



The

# Northwest Folkdancer



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FOLKDANCERS

Corvallis, Oregon



2005



# Hoolyeh & Friends Reunion

By Kathy (Armstrong) Sandstrom

At Betty McCauley's 80th birthday party last year, some long-time Hoolyeh dancers were reunited. It was so much fun to visit, dance, and catch up on 20+ years of "life" that we didn't want to wait another quarter century! The last time we had a "formal" Hoolyeh reunion was 22 years ago! We think it is time for another one. It will be April 26, 2008 at the Senior Citizens Center, 2601 NW Tyler Avenue, Corvallis, Oregon, starting at 7 p.m. Let us know your choice of an "oldie moldie" to do and we'll try to dig up the music. Only \$5 admission, and \$1 off if you are in costume. Spectators are free as usual. Bring fingerfood to share.

Hoolyeh is an Israeli word loosely translated to "let's get together and have fun"—and that's just what we did! I started dancing in 1970 when I saw some folks dancing during lunch and free time at Corvallis High School. There was teen dancing on Thursday nights (we had 140 high school students dancing together on Thursday nights in the early '70s!), adults on Friday nights, and kids on Saturday morning—all sponsored by Corvallis Park and Recreation. It was all run by Hildred Rice at that time, with Glenn Weber assisting her, along with others doing guest teaching, as well. (I blame Bekki Levenspiel for teaching me my first dance!) Mrs. Rice's sister, Pearl Atkinson, ran the dancing at Reed College for years and years.

In the winter of 1971, there was a week of non-traditional classes at CHS (anyone remember "OCCE" week?). You could sign up for anything you wanted, and I signed up for both the folk dancing class and the jewelry class, which were held at the same time. I went back and forth until I was so hooked on the dancing, that I stopped going to the jewelry class! Once you get bit by the folkdance bug... Well, that was the beginning of a very long and continuing passion with cultures from around the world. Garfield School was our home on Thursday nights.

A month or so later was my first excursion to Seattle for the big folkdance festival held up here. My mom wasn't so sure about me going up to the big city with a bunch of other kids on a bus! I assured my mom that we were all going to the festival and doing nothing else. We were staying at the YWCA and Mrs. Rice would be there with us. So away we went! We met dancers from the Polish performance group Polonie; many of them are still my good friends today.

Less than a year after I started folk dancing, it was decided that a teen Hoolyeh performing group would be organized. I had really taken to folk dancing and really, really, really wanted to be in this group! So, I auditioned with many others, and happily made it in. Mrs. Rice sold placemats and other things to help raise money for costumes. The city supported us, as well. Our first

costumes were Israeli ones—red linen dresses for the girls and blue shirts/white pants for the guys. Our next costume was the beautiful Greek one that Mary McCauley researched. My first costume experience was researching and finding fabric with Mrs. Rice for our Polish Lowicz costume. Later we added Ukrainian, Romanian, Austrian, and others.

Less than one year later, the Hoolyeh performing group went to the Seattle Festival. It was pretty darn exciting to be going up, learning dances, attending a festival, and performing! One year, we were madly finishing our Russian costumes on the bus. I don't remember how we schlepped all our costumes down University Avenue and through campus to the HUB! We were so excited to be performing. We entered the UW Hub Ballroom in a long diagonal line doing Timonia and everyone applauded as we entered. We were sky high with excitement, so much so that by the time we got to Hopak, several of us were dancing and crying, with tears of joy streaming down our faces. This folk dancing stuff was really great!

The Enumclaw festival was in August. The infamous Seattle folkdance friend Alice Nugent kind of "adopted" our bus of teenagers and arranged for us to have a potluck supper at Enid and Neville Pooley's house, and go back again in the morning for breakfast. Pretty cool! A highlight of this festival was the watermelon feed at the end on Sunday—we never left before stuffing our faces! And who can forget the watermelon seed spitting contest!

We put on annual concerts for several years. As we did not have a lot of costumes to choose from at first, we would do several dances in one costume before changing. So this meant we sometimes did a Bulgarian dance in our Israeli costume, and a Croatian one in our Greek costume! Oh well! When we started, we mostly did the dance from beginning to end. Eventually we started doing a little choreographing and segued into different dances. We only had taped music, so we were somewhat limited in our "arrangements." A few folks did have original costumes, and we used these when possible. We even had some live music by some of the dancers, and sang some songs too (like *Sinoc mije lane moje* from Croatia).

We also went to local festivals and workshops in Salem, Eugene, Portland (including ones at OSU, U of O, and Reed), and wherever else Mrs. Rice would take us on the bus. Bekki and Barney Levenspiel arranged some workshops and folkdance parties at the coast. We danced

many times in Betty and Jim McCauley's carport. We helped teach at a festival at Evergreen State College in Olympia in its early years (when there was no landscaping yet!). When going to Washington festivals, we always stopped in Woodland at the Oak Tree Restaurant to eat (and that is still my stopping point on all my trips home today). Whether there was an event in Corvallis, Eugene, Albany,



Hildred Rice and Pearl Atkinson



Mary and Jim McCauley

Salem, Portland, Seattle, or Enumclaw, we all went to each other's events, our circle of friends widened quickly, and we were a strong presence in the Northwest.

Besides taking us to festivals and workshops and hosting many, as well, Mrs. Rice awarded scholarships to 11th grade students to help pay for tuition to a folkdance camp in Stockton, California (which celebrated its 60th camp last year with a good showing of Pacific Northwesterners attending). For years, Corvallis had a strong presence at Stockton, often with 7–12 attendees. Later, dancers were supported at camps through the Jim McCauley Scholarship Fund.

Our local festival was always the last weekend of April. That also used to be when we would “spring forward.” We would start decorating the evening before the festival and keep going until we were done. One time we finished in the wee hours of the morning and decided to go get some hot chocolate. I got home around 4 a.m. or so, and did I ever get in trouble for not having called home to say where I was!

Some of our wonderful guest teachers for workshops and festivals included Glenn Bannerman (who brought clogging to us), Atanas Kolarovski (Macedonian), Madame Judetz (Romanian), the infamous Dick Crum and Yves Moreau (Balkan), Johnny and Paula Pappas



*Dancing in the McCauleys' carport.*

(Greek), Bora Gajicki (Serbian), Billy Burke (Balkan), Larry Weiner (Balkan), and many more.

I am so lucky to have had my roots with the Corvallis Hoolyehs—so many excellent dancers during my time with them, and there were many before and after. Because of these excellent roots, I went on to perform in many groups in the Seattle area in the Balkan arts as a dancer, singer, musician, and costumer. Kudos to Mrs. Rice and all the teachers who continued teaching and supporting the Hoolyeh dancers—we have tried to list them all on the Web site. They have all contributed to our strong folkdance history and identity in Corvallis. Dana Poling is currently running Hoolyeh. Thanks to Karen Emry at Corvallis Park & Recreation for the department's continuing support. Big thanks to our parents for their support, too.



*Kathy Armstrong Sandstrom*

Jane McCauley Thomas is writing up the earlier Hoolyeh history and her article is also in this NFDI issue. The full write-up will also be posted on the blog that Bekki (Levenspiel) Levien created at [www.hoolyeh.com](http://www.hoolyeh.com), plus lots of photos and more memories. Whether you are a Hoolyeh or danced with us, you are invited to add your stories, memories, and comments to the blog. I am so grateful to have a whole world of life-long friends and contacts from this fabulous “hobby.”



## Hoolyeh and Friends Folkdance Reunion



**When:** Saturday, April 26, 2008

**Where:** Senior Center  
2601 NW Tyler Ave. • Corvallis, OR

**Time:** 7 pm until ?

**Who:** All past and present Hoolyehs, their parents, kids and friends

**Cost:** \$5 at door (\$1 off, if in costume)  
Spectators are FREE

**Bring:** A snack to share/photos/memories

For more information visit:  
[www.hoolyeh.com](http://www.hoolyeh.com)





# Folk Dancing with the Corvallis Hoolyehs: The Early Years

Jane McCauley Thomas

I was in the third grade when I started folk dancing with Irene Butts' children's group in 1959. We met every Saturday morning in the cafeteria at Garfield School in Corvallis, just a few blocks from our house on 12th Street. Irene was a short woman with a crown of silver braids. She wore a long skirt, and when she danced, it was hard to tell that an adult was on the floor. The group was for children through sixth grade, but a few old-timers stayed on into junior high.

Mike Onstad was in fifth or sixth grade then. He had curly black hair and a silver tooth that made him look like a pirate, and all the girls wanted to dance with him. Howdy Booster was a year below me in school. He once told me I was his "second best girlfriend"—the first was Karen McDonald, the girl all the boys wanted to dance with. Usually, Irene would walk us through the dances and then put on the music. Records were kept in heavy cases which the big kids would carry out to Irene's car at the end of the dancing. Each morning ended with Clap and Turn Polka, and this time, no concessions were made for beginners. "Get off the floor, you're going to be killed!" Irene would shout, and the old-timers were free to spin as fast as they could go.



Mary, Jane, and Tom McCauley,  
1962 or 1963

I don't know when the children's group first began. My mother, Betty McCauley, tells me that Hildred Rice promoted a Valentine's Day dance at Roosevelt School as early as the mid-1950s—she remembers dancing there a few months before my sister Mary was born. (She and my dad also danced Salty Dog Rag before that, when she was pregnant with me.) By the time I started dancing, Irene had probably finished her English teaching career at Oregon State University—a job that

didn't include retirement benefits. Our family spent my fourth-grade year in Montana; my mom remembers Irene appearing at the house:

I don't know how Irene managed, but she collected newspapers from all her friends and took them to recycling, which paid in those days. She was one gutsy lady. She learned to drive when she was over 40—it was awful to ride with her!—and traveled across the country to see her kids. She slept in her car and brought sandwiches to save money. In Bozeman, we once came home to find her sleeping on our couch—the neighbors had a key and had let her in.

When we returned to Corvallis, we bought a house on

29th Street, and once again, we started dancing. In an old diary, I wrote that Irene would be picking me up each Saturday morning, along with my brother and sister: "Mary has gone a few times before, and I have gone lots of times, but Tommy has never gone except to watch. What worries me is how he is going to find any little girls smaller than he is." There weren't many girls shorter than a kindergartner, but we found another solution: "In the dance called Crested Hen, you usually have one boy in the center and two smaller girls on the outside. But I had to be inside with two boys, one of them Tommy, and neither of them able to dance."

I stayed with the children's group well into junior high, by which time I'd been an "old-timer" for several years. The first performance I remember was probably during my first year of dancing. We danced at a festival at the old Roosevelt School, which later burned down; we did Shibolet Basedeh, the Israeli "open-the-gate and shut-the-gate" dance.

Later, pictures show a group of costumed children at the tiny roadside park between Monroe and Junction City, a traditional stopping place when we drove to the Eugene festivals. I'm wearing my great-great-aunt's Norwegian dress, with a beaded panel tucked into a red wool bodice. Mary wears a flowered cap and an orange dress from Sweden, the same dress my mother used to wear—and the same dress my daughters Rhiannon and Emily wore many years later. Tom wears a Swedish costume with a round cap; sometimes he'd wear German lederhosen, instead.

At one of those early Eugene festivals, a white-haired man asked if I danced the hambo. Of course I did, I told him—I'd danced it with my grandpa at Swedish Midsummer parties. But as it turned out, I didn't know it at all. Francis took me out into the hallway and showed me the steps—left, touch, right, left, touch, right—and from then on, I knew.

We also danced at the Junction City Scandinavian Festival, back when it was a big event and visitors packed the streets buying Swedish pancakes and Danish apple pastries. We'd perform Scandinavian dances such as

## Needed: Volunteers to Help with NFDI Mailing

NFDI needs 2–3 volunteers ASAP to help with the newsletter mailing once a month. Our current volunteers have been involved for a number of years and are retiring from the newsletter mailing.

The mailing party usually takes place a week or so before the end of the month. The actual date and time are flexible and can be worked around your schedule. Volunteers count the newsletters, tape the edges, affix prepared mailing labels, bag the newsletters for delivery to the post office, and deliver the newsletters to the bulk mailing facility in south Seattle. The entire process takes about 2 1/2 hours, and the time passes quickly. It can be fun!

Please contact Kathy Bruni at (425) 485-1638 or [dancinglaughter@comcast.net](mailto:dancinglaughter@comcast.net) if you are willing to help.

Gustav's Skol and Little Man in a Fix, where the two boys on the inside would swing the girls off their feet as they turned. I also remember Man in the Hay, where the girls were tossed high in the air at just the right moment. Dancers in those days included various Varsevelds and McKimmys, Ellen Burgess, Susan Terierre, Glenn Weber, my friend Terri Bennett, and many others.

We danced with the children's group through most of junior high, right up until Hildred Rice started a teen group that met Thursday evenings in the new Garfield gym—the Hoolyehs, as we became known. This must have been when I was in ninth grade, around 1965. Hildred, another OSU English instructor, was tall and stately, with tight grey curls. Student dancers helped with the teaching—Mike, Howdy, Lloyd McCaffrey, Karen, Glenn, and various others. Among the seventh and eighth graders were Jeanette Leach, Kathy Bucy, Ruth Phinney, Debbie and Pam Hanus, Scott Rohde, and Jeannie Olleman. My sister Mary was still too young to join, but she remembers watching the dancing from Doris Tilles's house across the street, where she had a Thursday babysitting job. Within a couple years, Dave Bucy had joined his sister in the dance group, "to look for girls," as Mary jokes now. It must have worked—she and Dave have been married for thirty years—but Dave also went on to lead the Hoolyeh performance group, and even now, he choreographs dances for local theater productions.



*Bekki Levenspiel  
Levien in 1970 (left)*

Within the group, some dances "belonged" to particular people. Howdy, with his clean-cut good looks, always led Macedonka, sometimes swirling a white handkerchief. Occasionally, I got the chance to lead Miserlou, "mirroring" the second person in line—doing the dance backwards, essentially. On Sjetna, we'd pull an unsuspecting guest into the line on the slow part, only to laugh as the rhythm suddenly shifted to double-time.

The Thursday night group was so much a part of my life that I rarely wrote about it. Looking back, I find occasional references to "At dancing this week," but I tended to write about the people more than the dances themselves. Still, it's clear that we frequently attended festivals at Reed College or Woodburn or Eugene, sometimes staying the whole weekend. By the group's second and third year, more people were active—Barb Schemm, Jerry Zavitkovski, Mary Van Holde, Susie Van Dyke, and many others. One fall, Terri and Lloyd and Mike and I danced Serbian Medley for the Centurions' "Evening of Folklore" in Corvallis.

Since dancing only on Thursdays wasn't enough, some of us started going to OSU's folk dance sessions as well—in fact, Terri later joined Julie Reed's exhibition group. It was also through the OSU group that Terri, then just sixteen, met an OSU engineering student named John Hardin. He was way too old, her parents thought—practically twenty. Since they weren't allowed to date, they danced; John soon joined the Thursday group, as well. Terri and

John now have four kids and several grandchildren; they've been married more than thirty-five years.

There were festivals in Enumclaw, and others in Portland. Once, a whole group of us slept on the floor at John Hardin's parents' house in Troutdale. People had regular dance partners they met only at festivals—Bud Brabham in Eugene, or Mary Eichstadt in Woodburn. Often Hildred would drive, or sometimes my parents or someone from OSU would take a carload of dancers. Hildred hated left turns—she'd route us in complicated directions to avoid them. But on the open road, she moved. "I rode home with Mrs. Rice," I wrote after one festival. "She didn't go over 90 mph—I think she averaged 80."

By late high school, I'd become less involved with folk dancing, and it's hard to remember whether the group itself was active. It wasn't until after I left for Reed College (where we'd often danced) that Glenn and Howdy rejuvenated the group by teaching classes during Corvallis High School's alternative education week. "We regularly had 140 kids dancing at Garfield School," Mary remembers, and the Hoolyehs staged a big performance every year. By that time I'd moved on to other things, but years later, I moved back to Corvallis and watched my own two girls dance with Dana Poling's children's group.

We didn't realize it at the time, but folk-dancing expanded our world. We recognized towns in countries our non-dancing friends had never heard of. We hummed tunes in seven-four time. We knew the difference between Serbian and Macedonian opanci. My sister had cats named Ciček and Bačko. Later, in Scottish pubs and Greek tavernas, I found the soundtrack already familiar. In Yugoslavia, I bought Mary a traditional costume, and as its owner and I worked out the price, we also discussed politics: "Tito, dobro" (good). "Kennedy, dobro." "Nixon, no dobro."

It's been nearly fifty years since I started folk dancing at Garfield School. These days, I rarely dance, though I do hike and ski. (And like Irene Butts, I teach college English and do long solo trips in my car.) Still, at my mother's eightieth birthday party last year, my feet remembered the steps. But my strongest memory is still of Irene shouting "Get off the floor, you're going to be killed!" as Clap and Turn Polka went onto the turntable and the old-timers spun out across the gym.

### **NFDI Policy for Sharing Folk Dance Music**

There are small fees to help cover NFDI expenses in providing music tapes.

- ▶ If we provide the tape, there will be a charge of \$1.50/60-min, \$1.75/90-min., \$1.25/12 min. chrome.
- ▶ There is a fee of 25 cents for each music piece on the tape. Mailing expenses are \$1/tape and \$1.50/two tapes. (Canadian rates are slightly higher.)
- ▶ If you are a NFDI member and need a particular selection, please contact Linda Caspermeyer, 8415 5th Avenue NE, #205, Seattle, WA 98115-4165, or call (206) 525-6143, or send an email to ireland-lover@msn.com.