

She's 'neither - or both'

By Amanda Nalley
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

If life stories were food, **Caroline Joan "Kay" Picart**'s would be a gumbo, an ethnic mixture of flavors.

The academic doctor, who considers herself a hybrid with a "fluctuating sense of rootedness," has lived in several countries; holds multiple degrees; has written many books; has learned, taught, competed and won in many styles of dance; and is an accomplished artist and professor at Florida State University.

"If I had to leave academia, I would be bored stiff. If I had to leave my dancing behind, forgetting that I have a body is not going to make me happy either," she said. "All of them fulfill a different part of me."

Recently divorced, Picart remembers that life is about "keeping a stiff upper lip" and that "there is only one person that can be responsible for me, and that's me."



Picart

The travelling hybrid

Born in the Philippines to professor parents of Filipino, French, American, Chinese and Spanish ancestry, Picart's ethnicity is an important part of who she is. "When I'm asked to identify myself," she said, "all I can think of is hybridity."

PICART

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In her book "Inside Notes from the Outside," she describes instances when her heritage has connected to and separated her from others.

She tells the story of a friend's little boy who, after staring for quite some time, asked her: "Are you black or are you white?" Picart answered, "Neither — or both."

The student

Picart first wanted to be a medical doctor after her mother began experiencing hearing problems. But, while she enjoyed the sciences, her "soul was thirsting for the humanities."

A charismatic young priest persuaded her to apply for the master's program in philosophy while she was finishing up her senior year with a double major in biology and philosophy and a 4.0 grade-point average.

As a graduate student and university lecturer hired by three different departments, she lectured on zoology, philosophy and astrophysics and enjoyed it so much, she decided to go for a doctorate.

Her degrees include a Bachelor of Science in biology and a Master of Arts in philosophy from Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines, a Master of Philosophy in history and philosophy of science from Cambridge University in England, and a doctorate in philosophy from



Special to the Chronicle

Caroline Joan "Kay" Picart, center, poses with Latoya Harris, left, Picart's friend and student, and Darlan Chancellor of Fred Astaire Dance Studio. Picart and Chancellor placed first in the 2006 U.S. DanceSport Council's U.S.-Worlds Pro-Am Cabaret Championship on Sept. 9 in Hollywood, Fla.

Pennsylvania State University.

The academic

As a doctoral student, Picart began teaching philosophy at Pennsylvania State University in 1995.

She taught at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, St. Lawrence University in New York and Florida Atlantic University before moving to Tallahassee in 2000. She also spent time in South Korea teaching English, creating art semi-professionally and learning folk dance, as well as organizing the International Ballroom Dance Club and the International Group of Artists and

Writers.

She is an associate professor of English and courtesy associate professor of law at FSU.

Her students admire and praise her.

"She tends to be sort of a renaissance woman," said Nathan Young, a teaching assistant and former student of Picart's. "I can see a lot of what I'd eventually like to become in her."

The sport dancer

Picart's passion is dance. "Dancing helps me to process emotions," she said.

She began dancing at 5 when her mother started her on ballet and Hawaiian dance. She studied Korean

ON THE WEB

Learn more about Picart's dancing and art at english3.fsu.edu/~kpicart/video.html and www.kinaestheticsportasart.com. View a list of books Picart has written at tallahassee.com/chronicle.

folk dance and began ballroom dancing in 1990.

Last year, she discovered cabaret dancing, a mixture of ballroom, ballet and gymnastics. She feels the style, like herself, is a hybrid.

She won second place in the Millennium DanceSport Nationals in pro-am cabaret dancing in June 2005, second place in the U.S. Open to the Worlds pro-am cabaret competition in September 2005, and she and partner Darlan Chancellor placed first in the 2006 U.S. DanceSport Council's U.S.-Worlds Pro-Am Cabaret Championship on Sept. 9 in Hollywood, Fla.

She not only dances, but

also teaches, choreographs and has written a book on the subject, "From Ballroom to DanceSport: Aesthetics, Athletics, and Body Culture." She is developing a radio program, "Ballroom With a Twist."

The painter

Picart began drawing as a child. As an undergraduate, she took an advanced art class and won first place in the end-of-the-year exhibit. She has exhibited in the Philippines, South Korea and various parts of the U.S. and runs an art business called Kinaesthetics.

The dreamer

Even with an extensive list of daily activities, Picart still dreams of breaking new ground. She's interested in the possibility of law school. She believes strongly in giving back to the community and promoting art through education and, if she ever finds the time, would consider opening a school of dance for youth. For now, her dance card is full.

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