

Bombarded By Love A Place of Acceptance

Have you ever brought a friend to dancing who was reluctant to come? Maybe they said they would come just once to make you happy. Or maybe they said they would come just to watch or listen to the music.

Well, maybe they are shy. Maybe they have been through a recent divorce and feel vulnerable. Maybe they are uncomfortable around the opposite sex. Maybe they do not know how to dance. Maybe they are directionally challenged – do not know their left from their right. Maybe they do not know what to wear. Maybe they do not have comfortable shoes. Maybe they think there will be no one there their age or no one they know. Maybe they literally cannot afford the cost of the dance.

The “maybes” could go on forever. And all of these reasons or excuses have been barriers or hindrances for any number of folks. But as I have experienced and observed now during almost twenty years of dancing, all of these “maybes” can be overcome when you are bombarded with love.

I remember feeling clumsy and a bit shy myself when I first began to attend contra dances. In my mid-forties, I had not danced since the high school prom. But yet I felt accepted immediately and fondly remember the gracious, kind people who were patient with me as I learned. Now, I continue to see that at our dances. I see apprehensive newcomers begin to smile and exude confidence.

Just recently I have observed a huge influx of middle-age adults who seem to be having fun in their new-found endeavor of dancing. Many usually arrive with a friend – for comfort I suppose - but they quickly are swept onto the dance floor with well-meaning new friends. They learn not to wear their business suits and high-heeled shoes. Some even learned to bring extra shirts to change

when they got sweaty from dancing.

Also it has been rewarding to see so many young people willing to be involved with this diverse, multi-aged group. They cannot miss the fact that older folks still enjoy the exercise and social opportunities that dancing affords. It looks like contra dancing has really become the “in” or “cool” thing to do in the young folks circles.

Indulge me with just a couple of stories with some of the names changed to protect the innocent.

Mary Lou recently left a conference early and drove three hours back to Huntsville just so she would not miss a dance. She often comes late because she has so many civic commitments. On dance nights, she dutifully attends concerts and then arrives on the dance floor in time to experience at least the last half of the dance. She loves it.

Another lady is a widow in her seventies. She has been delighted to know that “she still has it.” Dora smiles and laughs the whole evening and has quickly become a good dancer.

A young college student, Chris, was recently visiting Huntsville from Johannesburg, South Africa. His friend, Jacqui, also on the same exchange program, talked him into trying the dance scene. She, being an accomplished Scottish Highland dancer, absolutely did not want to miss this opportunity to experience folk dancing in our country. She loved it and much to his surprise, Chris also had a wonderful time that same evening. After Jane Ewing’s intermission waltz workshop, he proudly exclaimed, “My mom will never believe that I learned to waltz while visiting Alabama.”

It is exciting to have new dance converts and to watch as they gain confidence when bombarded with love. I hope this tradition of acceptance continues in our contra dance circle. *Editor*

Huntsville Calendar

- Huntsville dances are the 1st & 3rd Saturdays of each month in the gym at Faith Presbyterian Church, 5003 Whitesburg Dr., South, (corner of Whitesburg Dr. & Airport Rd.). Beginners Workshop is at 7:00 PM then the regular dance is from 7:30 – 10:30 PM.
- Admission is \$7 (\$6 for members), \$4 for teens, free for ages 12 & under.
Remember to bring comfortable, **non-scuffing shoes** for dancing. Bring someone new to a dance this month.
- Contact Bryan Walls (256) 837-0656 or email: bwalls@pobox.com or visit <http://secontra.com.NACDS.html> for more info.

Date	Caller	Band
Feb 3	Chrissy Davis-Camp	Ed Baggott & Elsie Peterson
Feb 17	Harry Delugach	Kaleidoscope
March 3	Jane Ewing	Maple Hill
March 17	Jef Hodge	Wolves A Howlin'



Area Dance Gypsy Calendar

Date	Location	Caller	Band
Feb 18	Sewanee 3 pm CST	Jane Ewing	Ed Baggott & Elsie Peterson
Feb 2	Nashville	Chrissy Davis-Camp	Jim & Inge Wood & Friends
Feb 9	Nashville	Susan Kevra	Frances Cunningham & Bill Verdier
Feb 11	Nashville (Friends Meeting House)	Emma Rushton	The Contrarian Ensemble
Feb 16	Nashville	Chrissy Davis-Camp	Kaleidoscope
Feb 23	Nashville	Tom Calwell & Myra Hirschberg	The Contrarian Ensemble
Feb 24	Chattanooga	Chrissy Davis-Camp	Force of Nature
Feb 10	Birmingham	Becca Impellow	Adam Hurt, Beth Hartness, Jim Holland

FoOTMaD (Birmingham) dances 2nd Saturdays at the YMCA, 3rd Ave & 23rd St, 7:30 PM. <http://www.bamalong.com/bcds.htm>.

CTDS (Chattanooga) dances 2nd & 4th Saturdays at All Saints Academy, 310 E. 8th St., downtown, 8:00 PM.

Contact Steve at (706) 937-4991, Claire & Bryant at (423)876-7359 or <http://contranoooga.org>

Misty Mountain Dancers (Sewanee, TN) dances at the Legion Hall in Sewanee, TN. For details, call (931) 598-0814 or check <http://mistycontra.zoomshare.com/>

NCD (Nashville) dances almost every Friday at 8:00 PM at **NEW LOCATION** -- Second Presbyterian Church on Belmont Blvd one block south of Woodmont – on the corner of Graybar. Sept 8 at Cohn Adult Education Center, 4805 Park Ave.

Contact Chrissy at (615) 210-6808 or John, email: DanceFools@aol.com or <http://dancenashville.org/>

Flat Creek dances – 2 & 4th Tues, Flat Creek Community Center – seven miles south of Shelbyville, TN. <http://www.nashvilleoldtime.org/Dances/flatcreekcontradances.htm>

A Bit Farther Away, But Well Worth The Travel

CCD (Atlanta) dances on Fridays & alternate Tuesdays. <http://contradance.org>

KCD (Knoxville) dances every Monday. <http://www.kornet.org/kcd/>

MCD (Memphis) dances on the 1st & 3rd Fridays. <http://hometown.aol.com/horselovers/index.html>

Sautee Community Dances (N. GA) once a month from Sept – May. <http://sauteecontra.home.mindspring.com/>

Getting To Know You

Readers will readily recognize Ed Baggott and Elsie Peterson as a favorite band that plays for local Huntsville dances. They have been playing together since 1992 and regularly play for regional dances as well as for dances in Louisville, and at the Old Farmer's Ball at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, NC. For the past four years they have played for Bob Dalsemer in Brasstown, NC at one of the contra weeks held at the John C. Campbell Folk School.

Ed is a self-taught musician and got interested in fiddle playing when he went to the Exit Inn in Nashville and heard the New Grass Revival Band in the early seventies. He said the band members were about his age, played well, and had a good time, so he decided it would be fun to learn to play. Besides the fiddle he also plays mandolin and some guitar. He enjoys playing for dances (not fiddling competitions) and says that he finds it meditative playing the tunes over and over..."just like in my own living room." When he's not fiddling around, Ed develops software for public safety systems at Integraph.

Elsie was a music major at Birmingham Southern where she sang in the choir; she also played flute and piccolo in her high school band. She is trained as an occupational therapy assistant and was a full-time mom and pastor's wife for 22 years. Her grown children are Allen Peterson, an

artist and instructor at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Atlanta, and Emily Peterson, a particle physicist in a postdoctoral position at Argonne National Labs. Probably everyone knows that her older brother is Chuck Weber who plays fiddle with another local dance band, Kaleidoscope. Elsie spends her spare time quilting, doing counted cross stitch and gardening.

Ed began dancing in Atlanta in 1979 when it was a small dance group with live music only every other week. He liked it because again it was a bunch of people his own age with similar temperament and personalities. He said, "It was a



comfortable feeling, a nice place to be, and it was all new and fun." Ed and Elsie met at a local contra dance after he moved to Huntsville in 1989. Elsie has danced all over the southeast as well as in Tallahassee and Ithaca, NY. Her first exposure to contra dance was at a friend's wedding. Friends of the couple hired a band and caller for the wedding

rehearsal. "It was wonderful gift and really helped everyone in the wedding party overcome any wedding nerves. Since it was lots of fun, I hoped I'd get a chance to do it again sometime," said Elsie.

We are fortunate to have Ed and Elsie as accomplished dancers and players for our Huntsville contra dance community.

Dance till the stars come down from the rafters. Dance, dance, dance till you drop. W. H. Auden

I don't want people who want to dance, I want people who have to dance. George Balanchine

Dance is the song of the body. Either of joy or pain. Martha Graham

This And That

Blue Moon – Our very own dance weekend is May 18-20. . Be sure these dates are reserved on your calendar for a fun weekend of dancing right here in Huntsville. Carol Mebane has a fabulous band and great callers lined up and the brochure with details will be out very soon.

Bob White and Bryan Walls tried to determine when the **Huntsville contra dances began**. It's between July, 1981 and April, 1982. Mark Mahon, President of NACDS, said, "We thought it would be great fun to meet for playing music and a picnic or some such thing. No plans are ready, but if anyone has ideas or would like to arrange a party, I would like to hear from you."

Mark is also experimenting with involving different people to **record WLRH spots** each month. Bryan Walls recorded for December and Mark did January. Others are lined up for February and March. Listen for the announcements and see if you can recognize the dancer's voice.

Jane Ewing did an especially good job of calling at a recent dance when there were tons of new dancers there for the teaching session and the dance.

The **NACDS News Editor** is searching for new articles and information for the newsletter. If you are interested in submitting an article, be creative and send it to her via email...wmca@hiwaay.net. Also, if you have not been featured in *Getting To Know You*, please send your bio and dance related info to her.

North Alabama Country Dance Society
4304 Holmes Ave, NW, Huntsville, AL 35816
Address Correction Requested



Send just \$10 for one, or
\$15 per family, to the address above.

Make checks payable to NACDS.
(mailing label shows renewal date)

Members receive monthly newsletter,
2 guest passes, and a \$1 DISCOUNT to
each regular dance!