

Patrice and Bill Hartung
Magnolia, DE

Current club: Pepper Steppers (MD)
Former clubs: Belles and Beaux (Patrice), Rutgers Promenaders,
Shooting Stars (OH), Kittyhawk Squares (OH), Magnolia Swingers
(MS)



How did you start square dancing?

Bill: Square dancing was a gym class at Rutgers University. A friend and I went to check it out. There were girls there, so I went back.

Patrice: I had always loved to dance and remembered doing square dancing a couple of times in school. One summer, the young adults group at my church went to a one-nighter at Bear Mountain State Park in NY, and it was fun. Soon after that, I saw square dancing was offered through the community adult education, and took the lessons. The class was taught by two callers. The male caller gathered all the single women together and tried to discourage us from continuing the lessons as we would have difficulties getting partners after we graduated. The woman caller made the effort to get me alone to encourage me to continue. She said I was a good dancer and that I would not have trouble getting partners. I am very glad she spoke to me or I might never have become a square dancer.

What year did you meet? 1985 And marry? 1987

Among the guests were a bunch of square dancers from Rutgers Promenaders and a caller, Betsy Gotta. So we did one tip at our reception, with Betsy calling.

Circumstances of your meeting and dating?

Patrice: The summer after I finished the Mainstream classes with Belles and Beaux, I attended all the Wednesday summer dances given by the NNJSDA. On August 14, 1985, the night that Betsy Gotta called, a group from the Rutgers Promenaders were there. My company had recently moved to Piscataway, and I had gotten an apartment nearby. That made Rutgers Promenaders the closest square dance club to my new home. I went over to one of the club members and asked for directions to their usual dance location. I was referred to the club treasurer – Bill. Bill gave me directions as best he could, given that I was still new to the area and had no idea of the landmarks or roads. (As it turned out, I didn't need the directions ever – he drove me all the time.) We stood talking for the rest of the break. He didn't ask me to dance until after three other people had asked, and it was the last dance, so we didn't dance together that night. He did ask me to join a group of people going to a diner after the dance. We all had a great time, and when it came time to pay the check, I pulled out my wallet. Bill told me to put it away and paid for me. I was pleased that he paid my share. He was happy that I let him without any argument. (If I hadn't, we probably never would have dated, according to him.) Afterward, he drove me back to my car, and we stood there talking until 2 or 3 a.m. The next week he again showed up at the Wednesday night NNJSDA dance because I was going to be there. We danced together, went back to the same diner, and I got home about 3 a.m. again. The next week's dance was our first date, August 28. We became engaged February 3, 1986, and married November 7, 1987, after the original wedding date was changed due to Bill's joining the Air Force and his training schedule. My first impressions of Bill were that he was a tall, thin, kind of cute young man. He was 20 years old and going into his junior

year of college. He was very nice and very friendly, and somehow we found a great deal about which to talk. He enjoyed square dancing, and dancing with the Rutgers Promenaders with him was a real blast – energetic, fun, crazy. It didn't matter to him that I was over seven years older than he was. We spent a lot of time together. I realized within weeks that he was the right one for me. (Wouldn't you know that my mother's frustrating answer to how you do you know when you are in love – "You just know" – was true? And just as unexplainable.) But given that I was a lot older and had dated some and felt that I had had enough experience to know that Bill was what I wanted, I tried not to let him know the depth of my feelings. I didn't want to scare him off. Much to my surprise, one day he tapped my head and told me not to start hearing wedding bells in there. As it turns out, he was the one hearing them. He was considerate and romantic and fun, and he cherished me. So when he proposed, I said yes, and didn't change my mind even when he decided to go into the Air Force (and the Air Force blew away my June wedding date.)

Bill: Since I was an engineering student at the time and the Rutgers engineering school was isolated from the rest of the university, female and breathing was enough for me to notice. As to knowing it was the right person. I had dated girls that excited me physically, and girls that I could have intelligent conversations with. Patrice was the first that hit both buttons for me.

Favorite square dance memories?

Patrice: Dancing at a large festival where people kept switching squares (trading at the ends of waves, passing into the next square instead of doing the partner trade part of a Trade By)

Being in the Royal Court of a Mardi Gras Ball square dance in Mississippi

Being human checkers for a caller friend to try out new and interesting routines in his garage, followed by food.

Me calling an All Eight Circulate from facing lines in a lesson class and having the students do the move while the angels stopped dead and told me "You can't call that from there."

Bill: I do not know if favorite is the right term, but a strong bad memory from square dancing was from a club we danced at for a short time in Ohio. Background first. Our first child was 6 months to 1 year old, and I would dance with her in a front carrier. My wife would get into a square and I would get Beth settled, then join her. People walked out of the square rather than dance with us. It was a sizable portion of the club that did this. We stopped dancing for several years because that was the only club we could get to with my shift schedule.

Anything else?

Patrice: Bill thought I should have something to keep me occupied while he was in his military training. So we attended a local callers college and I learned to call. I never did too much with it, but I called some dances in a few states and taught square dancing for two years for our club in Mississippi.

All five of our children have learned to square dance, starting about age 9. I taught two of them. And most of them enjoy it still. (Our college age son dances sometimes but not really by preference.)

We are not currently official members of Rutgers Promenaders. We do attend the annual picnic and we try to get to at least one or two of their dances a year. So we may be considered unofficially members. But financially, given the distance and the fact that we can attend the dances so rarely, it makes no sense, so we have not officially been members for the last few years.