

Peel Bio

May 16 - 78

107

MAIN, KAREN

Karen Kain came home this week and Mississaugans rose to the occasion

By **BETTIE BRADLEY**
Times Community Editor

The Rotary Anns of Mississauga and their guests rose to their feet and spontaneously applauded when Karen Kain and Frank Augustyn walked crisply to the head table in the dining room at Credit Valley Country Club last Wednesday. Where was the renowned Canadian reserve?

Paris adores Karen Kain, Moscow has wooed her, London has acclaimed her, New York covets her, but surely Mississaugans understand that their role, as Canadians, is to show a studied indifference. Canada never acclaims its own.

But here were hometowners, on their feet, the air electric with anticipation before the arrival of the dynamite pair. And they were hardly disappointed — Kain and Augustyn were warm and outspoken. "Of course we don't always agree on interpretation. In fact, we fought all morning."

ONCE UPON A TIME . . .

A little girl, tobogganing down the hills of a Mississauga golf course, translated a care-free suburban childhood into international stardom. The key is elusive, and Winifred and Charles Kain, Karen's parents, don't pretend to have the answer.

Home environment must be part of it — the entire family seems to be achievement-conscious.

Kevin, the youngest, is 23 and in third year medicine. He was offered scholarships from every university to which he applied but his first choice was Western. He lives in London with three other students and, although he never cooked at home, "he's turning into a great gourmet cook," said his mother.

Then there are the unlike twins. Sandra (who lived with Karen for five years) is the "tall twin" (at 5-feet, eight inches). Susan is the "little twin", standing barely five feet, two inches.

Susan is the work-a-holic, whose initial goal was to be a jockey. She had saved \$1,000 by the time she turned 17, (giving swimming lessons for the parks and recreation department in Mississauga) and bought her first thoroughbred. She trained the horse herself and then sold him for \$5,000. She's an outdoor girl, currently working in Banff, "where she can ski in the winter and have a tan all year round."

Sandra, her 25-year-old twin, also taught swimming throughout her high school years, tried working in business and turned to nursing "when it was tough to get into the nursing schools, tough to pass the exams and even harder to find a job, and she did all three," said her mother. And she graduated with a 90 per cent average.

THERE WAS ALWAYS A GOAL

It becomes clear in listening to both Karen Kain and her mother that they represent a highly motivated, competitive family. Karen's mother doesn't deny her famous daughter is determined and strong-willed. "She resented the regimentation when she went into residence as a school girl. She was not easily governed, she's always known how she wanted to do things."

How Karen Kain wanted to do things was evident by the time she was 11 years old. Although her father's business meant the family had to move to Detroit, the little girl elected to stay in Toronto and go into residence at the National Ballet School. She was often lonely, often tired, but she stayed.

It was with some relief that the family returned to Mississauga a year later.

Karen stuck it out, sometimes struggling with weight and worried about height. At 17, she was an almost too-tall five feet, seven inches (and gains a menacing three inches plus when she rises on her points). Karen once admitted, "Betty Oliphant (director of the National Ballet School) lost a bit of faith in me, but never really gave up entirely, even when Celia Franca said, 'She'll never make it. She's too fat and too tall.'"

Today Karen holds her weight to 112 pounds, "but Frank can tell when it creeps up to 115!"

But back in 1970, it was a constant worry. When she asked to graduate from the corps de ballet, she was told to learn Swan Lake, but she did more. She slimmed down, as well, and when Veronica Tennant ripped her back in Arizona, Karen was ready.



Paul Biaz

MAY 16-78 MST (3)

KAREN, KAREN

In 1972, she added the second of the great classical roles, Aurora, in *The Sleeping Beauty* and, in 1974, what many consider the greatest ballerina role, *Giselle*.

By now her astonishing technique and dazzling stage presence were attracting attention. She triumphed before the toughest judges imaginable at the Moscow International Ballet Competition in 1973, earning the silver medal for women soloists and, with Frank Augustyn, the first prize for the best pas de deux.

Rudolf Nureyev chose her as his partner for *Swan Lake* in Vienna, the *Corsaire* pas de deux in Washington and then *The Sleeping Beauty*, which they danced with the London Festival Ballet in London and Australia.

When choreographer Roland Petit saw her, he not only invited her to dance with his company but also created two roles for her, in which she scored a resounding personal success.

Last year, she and her most frequent partner, Frank Augustyn, returned to the site of their triumph of '73 — they danced *Giselle* at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre, going on to performances in Tallinn, Vilnius and Kiev.

Karen was unnerved in Moscow. "Their mime was different, the music was different, a different emphasis in the production."

She needn't have worried. Even though opening night included a fall, which had to be quickly converted to look like innovation, they were acclaimed.

A prima ballerina, international star, riding the crest of world-wide acclaim, and living in her modest little house in the heart of Toronto's Cabagetown. Somehow, it's exactly what Canada expects from its stars. Excellence in performance — but nothing too showy in the private life, please!



Times Photo by Helen K

Frank Augustyn and Karen Kain arrive at Credit Valley Golf Club.



Times Photo by Helen K

Karen and Frank's talk took the form of questions and answers.



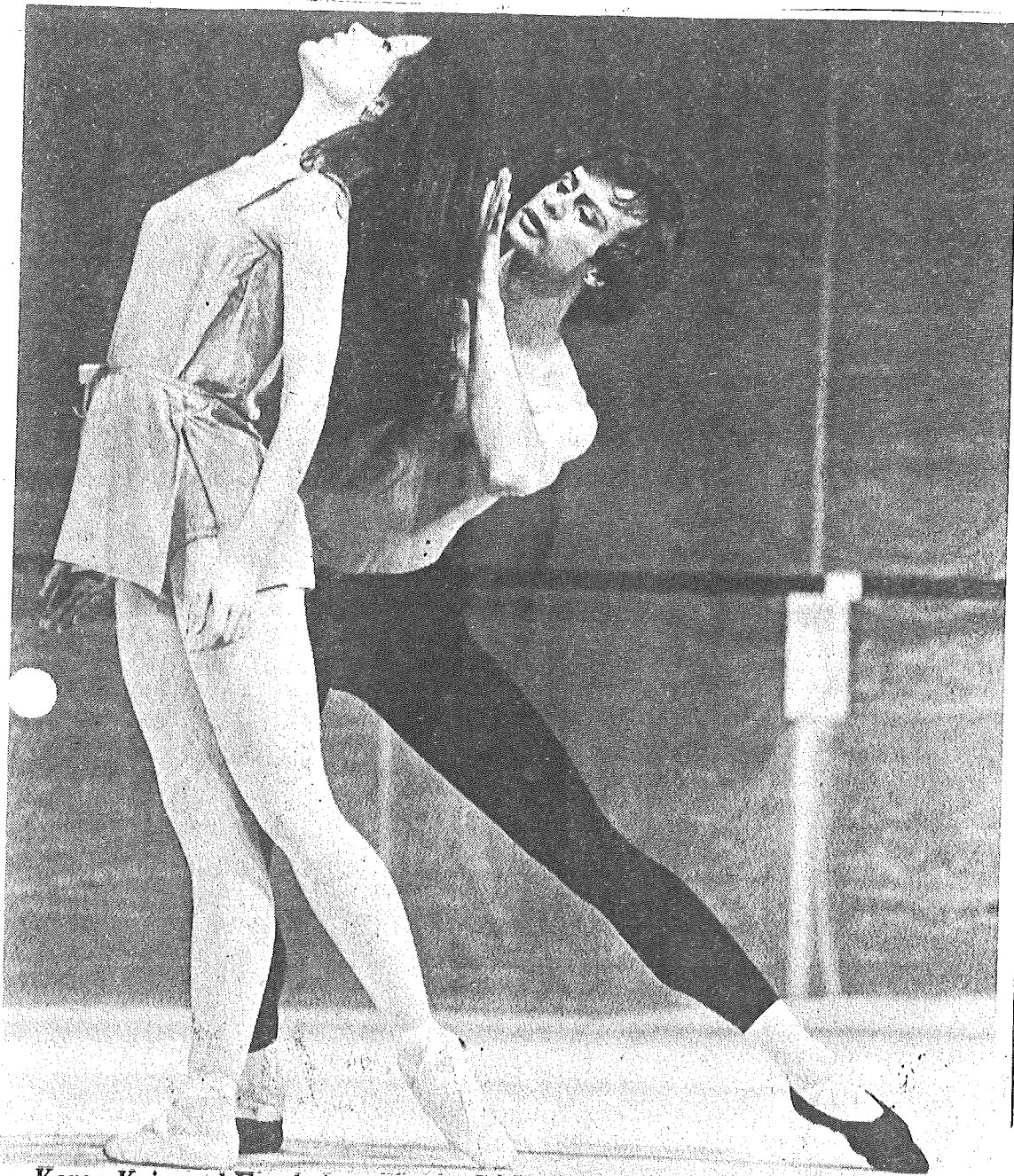
Times Photo by Helen Kaulbach

Frank and Karen accept flowers from Laurie Pallett.



Times Photo by Helen K

The popular pair autographed books after the luncheon.



Karen Kain and Frank Augustyn in the National Ballet of Canada production of *Afternoon of a Faun*, choreographed by Jerome Robbins.