

## Spotlight Feature

Reprinted from the April DANCERgram “This & That” Newsletter

Our own Judy Barnhill was the Spotlight Feature in the March 2023 American Square Dance! Below is the article.

In 2009, she went to a square dance class offered by the Volunteer Travelers in Knoxville, Tennessee with caller, Bill Fox. A little later, she and her husband Dwayne decided to also take round dance lessons with cuers, Bob and Bev Casteel.

Judy became interested in choreographing round dances when she retired from nursing in 2017, and moved to Port Charlotte/Punta Gorda in southwest Florida for the Winter months. Wanting a hobby that wouldn't have any stress, she asked Russ and Wilma Collier, who were their cuers in southwest Florida at that time to help choreograph a round dance. They agreed, but questioned why she didn't want to cue. The Colliers helped Judy and Dwayne choreograph a waltz to “Satan Can't Hold Me”, a Jim Reeves song. But, in exchange, Russ wanted her to cue it for the dancers. Well, that was the start of another hobby! Russ & Wilma worked with her for another 6 months and then Wilma had a stroke and passed away. Russ then became sick shortly after that and also passed. Fortunately, Russ had introduced me to another cuer and her husband, Joanne & Ken Helton, who lived across the state in southeast Florida. The Heltons took Judy under their wings and helped her every week, and still do, via telephone with cueing, choreography, and dancing.

Judy says, *“Any success that I've achieved is due largely to the Colliers' & Heltons' guidance and patience.”*

She adds, *“Have you ever thought of becoming a cuer? I thought cueing and teaching round dancing wouldn't be that hard, right? Wrong! Little did I imagine not only did I need to know to tell a woman dancer where to put her feet and when, but I also had to learn the man's part as well. Really, it was like learning to dance all over again. I'm still learning how to teach because each rhythm is different, and the steps are different. There's always a challenge just around the corner. Cueing and teaching takes practice, lots of practice. For the first year or so of my new “hobby”, I worked tirelessly on my cueing & dancing. Not to*

*mention the business aspect, learning about audio/video equipment, computer programs, teaching methods, and traveling. What happened to this stress free hobby???? Still, it's worth it because I love the magic of dancing and I love people."*

*Her advice to someone interested in becoming a round dance cuer? "Don't enter into cueing with your eyes partially closed. You need a mentor to help guide you. A musical background is helpful but no required. You do need to realize that cueing is more than just a hobby, it's a profession. There are certain standards of education and training that are needed so that you'll have the knowledge and skills to provide the best experience to your dancers. Here's also a code of conduct that ensures ethical and moral obligation. You need to like people, and learn how to work with callers, other cuers, and dancers in an art form of compromise. You need to encourage, compliment and uplift your dancers. Remember, dancing is for fun – mistakes & all. Many times you'll need to go the extra mile and do it cheerfully. Take advantage of learning opportunities to further enhance your cueing and teaching. You need to become a member of a professional organization such as Roundalab or Callerlab. At each dance, you can make a difference if you go prepared and with the attitude of being a blessing to someone."*

You can find Judy Barnhill in American Square Dance publication each month and regularly cueing and teaching in Florida and Tennessee as well as state/national conventions throughout the south.

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