

## Rusty and Richard Ball



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They fell in love while riding around Japan in a two-seat Honda – a young Army nurse from Indiana and a shy First Lieutenant from Rochester, New York.

“Rusty was a captain in the Nurse Corps,” said Richard. “Yes, she outranked me!” During the Viet Cong’s Tet Offensive in 1968, Rusty put in 20-hour days as an operating room nurse for American soldiers flown in to her camp from Vietnam. Richard was in the Quartermaster Corps, where he had numerous

responsibilities as a rating officer and custodian of the central post fund. “I handed out checks totaling a million dollars to all the Army units in Japan.” Rusty was attracted by Richard’s wonderful sense of humor, which was a great stress-reliever after working with wounded soldiers. They became good friends on their outings. “The rest is obvious,” said Rusty. “We celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year!”

They were married in 1969 in Washington, DC, while Rusty was stationed at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Richard had already returned to civilian life, and the couple was transferred by McDonald’s to New Jersey. Richard is still with McDonald’s as assistant to the vice president of a 17-store franchise. Rusty was a nurse-manager for more than 30 years before switching her focus to computer applications as a certified Microsoft Master Instructor. She has a personal computer buying and repair service, but also returned to nursing part-time three years ago.

In 1991, on a quest for a fun shared activity, Rusty located a Belles & Beaux open house. Richard had participated in one square dance demo in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, but Rusty came from a dancing family and had enjoyed dancing with other teens. “It was a social outlet in an area where the nearest town was 20 miles away,” she said. “The crinolines were single layer, and you had to starch them. We wore four or five to get a full skirt!”

At Belles & Beaux, Richard was hooked “somewhere about the third tip.” Since joining the club, the Balls have served as Head Angels, Secretaries, Vice Presidents, Presidents (five times), and Mystery Bus Raid Chairs (11 years). They also became active in the NNJSDA as State Outfit Coordinators (“dress police,” said Richard), 2<sup>nd</sup> VPs, and 1<sup>st</sup> VPs. In addition, they chaired The Gathering in 1996 and 2007 and served on the committee in 2008. The Balls were elected Presidents in 2007 and again in 2008.

When asked about the biggest reward and the biggest challenge of being President, Rusty said she is pleased to see the NNJSDA “grow into the 21<sup>st</sup> century” by giving back to the dancers through leadership seminars, hiring nationally popular callers that member clubs could not afford individually, developing the website, working on the digitalization of the *Grand Square*, updating the Constitution and Bylaws, and giving equal treatment to Mainstream and Plus dancers.

For Rusty, the biggest challenge of the presidency is convincing dancers to become leaders at the club and Association levels. “We’ve seen clubs close over and over again due to apathy and lack of new enthusiasm and energy,” she observed.

In Richard’s view, the biggest reward and the biggest challenge of being President are the same: “Helping clubs and the Association survive.”

Every leader needs a break from leadership, and the Balls have a ball (sorry) at conventions and festivals where they can “kick back and dance until they drop.” Richard’s other main hobby is making maple syrup from his own trees. Rusty finds relaxation in sewing. In fact, she wrote the “Sewing Circle Squared” column in the *Grand Square* for four years.

Richard graduated from Cornell University with a degree in Hotel Administration, while Rusty has a nursing diploma from a hospital school in Indiana and a BSN from Rutgers. Although her name is actually Carol, a nursing classmate from Great Britain bestowed the nickname Rusty because her hair was dark auburn.

Lise Greene