

PARADISE VALLEY • ARCADIA • BILTMORE

Camelback

June/July 2006

SERIOUSLY FUNNY

PV's Leslie Nielsen still has 'em rolling in the aisles

DEVOTED DADS

Arcadia schools go high-tech thanks to fund-raising fathers

Best-known as the wife of rocker Alice, Sheryl Cooper proves she's a superstar

IN HER OWN LIGHT

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Meet the "Bentley" behind the galleries

Climb Camelback with historian Gary Driggs

DINING REVIEW:

Oscar Taylor's American Grill



Story by Dean Meadors
Photography by Paul Markow

In Her Own Light

Sheryl Cooper is scoring big with Destiny Dance International, but the talented wife of rocker Alice is even more proud of their inspiring, 30-year love story

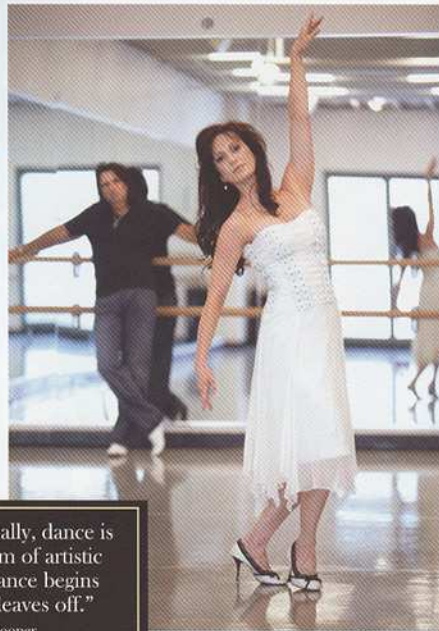
It is evening, near the end of a long day for Paradise Valley resident Sheryl Cooper, when she notices a familiar face in the hallway watching her teach a class of ballet hopefuls.

Husband Alice Cooper has appeared unannounced at Destiny Dance International, the Arcadia dance studio his wife opened three years ago. Later he will tell her, "I just wanted to watch you dance."

In that moment, the two great loves in her life merge—dancing and family—and nothing could please her more. There are no ambiguities in priorities. "My first job is to be a wife to my husband and mother to my three children," she says. "The studio is my second job."

The Cooper brood includes daughter Calico, 24, a singer and actress who tours as a backup singer with her dad; son Dashiell ("Dash"), 20, a sophomore at Arizona





“For me personally, dance is the highest form of artistic expression. Dance begins where music leaves off.”

—Sheryl Cooper

State University who has a band of his own named Runaway Phoenix; and daughter Sonora Rose, 13.

Sheryl, 50, sets high standards for herself when balancing the demands on her schedule, and her plate remains full. For starters, she is a wife, mother, performer, businesswoman, volunteer, writer and more.

She is also a director of her husband's Solid Rock Foundation, a nonprofit Christian organization providing financial assistance and guidance to Valley youths, and she helps organize its two major fund-raising events—Alice Cooper's Christmas Pudding show at the Dodge Theatre, and the Alice Cooper Celebrity Golf Tournament.

She is also smart, creative, articulate, spiritual, talented, humble and successful, all beautifully packaged in a dancer's lean, to-die-for body.

Handprint on Every Detail

Sheryl opened Destiny Dance in June 2003 in a vacant, 6,000-square-foot building on Indian School Road in Phoenix. Her handprint is on every detail, from the interior design to the classes taught.

In only three years, Destiny Dance has grown to 450 students, 18 instructors and classes in virtually every style of dance and movement—ballet, tap, jazz, pointe, creative, tumbling, hip hop, cheerleading and more.

Pat Barshis of Scottsdale credits Sheryl with “igniting a spark” in her daughter, Jessica, 12. “The staff works very hard to connect with the students, to coach their mental attitude as well as their dance skills,” Barshis says. “They want students to appreciate the art, not simply go through the motions.”

Sheryl comes to teaching naturally. She first danced in New Haven, Conn., at age 6 under the watchful eye of “Miss Rita,” a formidable taskmaster and one-time understudy to Broadway star Gwen Verdon, Sheryl says.

“That woman could dance,” Sheryl says, smiling, “and I was immediately bitten by the bug.”

Her goal was to climb the ranks of ballet and become a classical ballerina, but at 16, Cooper decided to climb down from the pressure-packed world of solo ballet and explore other styles of dance.

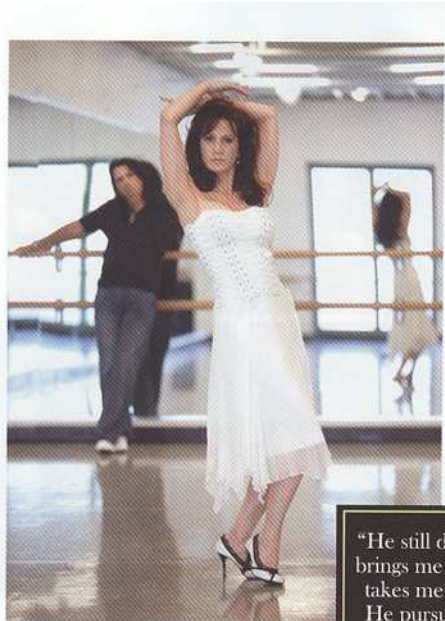
“That's when I really blossomed,” she says. “I found I loved all forms of dance.”

Career Boost

Sheryl's versatile skills (she also sings and acts), coupled with a strong work ethic, soon brought career recognition. Living in Los Angeles, she began earning appearances with such diverse entertainers as Jackie Gleason, Steve Martin and Aerosmith.

She doubled for Goldie Hawn in movies, and danced with stars such as George C. Scott, Peter Frampton, Joe Namath... and rocker Alice Cooper, whom she met during rehearsals for his 1975 “Welcome to My Nightmare” tour. In one portion of his concert, a classically trained ballerina was required, and 19-year-old Sheryl Goddard won the role.

She worked or studied with the leading choreographers in the industry, including Michael Kidd, Robert Joffrey, Glen Tetley, Ruth Page and Joe Tremaine. She has performed onstage, in mu-



"He still dates me, he brings me flowers and takes me to movies. He pursues me like I'm not already his."
 —Sheryl Cooper about her husband of 30 years, Alice

sic videos and at the American Music Awards, the MTV Awards and the Rock Music Awards.

But a year after meeting Alice in 1975, the pair married, and interspersed with her career were children and a move to Paradise Valley.

She and Alice still live in the home Alice purchased in 1973 with one of his first big paychecks—although they've expanded and renovated it three times since then.

Sheryl finally decided to fulfill the dream common to many little girls in tutus—owning her own studio. She is anything but an absentee landlord, often going to the studio six days a week and teaching a dozen classes herself.

"She's very inspiring," says Ann Verderame, 17, a student at Destiny since the studio opened. "If there's something you want to do, a goal you want to achieve, she'll help you get there."

Building a 'Mini-Julliard'

Sheryl's vision for the studio calls for an expanded mission. "I want to see it grow into a full performing-arts academy," she says.

She sees Destiny Dance as a "mini-Julliard," with a full slate of drama classes, music instruction, voice training and lessons in every form of dance. She already offers some voice and drama coaching, plus a foreign exchange program with Danse Plus, a studio in Monaco owned by her sister, Shauna Goddard.

Goddard, seven years Sheryl's junior, confesses it was "pure jealousy" that stoked her interest in dance. "Sheryl had pretty tutus and toe shoes, and I wanted to be just like her," she says. "She was always my example."

As important as dance is to Sheryl, the most important thing is that familiar face peering unexpectedly through the studio window.

Alice Cooper, 58, may be the most outrageous onstage character in the history of rock and roll—and that argument can be convincingly put forth—but around Destiny Dance he's just half of Team Cooper, and the man Sheryl "can't imagine not being with."

'Poster Boy for Sin'

It will surprise many, but not friends, that the Coopers recently celebrated 30 years of marriage and that they credit Christian underpinnings for part of that success.

It wasn't always so, at least for Alice, who rose to rock 'n' roll stardom on a macabre sense of humor and shocking stage props. He quickly admits that in those wild years, he was heading down a destructive path. "I was the poster boy for sin," he now says.

It was Sheryl who eventually threw the lifesaver for Alice to grab. "She took me by the ear and pulled me in a direction I needed to go," he says.

After treatment for alcoholism, at Sheryl's urging, the pair began attending church again. Both had come from Christian backgrounds; Sheryl's father was a Baptist pastor, and Alice's parents were volunteer missionaries.

"I had to figure out that Alice was a character I played, and when I walked off stage I had to go back to being me. In order to do that, I had to have Sheryl," he says.

"There has never been a single moment in my life when I questioned whether she was the right girl," he says. "Not only is she the love of my life, I just like hanging out with her." ♦

Destiny Dance International is located at 4550 E. Indian School Road in Phoenix. Call (602) 381-7966 or visit www.destinydanceinternational.com for more information.