

Gardner Patton, President, CCNJ

Gardner Patton was born in Boston, and the family moved to Portland, Oregon when he was seven. His father was an eastern-style caller and contra prompter and also the principal of Gardner's school, where students could learn to dance in the gym during lunch hour. Gardner ran the noon movies, so he didn't try dancing himself until a few years later when, as a high school exchange student to Finland, he learned folk dancing.



While attending Brown University, Gardner worked one summer for the Army Corps of Engineers in Alaska. Because of the folk dancing experience, he went to the YMCA in Anchorage for evenings of mixed folk and square dancing. Upon returning to college, he started calling and teaching square dancing at the local YMCA.

Gardner became involved with computers through a college course. When he graduated with a bachelor's degree in physics, there was a market for people with computer skills. He accepted a position with Western Electric, working on software for missile guidance systems. He later worked for Bell Laboratories, Bellcore, and Telcordia doing computer programming, software testing, and research.

Through folk dancing at Brown, Gardner met Diana, an artist-illustrator-writer. They married, started raising their family of three sons, and ran a folk dance group in the Morristown area. After Diana took lessons at Hanover Squares, they became active square dancers and club presidents. They are now members of Bee Sharps.

Gardner teaches the Bee Sharps class and calls for the Do-Si-Dos in Eatontown. He is a member of CALLERLAB and was elected president of the Callers' Council of New Jersey (CCNJ) in 2011. One of his goals is to continue increasing the number of new callers, especially in central and southern New Jersey. He believes that "new callers mean more square dance activities, and more activity means more dancers."

Gardner serves as webmaster for almost a dozen websites; they include four square dance sites, CCNJ (ccnjcallers.com), Square Dance Council of New Jersey (squaredancenj.org), Hear-2-Dance (hear-2-dance.com), and New Square Music (newsquaremusic.com). He developed Hear-2-Dance to help people hear the caller at dances. He composes, plays, mixes, and produces New Square Music. Gardner remains interested in "harnessing the computer to further square dancing," and is presently involved with developing innovative computerized square dance programs.

Gardner scanned all issues of *Grand Square*, which can now be electronically searched on the NNJSDA website. He also digitized all issues of *Sets in Order*, the international square dance magazine, and plans to digitize the Delaware Valley's *Squares and Rounds* and the Lloyd Shaw Foundation's *American Dance Circle*.

In 2003, Gardner retired: "I say you should never retire *from* something; you should always retire *to* something." He describes computing and dancing as "my hobbies and my work." For Gardner, "watching computers grow from their infancy to where they can understand a caller's voice commands and move dancers around the screen in response to those commands has been the wildest ride."

Last year, Gardner was interviewed by Bob Brundage. To hear the interview, visit sdfne.org/Documents/BrundageAudioInterviews/tabid/374/Default.aspx and scroll down. To read the transcript, click on the "T."

Lise Greene