

# Remembering Barbara Hicks Harding

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By Katy German

Like so many of the best teachers from my childhood, Barbara was a memorable personality. She was joyous, bouncy, and precise. She expected excellence on the dance floor, and her gaiety inspired you to crave it too. Her energy and love of English country dancing was infectious, and she had a particular habit of singing out the rhythm of the tune as she taught a dance. In fact, you have only to utter “rumty tumty tickety tee” in the presence of one of Barbara’s dancers, and their posture straightens, their head lifts, a smile breaks across their face, and they are on the balls of their feet ready to move!

I first knew Barbara as a dance leader, but over the years came to learn about the rest of her life, and how her love of teaching was the common thread that connected her dance and non-dance activities. Inspiring and socializing young children was her passion, and she set her life to that beat. In 1951, after identifying a lack of preschool programming in Herndon, VA, Barbara founded Harding Hall. The school operated until 2003, when Barbara retired at the age of 80, and continues today as the Montessori Peace School. She taught in local elementary schools. And she continued teaching English country dance and English ritual dance throughout the years. She was a founder of the Old Dominion Dancers, an ECD group formed in 1970, and she was especially keen

on developing youth Morris and Sword teams. Barbara was a singer and musician, too, playing organ, piano, and accordion. She was a supporter of The Country Dance and Song Society, dancing with CDSS’s former Director May Gadd at Berea College’s Christmas Country Dance School. Barbara attended Christmas School every year from 1952 to 2012, teaching, playing music, and leading songs for generations of dancers.

“Ever practical, ever joyful, ever ready to share her love of dance and song... Ricky tickety tik!”

—Rebecca Davis, Ft. Mitchell, KY

One thread of Barbara’s life for which I am especially grateful was her role in creating the Danish-American Exchange (DAE). Founded in 1971 and headquartered in Berea, KY, the DAE is a network of individuals, groups, and organizations in the USA and Denmark united in the passion to learn from and inspire one another through home stays, folk dancing, folk music, and song and cultural experiences. For almost fifty years, U.S. folk dance groups from Virginia, Kentucky, Michigan, and beyond have participated in the exchange, and in turn have hosted Danish folk dancers who often became

lifelong friends. Those of us who were lucky enough to be a part of the DAE carry with us cherished memories of bonding through song and dance, of traveling together, of learning the art of hosting, and of experiencing how the world seems to open up when you realize what binds us together.

**Far Left:** Barbara Harding.

**Left:** Barbara Danish dancing with friends. Photos are courtesy of Jane L Harding.

