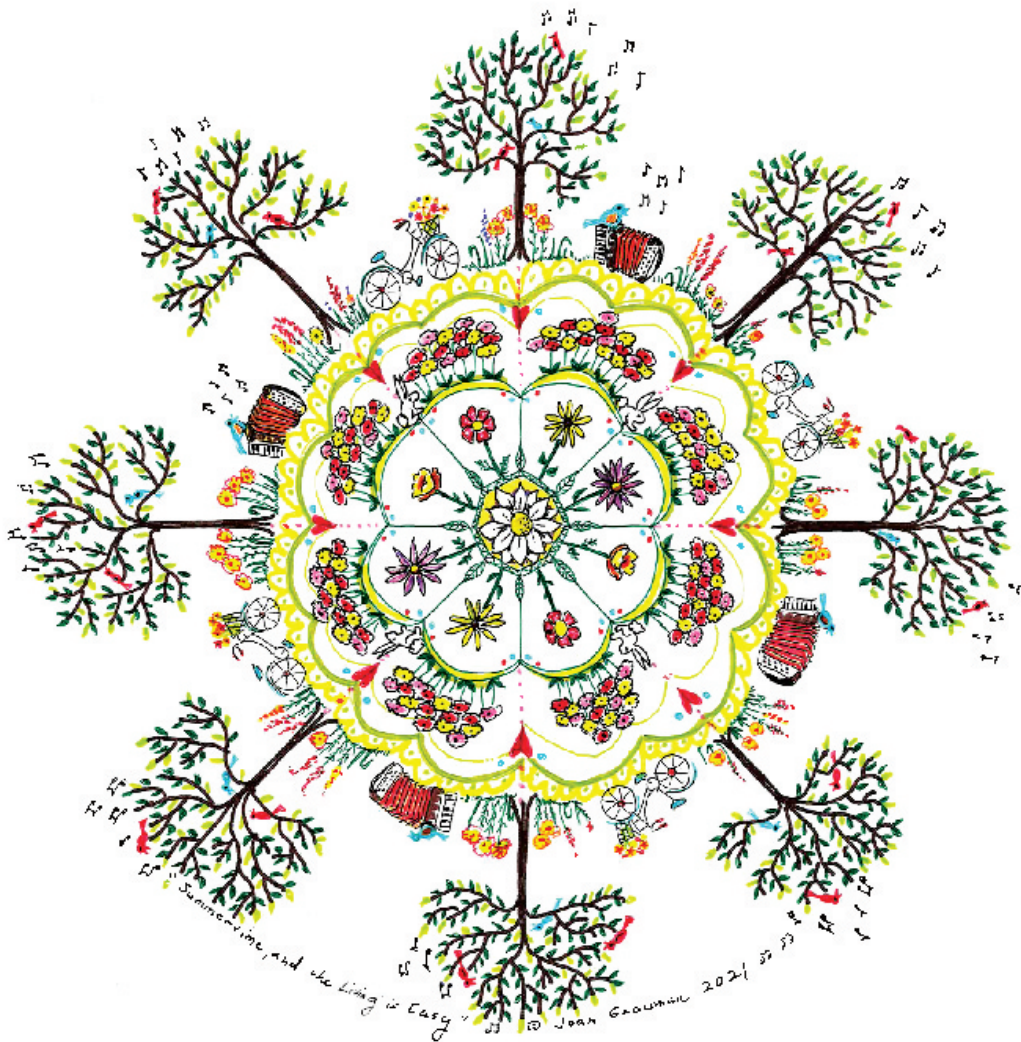


Celebrating Linda Soley Reed

Tributes by her friends in honor of her

2021 AAA Lifetime Achievement Award

Compiled and illustrated by
Joan Grauman, AAA Historian





AccordionUSA.com Editor: Rita Davidson Barnea Email: Ritabelll@aol.com

Dear Linda,

On behalf of AWW (Accordions Worldwide) I would like to congratulate you for your lifetime of dedication to the accordion.

We appreciate all your expertise, talents, and devotion to enhancing the positive image of the accordion. You have inspired and encouraged the many musicians you worked with throughout your years as a performer, teacher, conductor and as AAA President when you initiated important projects and achieved your goals.

Your positive influence will continue to be present for future generations of accordionists.

We hope you enjoy your retirement years as you deserve many many years of happiness.

However, knowing your enthusiasm for accordion, you will probably continue to be busy being involved in shaping the future of the accordion.

All the best in the years to come,
With great respect and appreciation,

Rita Barnea
Editor of www.accordionusa.com

14 January 2021

American Accordionists' Association
New York
USA.

Re: AAA Lifetime Achievement Award Ceremony/Concert
Honoring Linda Soley Reed

I wish to congratulate Linda Soley Reed on being honoured with the AAA Lifetime Achievement Award.

I can personally remember in the 1970's working closely with Faithe Deffner in NY and even at that time, Linda Soley Reed was one of the very important behind the scenes workers, especially having a lot to do with the Festival Journal and other publications of the AAA.

Linda Soley Reed held a number of positions in the AAA over the years and then became the AAA President for the years 2005 to 2014, holding that position with dignity, grace and some humor for all those years, and also, behind the scenes working many many long hours.

This behind the scenes work did not cease after the AAA Presidency of Linda Soley Reed was completed in 2014. Linda Soley Reed was a key person working behind the scenes with Mary Tokarski (then AAA President) to achieve the huge success of the AAA 80th Anniversary Festival in 2018 in Alexandria, Virginia.

I had been able to attend in person the AAA Lifetime Achievement for Faithe Deffner in NY in 2009 and it has been my wish for the last two years, to be present in person and add my cheers with others, when Linda Soley Reed is being honoured in 2021. Sadly, due to the world problems of Covid-19, this is not possible and I am therefore writing this letter.

Thank you Linda Soley Reed for a lifetime of dedication to the accordion. All your work on behalf of the accordion is greatly admired and hugely appreciated.

Very best wishes,



Harley Jones
Founder
Accordions Worldwide

Linda Soley-Reed
A few words by Joan Cochran Sommers

I am not quite sure when I actually met Linda the very first time, but she played in the wonderful accordion ensembles that Rudy Molinaro taught back in the 1950s and '60s. The American Accordionists Association Festivals each summer drew many of us from all over the USA to attend with our students in competitions, to take part as adjudicators, or as conductors of orchestras. Some of us performed on various AAA Concerts or the concerts sponsored by several of the accordion companies or distributors. As a young accordionist Linda was undoubtedly competing as a soloist and as a member of a group. My point is that even if we were not introduced to each other, we were around these great accordion events happening during those years.

But Linda later became extremely active in the AAA as an adult and we certainly became friends during those events, such as the one held in Nashville, TN one summer when I was conducting the Festival Accordion Orchestra. After all the scheduled events for the day and evening were over, there was always a get-together in the hotel for all of us to have a drink, some refreshments and lots of animated conversation. And Linda seemed always to be in stocking feet, since she probably had been on hers for many hours before this began. Linda always knew everyone by their first and last name, where they lived, what they were doing, whether teaching or selling the accordion. So if anyone ever needed to be introduced Linda could do it and could make everyone, new or old, feel welcome and accepted; it was just one of her many good traits which always endeared her to everyone!

In October of 2006, the 59th Coupe Mondiale was held in Asker, Norway. As usual, Faithe Deffner was there. I was there, too, both as an adjudicator and as the teacher of a young accordionists representing the ATG. But this year Linda was also there. Well, one day, as usual, I got up quite early, had a quick breakfast, and walked to the Competition site, where I was adjudicating all day and where all of us would be together that evening for one of the big Competitions/Concerts of the event. Faithe had driven to the event since she normally would rent a car if it might be useful. After the concert was over, she brought the car around and Linda and I jumped in with her. Now the fun began! We were just a bit over 2 blocks away from the hotel, but it was dark, rainy, and somewhat dismal outside so it was great to be in this big car! There were many street signs, and even a nice shopping center, plus train tracks coming in from the area where airline passengers could get on and go to their desired destinations around the city. In other words, it was a busy place even at night and especially so after a big concert with lots of attendees walking around outside, so a driver had to be careful to watch what was happening and where to turn and whether the street was one way to the left or to the right or had a no turn sign! It was a bit confusing to say the least, especially shall we say for an American who was not familiar with the area. But Faithe did what she thought was correct. Well, it was the wrong choice and after a few more incorrect turns we ended up somewhere in a dark area where we had to stop and assess where we were. We could see the lights of the hotel where we wanted to go, but there were certainly no streets that we could see which would lead us there. By this time, both Linda and I were beginning to laugh a little and making a few remarks of assurance to Faithe that everything would be just fine...and then we would laugh a little louder and with less assurance probably that our driver knew what in heck to do to get us to that hotel. Finally, with all three of us making jokes about this silly circumstance in which we were involved, somehow, someway, and in spite of everything, we eventually arrived at the hotel where Faithe most assuredly drove us right up to the front door!

After taking this grand tour of the one-way streets leading us nowhere, but with a bit of luck and a lot of jollity and enthusiasm, we finally arrived at our destination where our friends who had attended the concert with us had already arrived after walking in the chilled misty rain of the evening. They had walked faster than we had ridden; however, I can tell you they did not have all the wonderful laughs that Linda, Faithe and I had just shared on our short journey!

Linda may also recall this evening since she certainly added a few choice one-liners of (significant?) encouragement to Faithe. She, Faithe and I had a great time that night in Asker, Norway. It was fun! In fact, there is always some fun going on when Linda is in charge; that is one of the reasons we like to be around her.

In 2007 the AAA and the ATG shared the sponsorship of the Coupe Mondiale in Alexandria, VA. Faithe Deffner acted as chair and Linda and I represented the two organizations on the details involved. We talked almost daily for many weeks and wrote innumerable emails to each other. Faithe was a taskmaster and the two of us really had to stick together sometimes to keep our sanity in control. I can tell you Linda was fantastic; she kept track of everything she needed to know and do. Just as she has always welcomed everyone with that glorious Festival Program book she has edited for so many years, she did the same in 2007 for both the AAA and the ATG, but this time including the Confédération Internationale des Accordéonistes. It was a great success and Linda contributed to that in so many ways; it is impossible to enumerate all of them.

Thank you, Linda, for the stellar work you have done on behalf of all accordion organizations over so many years. I appreciate your friendship so much, just as many others do. You know how to get things done! You represent the very best of those accordionists who “grew up” in the AAA Festivals but have remained long afterwards to assist in making the organization one of the most outstanding in the world with much of it due to your expertise and assistance wherever and whenever needed. You are a blessing and we love you!



To Linda — CONGRATULATIONS!!

I know what you have accomplished — you know what you have accomplished — everyone knows and admires how you have elevated the accordion image throughout many years of hard work and dedication. There could NEVER BE ANOTHER LINDA. You are loved by all.

Thanks for being YOU! God bless and keep you well and safe.

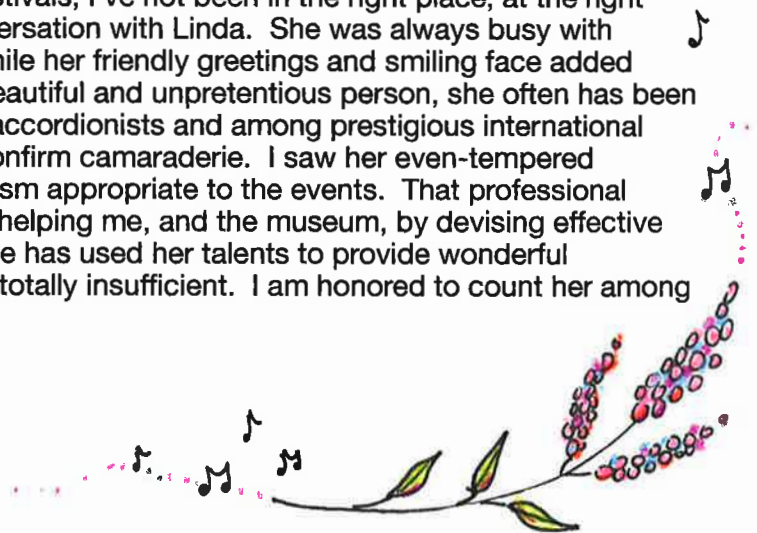
ALWAYS YOUR FRIEND,
Dan Desiderio



From Dr. Helmi Harrington

In many years of interaction at national festivals, I've not been in the right place, at the right time, to enjoy a meaningful personal conversation with Linda. She was always busy with festival operations and honored guests while her friendly greetings and smiling face added much to the ambiance of the events. A beautiful and unpretentious person, she often has been pictured with the most famous American accordionists and among prestigious international personalities whose happy expressions confirm camaraderie. I saw her even-tempered behaviors always evidencing professionalism appropriate to the events. That professional excellence was carried out many times in helping me, and the museum, by devising effective advertisements and program lay-outs. She has used her talents to provide wonderful solutions, for which my simple thanks are totally insufficient. I am honored to count her among my friends of long-standing.

Best regards,
Helmi



From Guy Klucsevsek

Congratulations to Linda Soley Reed for this well-deserved AAA Lifetime Achievement Award. I so admire and respect her for the way she has dedicated her life to the accordion as a performer, conductor and educator, as well as pouring her passion, energy, ideas, time (and a significant portion of her wallet) into this venerable institution. She is also one of the funniest and most delightful people I have ever met.

From Joe Natoli

I have known Linda since the age of 16 and she has always been a dedicated supporter of the accordion, the AAA, and members like me who have maintained a long and gratifying relationship with both the AAA and Linda. Linda's dry sense of humor always comes out best in an after concert hospitality room scenario when she hilariously reflects on everything accordion. Always a lot of fun, but never surpassed in her loyalty to the accordion. God bless you, Linda, and thanks for all your years of service, friendship and hard work!

Linda Soley Reed is an enormous figure in the Accordion world, and when it comes to the American Accordionists' Association, she has been the Back Bone of the organization for many many years! When I joined the AAA Governing Board, I had the honor and pleasure, right off the bat, to start working alongside Linda and, let me tell you, this woman is simply Amazing!! She's super intelligent, strong minded, witty, has a terrific sense of humor and is a master at multitasking.

You might not know it, Linda, but you have been a huge influence in my life. Working alongside of you has truly been a pleasure and the experience has been educational, to say the least. Linda, Congratulations on your Lifetime Achievement Award. No one deserves it more than you!! It is with great honor and Joy to be able, as President of AAA, to present you with your prestigious 2021 AAA Lifetime Achievement Award. If it had not been for your guidance, I would never be in this position.

Even though you despise the word "Virtual", just think: you are making history as the first recipient to receive this award online..... Lucky You! AAA and I Thank You for your continuous service as one of the most important figures in the history of the AAA's Governing Board of Directors.

Love you always,
Joseph Ciccone, D.C.
President of the AAA



From Kevin Friedrich

Congratulations Linda as the AAA honors your career in the field of music.

Your dedication to and tireless efforts on behalf of the American Accordionists' Association has contributed profoundly to the advancement of the accordion, both in the United States and internationally.

In addition to your leadership as AAA President over many years, much of your work, while it has gone on behind the scenes, has definitely not gone unnoticed.

Thanks for lending your expertise in the field of publishing, desktop design and creative writing. These editorial talents, ranging in projects from advertising events, creating eye-catching graphics, the expansive Festival Journals and the Newsletters have kept the activities of the AAA professionally represented to the world.

Just as today we comb through archives searching for historical information, in 50 years time as the next generations do that, we can be truly thankful that the materials you have created will showcase the AAA in a most favorable and professional way.

You are always a joy to work with and your ability to combine very hard work and incredible attention to detail, with an ever humorous tone, makes the time spent together incredibly entertaining as well as productive.

Congratulations on your well deserved Lifetime Achievement Award, and I look forward to our continued collaborations. I adore you!!! Bravo!!!

Kevin
Kevin Friedrich, Board of Director, AAA

To My One-of-a-kind, wonderful friend:

As I type these beautiful tributes, it warms my heart to know that everyone recognizes how special you are, just as I always have. All of us on the AAA Board have marveled at all you can SELFLESSLY accomplish, year after year and, well, I personally think you should be considered for sainthood for putting up with all of us!! :) :)

On a more personal note, you have been such a caring and thoughtful friend to me for many years. I had a very hard period in my life not long ago, and you called me daily, visited, dragged my sad ass all over Florida, took over much of my AAA work — without taking the credit you deserved — and the list goes on. I will never forget your kindness, which so very much helped me to find the light at the end of that long tunnel!

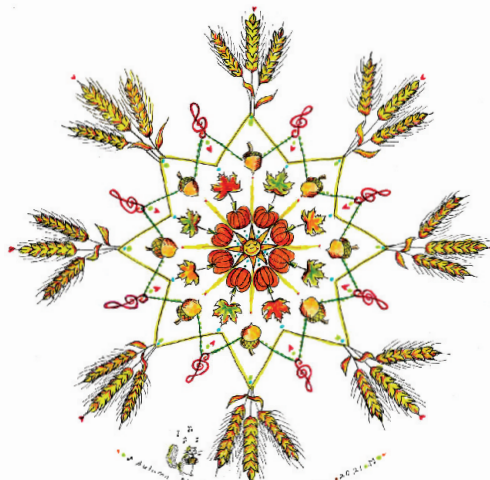
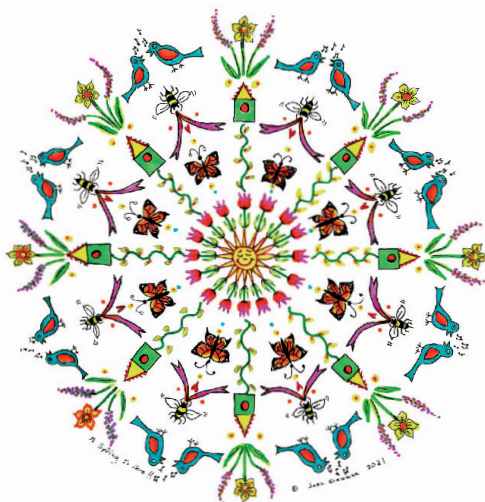
On a more cheerful note, no one can speak her mind better than you, and no one can make me laugh as you do!! And your “colorful” language..... I proudly tell folks now (who are shocked at some things that come out of my mouth) that I have graduated from the “Linda Reed School of Linguistics”!

We’ve shared so much of the history of our beloved organization. We both reminisce about the many terrific accordion friends who have passed away. Sharing history is comforting — and speaking of history, you have helped me tremendously with my efforts these past 13 years as the AAA Historian! With all that you do, you ALWAYS find plenty of time for your many friends, and we all appreciate this more than you will ever know!

And one more thing: you have been my greatest fan of the mandalas I started to draw a couple of years ago. So, this is why mandalas can be found throughout this book. I hope reading these beautiful, heartfelt tributes, and seeing the artwork, will bring you years of happiness!!

Much Love,

Joan Grauman



Well Linda, it's been about 50 years since we first met at Rudy's Music Studio in Bridgeport, CT. For all the work that you have done for the AAA throughout the years, we can't think of anyone more deserving than you to receive the “2021 AAA Life Achievement Award”. Enjoy this wonderful day! You certainly serve the recognition you are getting. Congratulations!

Sincerely,
Sam and Peggy Falcetti,
Springfield, Massachusetts

Memories from Frank Busso, Sr.

Linda and I have known each other for over 50 years. We started our relationship as simply accordion competitors, then colleagues. As the years progressed, this blossomed into a lasting friendship.

We were there for each other on many occasions. Linda's group entered the AAA Showband category in Chicago in the early 1970s. She decided that two Lindy dancers would enhance the performance. So, our mutual friend, Lana Gore (esteemed accordion teacher from Dearborn, Michigan) and myself were persuaded to add to the entertainment and we happily danced a jitterbug!

My Virtuoso Band was entered into the New York State competition in the 70s and the 1st accordionist became ill. Rather than withdraw, Linda offered to substitute for my student playing the Glinka Overture — Ruslan and Ludmilla.

Our mutual friendship was enhanced and fostered by Maddalena Belfiore Greco. We enjoyed being with each other and working together to benefit the AAA. In 1975, the AAA office received a call from the New Jersey State Symphony Orchestra, requesting three accordionists to perform the Tchaikovsky Serenade. Linda, Maddalena and myself performed ten concerts throughout New Jersey. In addition to the musical experience, we also enjoyed post concert dinners. Great comradery.

Linda continues to give of herself, not only to her many friends and family, but to the entire accordion community. She is a well-respected musician, conductor, diligent worker and dedicated to the promotion of the accordion.

The entire Busso Accordion Family offers our sincere congratulations to a very special Diva.



For My Linda
Marilyn O'Neil

From the very first time I set eyes on you in 2004 at our first CAA meeting, I immediately knew I was in the presence of a force to be reckoned with. A natural leader, someone I could depend on to always be there, always deliver, always care. You see when a job needs to be done and you take it on without having to be told. You're a true friend who speaks her mind.... Sometimes without a filter, with plenty of Linda humor thrown in along with blatant honest feelings. If you go too far, you recognize it and own up, always preserving and cherishing relationships that are important to you. Always loving, Never giving up.

Whether it was conducting the CAA orchestra, serving as President of the AAA, supporting me in any and all projects I instituted, you always gave it your all. You still do. You remain a pillar in the accordion world. Irreplaceable.

I cherish our almost daily contact, realizing that God put you in my life for a very special reason. You've taught me a lot about music, about relationships, about strength and determination.

Thank you for the blessing of knowing you and having you in my life.

Linda Soley Reed
By Mary Tokarski

If ever there was a person that was "One of a Kind", it's Linda! A unique personality, sharp wit (and tongue to go with it), devoted accordionist, totally committed leader, and the list of great attributes goes on and on.

I think we all have fond memories of things that Linda has done "for" us.... And memories of things Linda has done "with" us on the spur of the moment (many of which were "X" rated) ... and SO MANY absolutely hilarious moments that kept us entertained in style!

Linda and I met as youngsters, in the halls of hotels at both Connecticut and AAA competitions ... always on opposing sides. Our music studios (Fernino and Molinaro), although close in miles, were intense and very separate at the competitions.

Later on in life, as members of the AAA Board of Directors, we became more than acquaintances ... we became fellow musicians, and then, very quickly, good friends, traveling together, sharing music and life stories.

For many years after my experiences at the Coupe Mondiale, I did not play my accordion. It was Linda's prodding that inspired me to begin playing again. She would frequently tell me (in her own "special" way) about the rehearsals in New Jersey, playing with the NJ Accordion Orchestra (before it became the Accordion Pops), and kept asking me to join her. I finally caved in, and the laughter began.

Imagine (if you can), being in a car with Linda for 3-4 hours driving to rehearsal, and another 3-4 hours on the way home. The laughter flowed, the tears ran, and very often, by the time we got to rehearsal, we were exhausted!

A few years later, Linda was again instrumental in convincing me that I should perform as a soloist, produce my CDs, and even appear as a Guest Artist at AAA events. Her leadership as President of AAA became another learning experience for me. "Always, with MY best interests at heart, you convinced me to take Chairmanship of the Festival and have a stronger voice at the Board meetings, and finally fulfilling a childhood dream ... serving as President of AAA.

Linda, you have had a great impact on my life and have become the best friend I could ever have dreamed of!"

With love and admiration, Mary 🎵



Dear Linda,

Congratulations on your well-deserved AAA Lifetime Achievement Award! Not only did you spend ten year as our AAA President, but you dedicated a lifetime of passion, devotion, endless hard work, time and energy in the support and advancement of our beloved accordion! Your caring is an inspiration to all.

I shall always cherish your friendship and never forget your birthday — July 20! It is on the same day as that of my late dear friend, teacher and concert artist, Carmen Carrozza!

Sincerely,
Beverly Roberts Curnow

Linda has been an influence on my musical career for as long as I can remember. When I was a student of Carmelo Pino's at the Biviano School of Music in Silver Spring, MD, she started judging me when I began competing in contests sponsored by the Accordion Association of Metropolitan Washington in the 1970s. She continued, for the next decade, to give me great guidance and advice that would serve me well for the rest of my musical career.

Later, Linda supported my nomination to be a Board member of the AAA and, as President of the AAA, she endorsed many ideas I proposed to the organization at the meetings. I am deeply indebted to her for her help, and consider her a mentor, a role model and close friend.

Manny Bobenrieth

Linda Soley Reed

The contributions to the American Accordionists' Association (AAA) by Linda Soley Reed are innumerable. Very few people can match her involvement and tireless efforts, many of which go unnoticed and are unheralded. Her efforts cover just about every aspect and detail of running our national organization. Whenever she takes on a task, she always give it 110%

Personally, I'd like to acknowledge the fact that she was the very first AAA president to recognize and acknowledge the merit and value of "Valtaro Musette" music. She gave myself and Ray Oreggia the opportunity to do some presentations/programs on this accordion musical style — the first of which was given March, 2006 in Jamesburg, New Jersey. She also organized several AAA events over the years at Magnanini Winery, in Walkill, New York that were focused on featuring Valtaro Musette dance music.

I will always remember Linda, Marilyn O'Neil, Bob Vitale and Emilio Magnotta coming to the very first meeting of the Long Island Accordion Alliance (LIAA) in August, 2010. Their support that evening for our fledgling group really meant a lot to all of us.

Congratulations and thank you for all your dedication to the accordion and the AAA.

Dominic Karcic
Long Island Accordion Alliance (LIAA)



Linda Reed was one of our best Presidents. She left out all ego and personal agenda, and worked entirely for the Association. She serves as a role model for future presidents.

Dr. William Schimmel

Linda, let me be one of the many to congratulate you. Ever since I've known you, I saw how hard you've worked for this organization. I appreciate your loyalty and dedication.

All the best, You deserve it!

Ray Oreggia



Dear Linda,

Congratulations on your Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Accordionists' Association. There is no one that I feel is more deserving of this award than you. You are the heart and soul of the AAA. You have been the engine and motivator that has powered the association and allowed it to continue and progress. Your creativity, dedication and commitment is unparalleled in the organization. There are so many elements that you have contributed to within the organization: contracting performers for our festivals, coming up with ideas to raise funds, judging contestants during our festivals, leading the organization as president as well as all of your contributions as an executive member of the Board. In a short phrase, you have no competition!

On a lighter, funny note, I recall the evening that we decided to hear Richard Galliano at a jazz club in New York City. We arrived quite early and wanted to get a table as close to the stage as possible. Luckily, we were able to get a table immediately next to the bandstand. The table was literally in the first row next to the bandstand. We could see Richard's fingernails since we were so close. After the band played the first set, a woman decided to come up to the bandstand to get Richard's autograph and chat with him. She was so extremely excited that she literally rushed to the bandstand like a football linebacker ready to tackle the quarterback. As she ran towards Richard, she literally plowed into our table and flipped the table down along with all of our drinks, and the glasses crashed to the floor and I ended up getting pretty soaked. The waiters came over to help us and looked dumbstruck trying to figure out what had happened. We looked at each other in total awe and I thought you were going to take this woman OUT. It was a memorable fun time for all!!!!

Warmest regards,
Don Gerundo

Dear Linda,

Congratulations on your AAA Lifetime Achievement Award! This is so very much deserved, and I hope we are all able to celebrate together in person soon! I especially hope that the Divas can assemble to perform with you in your honor.

Jeanne Velonis

Linda, I have known you and worked under your wise and vastly experienced leadership in the AAA since 1995 when Elsie Bennett invited me to join the Governing Board via the Composers Commissioning Committee. To this day, I am awed by your clear judgement and smooth operation in handling the plethora of administrative, personal, business and often sensitive matters and issues that inevitably arise in an organization such as ours. I am eternally grateful that there are people, though so often few in number, like you who are capable of and willing to take on all these challenges. Not everyone can or would (or should!). However, diplomat that you are, you do not mince words when asked for an honest opinion about any matter; but this is always done in sincere humility and with willingness to hear, consider, and often boldly support and put into action counter ideas.

These attributes, along with your highly successful record as a businesswoman, teacher, musician, and one of the longest serving and sagacious members of the AAA Board, makes you absolutely indispensable to the American accordion community today and one whose experience, wisdom and friendship is treasured by all of us on the Board, and the AAA membership in general.

Thank you, Linda, for everything! You are a great friend to and role model for us all.

Bob McMahan



I can't possibly think of anyone more deserving of AAA's Lifetime Achievement Award than Linda Soley Reed. I've known Linda since I became one of her students in the mid-1960s. She was a fabulous teacher — demanding, but patient. She knew just how hard to push without frustrating me. And she knew how to make me laugh — and we laughed often! As the conductor of the Molinaro Accordion Orchestra, she was able, over and over again, to take a bunch of kids of varying abilities and mold them into an award-winning ensemble. Linda is the reason that, 50+ years later, I'm still enjoying playing my accordion. I can truly say that she was a major influence in my life, and I suspect there are scores of people who can say the same. Linda, congratulations and, for the bottom of my heart, thank you!

Pam Martin Dodson

As a member of CAA during your tenure with us, you exemplified your talents and dedication. The growth was phenomenal with so many seasoned players and with your persevering efforts. I congratulate you for being honored and proud that you are being recognized for your achievements.

Squeezer,

Dorothy M. Gondek
(and a fan, Marie B. Gondek)

"People come into your life for a reason, a season, or a lifetime."... Linda Soley has touched and blessed the lives of many people through the years, including myself. She was recommended to my parents by Arthur Moretti, Sr., as a great accordion teacher at Molinaro Music School when I was eight years old. And so, I began lessons. Mostly fun, but at times she was so hard on me that I left the studio in tears. Unbeknownst to me at the time, it was for my own good. She figured out how to get what she wanted from me, musically. We have had an educational alliance, personal friendship, and professional relationship for so many, many years since then. I won't list the number or she would kill me. After a short hiatus, I looked her up and restarted lessons with her. She was then the owner of Molinaro Music School. And alas, we went on, and built a deeper friendship over all these years. With her inspiration and education in the "Who's Who" in the accordion world, I was able to start the San Antonio Accordion Club while living there, where we enjoyed the beginnings of a membership of over 100-fold, and they still exist today. Life took me to Portland, OR, and I started the Rose City Accordion Club again, in her honor. In 1999, I moved to Florida and started the Florida Accordion Association, again... all due to her. The onset of that turned into local chapter spin offs that include Orlando, Sarasota, Bradenton, Fort Lauderdale area, Miami, Sun City Center, Brooksville, Cocoa Beach, Fort Walton Beach, Pensacola, and then into the Southeast USA... Atlanta, Tennessee and the Carolinas: all of which thrive today. Because of all the lives she's touched, accordionists made new friends, would travel to visit with one another, took lessons again, started attending accordion conventions, and in some cases, added years to their lives. Recently, Linda moved to Port Charlotte, Florida and started an accordion club, and I am happy to send her whatever leads I get in that area for members, students, etc. I am proud to call her mentor, colleague, friend, and adopted sister. And I thank God for every day she is part of my life. No one deserves a Lifetime Achievement Award more than she. Linda Soley IS my lifetime.

Karen Adam Kasprzyk
FL Accordion Association
SE Accordion Association



From Cindy Thomason Bartlett

I first met Linda in the 1970s when I joined the Molinaro Accordion Orchestra, traveling for rehearsals from New Jersey to Connecticut with Bob Piegdon and our teacher, Rose Slachetka Bachraty. Rose and Linda were former students of Rudy, and great friends. As an "adopted NJ member" of the orchestra, Linda always made me feel like I belonged. It was an honor to play under the baton of Rudy, and then later under Linda when she took over the studio and the orchestra. The bus trips to the AAA competitions hold great memories for me.

As an adult, I took over my teacher's NJ studio and Linda became an invaluable mentor to me in navigating the various competitions. I have always admired and have been grateful for Linda's musicianship, work ethic, kindness and friendship.

CONGRATULATIONS, LINDA!

From Carl Devellis

I can remember the day I came to audition for the band at Drew's house (or Val's house). I walked downstairs and saw you with the accordion and started to walk out. I think Rich asked if I was Carl and I said yes, but I don't play in bands with accordions. You said to listen to it before you leave, and the rest is history.

We had so much fun for what, 12 years? I remember you said, "What songs do you sing?" I said, "I'm a trumpet player, not a singer." You said, "Well, OK, but try to sing this song". I think it was Color My World and, after that, you asked if I could do a gig that weekend. After that gig my throat hurt really bad and so I went for voice coaching. That helped a lot and then I said, "You all have to start singing", and that started your singing career!! I always loved it when Drew and I sang together, he was really good and sang freakin' harmony!!

Val is on my Facebook page, and every now and then I'll send her some pictures. I don't have any more pictures to send, so I guess this is the end of our communication. JUST KIDDING!!

Probably Leroy Brown, Celebration, or Peppermint Twist were the only songs I was allowed to sing, and rightfully so! I still think about Drew all the time. We never realized how bad his heart condition was — I will always remember him singing Al Jarreau's Charade.

Dear Linda,

I am so pleased to learn that the American Accordionists' Association is honoring you with their Lifetime Achievement Award. With all your years of teaching, conducting and hard work in promoting the accordion, it is a recognition well deserved. Your tenacity and hard work in this organization keeps the accordion front and center for so many people.

On the occasions when we shared the experience of judging students in competition, I observed you to be sensitive to students' needs and exhibit a rapport that enabled them to accept and appreciate constructive criticism.

Way to go Linda! This is awesome! You earned every bit of it.

Congratulations and best wishes,

Rose Slachetka Backraty



I became acquainted with Linda when I was a young student competing in the local CT state accordion competitions. Linda took lessons and taught for a well-known teacher, Rudy Molinaro. My teacher consulted with Rudy on occasion. When I was a bit older, I played with the orchestra Linda was conducting. As I went through college, Linda was also taking courses at UB. Linda was invaluable in the publishing of my book on Paul Creston. Our friendship has remained over the years. She has done much to further the cause of the accordion. I wish her all the best.

Linda, I hope you enjoy all of the tributes,

Monica Slomski

From Ben Armentano

I started playing the accordion at age 8, first taking lessons with my father, who was a professional accordionist, musician and teacher. After a couple of years, when it became obvious that I wasn't listening to him anymore (lol!), my dad had me study with another teacher, a man named Paul Scalora, who was an excellent teacher with roots in both classical music and jazz, which was important to me because, by my early teens, I had developed a strong love for jazz and pop music.

During those years, I was enrolled in all the Accordion Teachers' Association of CT's contests and actually did pretty well, winning several trophies during those years. At one of the competitions, I attended a concert they were having and I heard something that changed my life forever — the Molinaro School of Music's Accordion Orchestra performing "Fiddle Faddle", conducted by Linda Soley. I was absolutely blown away by the sheer power and virtuosity of the players in this mighty accordion orchestra, and I knew that I wanted to be a part of something like this. So, I asked my dad how I could go about becoming a member of this ensemble, and he knew the only way was to take lessons at the Molinaro School of Music. The next thing I knew, my parents and I were in the car on a Sunday morning, making the hour long drive from Newington, CT to Bridgeport, CT to study with Linda Soley, the woman who was conducting the Molinaro School of Music's accordion orchestra.

From my very first lesson with Linda, I knew things were going to be very different from what I had previously been accustomed to. Linda was a brilliant musician who paid a great deal of attention to detail in music. If a whole note was written in the music, she made sure I held the note for a full four beats, not three and a half. If the music called for notes to be played staccato, she made sure I played it staccato. She made me work very hard on scales and technique. She also pushed me very hard on sight reading, which is something I wasn't very good at and still to this day am not GREAT at, but it only took me about thirty years to finally understand WHY she pushed me so hard on this. I truly believe that Linda saw that I seemed to have a talent for playing jazz and pop music, and that someday I might be able to have a career as a studio musician, if I could sight read well — I just wished it hadn't taken me thirty years to realize this! LOL! She also saw that I had a strong interest in composing and arranging, and even was nice enough to allow me to write an arrangement of composer Jimmy Webb's "MacArthur Park" for the accordion orchestra, which later performed the song at an ATAC concert performance. We won first place in the competition, and Linda was nice enough to give ME the trophy to keep!

Linda has a wonderful sense of humor and, while we had many many, many laughs during my lessons, there were lots and lots of times during my lessons that she became very angry with me because I hadn't practiced or kept on playing the same passage wrong, over and over. I remember working on the first six measures of some classical pieces for two solid months until Linda was happy with the way I played it! But that's what made Linda such an incredible teacher — her absolute unwillingness to settle for the music that we were working on to just "good enough" — it had to be PERFECT, or as close to perfect as possible! And that is what made Linda such a great teacher!

So, in closing, let me say this: Linda Soley Reed was the best teacher I have ever had. I would not be the musician I am today if it wasn't for Linda. I have been teaching piano for over forty years now, and there are SO many times when I'm teaching a student that I ask myself, "How would Linda handle this student?" or, "What would Linda have this student work on to make this better?" And one final note to illustrate what a wonderful PERSON Linda is: a little over a year ago, I was having severe financial problems and was looking for a new job. Linda reached out to me and wrote a brand new resume for me and put me in touch with a couple of people that she felt might be able to help me out further. And that's the kind of person Linda is.

Congratulations on your AAA Lifetime Achievement Award, Linda!!

Love,

Ben Armentano



Congratulations on receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award! Your dedication and enthusiasm for the accordion has been an inspiration for all who love the instrument. Looking forward to seeing you continue spreading the enthusiasm with your local meetings.

Joe Zalewski
Maggie Valley, NC

To my dear friend of 60 years, Linda Soley Reed — That's not easy to do since we're both only in our 50s!

What a ride we've been on together on the "Molinaro Express." Most of our Molinaro family still keeps in touch. In OUR world, it wasn't Sunday unless we were at 2 pm band rehearsal.

Rudy was so wise to turn the studio over to you because he knew you would continue his legacy and advance the instrument. If he were here today he would probably say, "You know, it's a funny thing (one of his favorite phrases), I never dreamed you would be a part of a World Accordion Association."

We were always together like Frick n Frack. Did some crazy things too. Remember the time you needed to move a loveseat sofa. So, you put the top down on your '57 Chevy convertible and, with some friends, we picked up the sofa and put it upside down in the back seat. Only problem, there wasn't enough seating left for all of us, so someone yelled, "The smallest one has to get in the back seat!" So there I was, under the sofa all the way home. I still have nightmares!

I'm so grateful that we crossed paths in this life.

Wishing you many more years of good health and success. You deserve it.

Love you,
Patty (Pat Branchesi Garbatini)

From Joanne Fioretti

It's so nice that they are honoring Linda with this achievement award. The following are some comments I can express about my relationship with Linda and the Molinaro School of Music.

I was around eleven years old when I started lessons at Molinaro School of Music. Fifty-six years later, I still have a relationship with Linda Soley. Linda was a mentor to all of us kids. I haven't seen Linda in many years, but we still communicate as if it were yesterday.

Linda pushed us to go further than we thought we could, and she didn't mince words. She knew what we were capable of and pushed us to follow through. I will never forget the hours of preparation for the many, many competitions I participated in. I remember, at crunch time, students would be at the studio practicing for a competition and you could sometimes find us in a bathroom practicing. We'd practice for hours and, before leaving the studio, Linda would say, "Let's hear it". You'd better pray it sounded better or else you were back there in the bathroom again!

Linda treated us all like "her kids". She managed to even pull parents together and it was wonderful to see our parents participating and supporting their kids. It felt like on big family. I have so many fond memories of those years gone by, and I thank God that I had the opportunity to have been a part of it.



I have known Linda Soley for a great part of my life and she has been such a great inspiration. In my humble opinion, I truly believe there would not be another soul on this Earth who deserves this award as much as she does at this time.

Thank you for the opportunity and the recognition of my dad, Frank Porto of Porto Music Studio. It is an honor to write this tribute to Linda, on behalf of my whole family.

Frank Porto, III

I first met Linda when I was 16 years old. Because I wanted to teach guitar, my guitar teacher recommended Rudy Molinaro's School of Music. I got the job and this is where I met Linda (that was 57 years ago). We hit it off quite well as musicians and friends. Linda knew I was in a band and later went on to two more bands for a total of three bands in my career. I kept telling Linda she could make good money playing in a band. Finally Linda decided to play in my band, even though she was a classical musician. One night, our original accordion player got sick, so I called Linda and asked her if she would play the gig. I gave her our fake books to review and, of course, she had no problems.

After this gig, we talked about forming a new band. I went to see Frank Porto about forming a band and, along with his advice, he helped us find two new band members. This band was called "Odyssey". We played in this band together from 1974 to 1985.

Linda and I have remained great friends since our first meeting, so much so that I consider Linda the sister I never had. Linda played a part in my wedding to Maureen and has been a big part of our lives.

Linda, we love you always,

Rich Kendrick



Linda Soley!

What can I say? Remarkably I've known her in a variety of capacities. First, as a young accordion player with Anthony Imbriglio as my instructor, I had Linda many times as a judge in various competitions. I looked up to her in awe. Fast forward to college... a student at UB now under the tutelage of Frank Porto. I now meet Linda in a different capacity... a fellow adult in the accordion world. I was in shock because both she and Frank were always people I looked up to and now I'm here... with them. Once I graduated and began teaching myself, I was now in a similar role. I now gained new insight and a new respect for Linda. I became friends with Linda... played in a CT accordion group with her, in an orchestra in NJ, helped at her place of business and truly had the opportunity to come full circle. I was now able to play with her and see for myself her musical abilities, but more importantly, her as a person. That little kid, now grown up and spending time with someone she so looked up to. Linda Soley Reed is so deserving of this lifetime achievement award... for so many reasons... many listed above. Congratulations, Linda from someone who has looked up to you for a long time!

Cheryl Dias-Kohler

Linda,

Congratulations on your well-deserved Lifetime Achievement Award. You are a wonderful teacher and musician, and I will always cherish having you as my accordion teacher, as well as your lasting friendship. You are the best!

Larry Benigno

From Dan Mastroianni

I've known Linda for 40+ years. I've been alongside her as student, teacher and peer at every level of the accordion world: CT Accordion Association, American Accordionists' Association and the CIA; I've traveled the US and abroad with her to countless meetings, competitions, concerts, seminars and master classes.... The thing that always shines through is her dedication and passion for our instrument. Linda has always worked tirelessly towards the advancement, improvement and promotion of the accordion. I can think of no one who is more deserving of a Lifetime Achievement Award than her. Congratulations, Linda! I have no doubt that you will continue to use your passion to champion this great instrument.

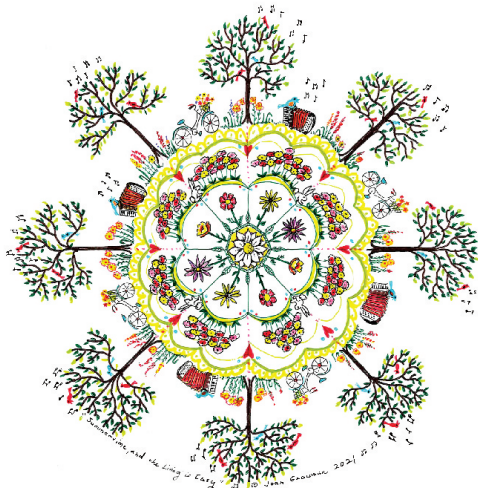
From. Barbara Johnson Mariconda

Linda Soley truly made me a musician — not just an accordionist (and she did a good job of that), but she nurtured in me the spirit and soul that allowed my music to come to life and touch the hearts of those who listened. This served me so well as a pianist, singer and liturgical musician — the work I loved best — moving hearts in ways that words alone could never do. Throughout my teen years, Linda also taught me enough music theory that I was able to skip my freshman Theory 1 and Music Theory 2 courses necessary for the BS in Music degree that I earned in 1977. Linda, thank you for these precious gifts that have enriched my life in countless ways, for so many years! Brava, Maestra!! Brava!

From Arthur Moretti, Jr.

I took accordion lessons at Molinaro School of Music in the mid to late 1960s. I did not have Linda for a teacher, but my cousin Louie Moretti did have her and he loved having her as his teacher, and she did a great job with him. I remember feeling, at that time, that I wished she was my teacher. Linda was always very cheerful and had a lot of energy — and not bad-looking either!
Wishing her the very best!

Artie Moretti



From Pete Peluso

I got to know Linda when joining the CAA Orchestra. I enjoyed playing under her leadership. Most accordionists play as soloists. Putting together an ensemble of soloists and keeping it going takes a lot of leadership and patience. For this I have much respect.

From Fred Schwinger

In January, 2010, my mother passed away. My mother was the one who encouraged me to learn the accordion when I was very young. For most of my adult life, I got away from playing the accordion seriously, but that summer after my mom's passing, I decided to go to the AAA summer festival to see what was happening in the accordion world. It was in Pennsylvania that year. I was so impressed with the quality of the musicians and the beautiful music being made. So, I went to Linda Soley Reed, the President of AAA at that time, and asked her if she knew of anyone I could study with near where I live. She said, "Sure! You have Mario Tacca up your way." I had never heard of Mario, but soon started lessons with him. Linda also invited me to join the CAA Orchestra. Soon after beginning to study with Mario, I joined the orchestra under Linda's leadership.

What I would like Linda to know is, that by her giving me Mario's name and inviting me to participate in the CAA Orchestra under her leadership, my skills as an accordionist have improved greatly and I have developed a broadened appreciation for the instrument, not to mention the joy of playing with and meeting so many outstanding musicians and individuals. These last ten years of studying and playing the accordion have enriched my life tremendously and given me many, many wonderful experiences, and I owe that to Linda. Thank you, Linda, for Mario and for the orchestra. It has been an honor to know you and to play under your baton. Congratulations on receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award!



From Rosemarie Cavanaugh

"When I go to sleep, I never count sheep, I count all the charms about Linda"
... words taken from a beautiful tune made popular by Frank Sinatra, back in the day...
These words may seem a little silly today, but true! I've known Linda many, many years now...
through our love of the accordion! Miles may have separated us... but "when we pass on the
street... I say to myself, Hello Linda"! "Miracles still happen"...we always get together at all
musical gatherings... whether they are in Connecticut, New Jersey, Virginia, New York or now
Florida, where she continues to share her talents on the accordion!

Linda's dedication, continued support and leadership in the American Accordionists'
Association... have all been "lucky stars that shine"!
Linda, congratulations and.. "Thanks for the Memories"! I have always been told: music is a
gift.... Thanks for being mine!!!

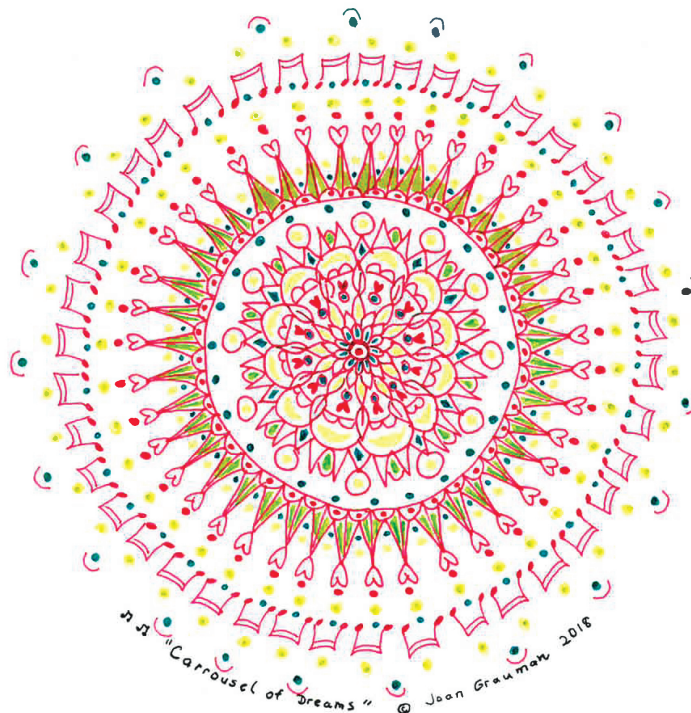
From Joanie Thomas

Linda Soley: mentor, teacher, friend.
If I hadn't played the accordion at Molinaro School of Music back in the 70s, my life would be
filled with many voids, lacked musical luster as well as long term friendships in the music
world. Participation is the key to happiness.

Linda is a sharp-witted, intelligent and generous woman who showed me how to love classical
music in an accordion band, and to be proud of my smallest accomplishments.

Linda led me to further my education at CBI in Bridgeport, CT where my business career
zigzagged up the corporate ladder. For that guidance, I will always be grateful as she was a
mentor and friend. I always had the capability to earn an income despite any economic
situation. For that guidance, I am grateful!

Congratulations on receiving this Lifetime Achievement Award! With God's Blessing! I love
you!



From Eddie Monteiro

Congratulations to you, Linda, on this well-deserved Lifetime Achievement Award.

It was always a pleasure to be able to work with you on the AAA programs and festivals, but what always got me chuckling was the speechless 'look' you would give me at the most apropos times.

Usually the situations were either comedic or so ridiculous that they didn't need any response and yet as you would 'scan the room' and would look at me — your eyes spoke volumes that would FORCE me to stifle any possible outbursts of laughter!

My wish is that you enjoy this Lifetime Achievement Award and reflect back upon some great music, years, meetings and concerts that we were fortunate to attend in your presence.

Thank you for your (continued) guidance and (continued) perpetual assistance to the AAA and promoting the accordion.

May you enjoy this for many years to come in Happiness and great health!

From Joanna Darrow

Hiya Linda,

Congratulations to you. You have certainly deserved this honor for many years. Thank you for your UNIQUE personality, and for your constant offers to help all of the accordion organizations. Also, thank you for your wonderful sense of humor and mannerisms in expressing your opinions.

You are a wonderful and kind-hearted person. The accordion world and the world in general is a better place because of you!

From Joe Cerrito

From all of the contests we have judged and the Pops Orchestra concerts we have performed in, I have the greatest respect for all that you have done for the accordion and the AAA. To me, you are family — my best pal and "sister".

Joe Cerrito and "Holy Sister Cerrito"



From Jim Reed

I was passing through the living room the other day and out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of an accordion resting on our couch. This started, as it often does, to make my mind reflect on the life and times that I have had with your Guest of Honor, my wife, Linda Reed.

We've been together over four decades and have been happily married 2 out of 37 years. The secret to this is to take your wife to Hawaii on your honeymoon and go back and get her 37 years later. Seriously, I love Linda now perhaps even more than when I first met her, and it seems to grow stronger every day that we're together.

We have traveled the world because of the magical accordion. We saw spectacular sights, met wonderful and most hospitable people, ate unmatched cuisine, and heard music that produced sounds that brought forth every emotion that resides in the human soul. This machine is an instrument of peace as demonstrated to me first hand at the Coupe Mondiale when Serbians and Croatians not only competed against each other but, afterwards, occupied the hotel lounge in camaraderie until the wee hours of the morning, with nothing but laughter and good will.

On the domestic side of Linda's career, the United States, and the entire US accordion family, be it the AAA, ATG, CAA, NJ Pops Orchestra, and everyone else from the smallest one room school to the largest multifaceted organization, should be proud to have someone such as our Honored Guest, Linda Reed, whose knowledge, dedication and tenacity has touched each and every one of them.

I would like to take this time, from the "bottom of my heart", to congratulate the American Accordionists' Association's Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, Mrs. Linda Soley Reed.



