'm not sure where my life would have taken me. Because she generously shared her passion for baton twirling & working with children, to this day I am still very involved in the sport. I thank Janet every day for believing in me and shaping my destiny for the rest of my life.

She was my role model, my idol, my mentor and my beloved coach & friend.

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God Bless You, Janet - you certainly have earned your wings, beautiful lady.

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