

Helena and Ken Robinson  
Hillsborough, NJ

Club: Rutgers Promenaders



How did you start square dancing?

My parents were square dancers, so I knew of it in the late 60s, early 70s. They got me to a dance once and I hated it. Helena was already dancing when we met. She graduated lessons in 1975. I started square dancing in the fall of 1978 because Helena was dancing – what better incentive??

What year did you meet? 1977            And marry? 1979

We did not have square dancing at our wedding. Our circle of square dance friends was not as big as it would eventually become and we had to limit the number of guests at the reception.

Circumstances of your meeting and dating?

We met on a blind date! Sort of arranged by my mother. Helena went to a Star Thru dance in Toms River by herself and was approached by two women – one of whom was my mother. The other women said, “You’re a nice single Jewish woman, aren’t you? How would you like to meet some nice Jewish men?” Helena gave out her phone number to both women. This was around Thanksgiving. A month later, when the woman I was chasing after told me that she had “sort of a boyfriend,” I looked for Helena’s phone number – which I couldn’t find. I was going to my parents’ home that weekend (it happened to be Christmas Eve) and I asked my mother if she remembered the phone number. She remembered the name, which I looked up in the phone book. I called and got her on the second phone try. We went to the movies and saw *The World’s Greatest Lover* with Gene Wilder. I proposed 2.5 months later and we were married on March 25, 1979.

Favorite square dance memories?

How can I pick just one? Would it be the first dance Helena took me to after finishing Mainstream lessons? It was a full Plus dance (then called Plus 2). On the way there she told me all the Plus calls and I swear the caller used every one in the first tip. By the end of the night people were asking when I was going to take Advanced lessons! Or could it be going to my first National Convention in Memphis, TN in 1980? Over 30,000 dancers were there. I remember dancing a lot of A1 during the convention (before I actually learned Advanced) and pulling many people through the tips. (I took Advanced lessons that Summer with Lee Kopman.) Or was it going to my first National Challenge Convention in the Summer of 1982 when we were halfway through C1 lessons? I’ve traveled to about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the 48 contiguous states, mostly for square dance related events.

Anything else?

Helena was misdiagnosed in 1979 with a “rare benign growth,” which was correctly diagnosed in 1981 as cancer (Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma). A few weeks after her surgery and the start of radiation treatments, we went to the January Jubilee Festival in Philadelphia, where she saved her strength so she could dance the “Die Hard” – a full hour of dancing with practically no breaks. This shows that dancing was our life and she wasn’t going to let her illness get in the way. We spent the next 10 years dancing all over the country. Once the cancer reoccurred, Helena scheduled surgeries and procedures around planned square dance activities. She never let recovering from the procedures interfere either. Usually, she went dancing and told the doctor what she did after the fact. Helena passed away in 2005.