

How The Folk Project Has Changed My Life

In the past year, my discovery of this long established community has changed my life. I found the project through friends I met in Florida at a contra dance. In joking with my dance partner, Ken, he told me he was from New Jersey also and belonged to a contra dance group in East Hanover called Swing “N” Tern.

When I returned to New Jersey, I joined the East Hanover group for their New Years Eve Pot Luck Dinner and Dance. Everyone at the dance was friendly and welcomed me to join the dances, which were held the first and third Saturdays of the month. I joined.

I shortly discovered that the Folk Project ran the dances as well as concerts every Friday night in Morristown. To my surprise one of my near neighbors and her son actively volunteered in the weekly Minstrel concerts. When she told me the concerts needed volunteers to bake and help in the kitchen for refreshments, I immediately began baking again and put together different cakes and cupcakes for the Friday events.

I enjoyed the dances and concerts so much that I began telling my friends and inviting them to join me for the dances and/or the concerts. One of my friends became a regular attendee to the contra dances.

In the spring, the Folk Project and Swing ‘N’ Tern held a weekend festival beginning on Friday and running through the weekend. My friend and I decided to go for their special Saturday event where we experienced a taste of dancing and the concerts. We were hooked. I now had a closer relationship with my friend enjoying both events.

We both enthusiastically signed up immediately for the Fall Festival where we brought food and helped set up the potluck dinner. The schedule of events listed many varied workshops besides concerts and dances. I learned more about instruments as the hardanger fiddle, the Nyckelharpa, the mountain dulcimer, the steel guitar, mandolins, banjos and a wide variety of drums, including hand made ceramic drums. I attended three workshops on song writing given by Jenny Avila and Anne Hills, learning that I could adapt my writing and particularly my poetry to music and play the drums.

Encouraged to bring instruments to their parties and festivals, I fixed up my violin and decided to learn how to “fiddle.” I have bought folk song books on how to learn how to “fiddle” and have begun playing my violin again after dusting off 30 years of neglect. One of the members of the Folk Project gave me suggestions on how to keep my fiddle in tune and gifted me an electronic tuner if I promised to keep playing...and I am.

The concerts have also inspired many new poems, which I have written after hearing many of the feature groups play. I have sent some of these poems to them and have now connected with many people I never knew before.

In summary, the Folk Project has inspired me to bake, fiddle, write poetry, dance, make many new wonderful friends, and expand my enjoyment of music and my CD collection!.

Now when I go to concerts, I use them to listen to the music and compose poems...which I send to those who inspired me... The following is a poem written after a Folk Project concert:

Broken Strings

By Barbara D. Hall

[<http://www.ournaturematters.net/>](http://www.ournaturematters.net/)

A few years ago, I bought a package of strings but they left all the notes out of the package.

Cliff Eberhardt

So I live my life in endless transformations
Like the strings on a guitar...
Reinventing myself with new notes as my journey changes
Taking me on a different path, learning different music
Ruins have their value, including ruined lives
In the rubble and broken strings
Find the place of selfless devotion
No more anger or disappointment in self
Scatter useless emotions
No more servings of rotten soup to stew self
The journey is internal...
Constant change to replace worn or broken strings
Disasters need not close the door
Even weddings teach lessons about self...

Broken strings remind me of lost family, lost love
I'll stay and play until I forgive myself
Keeping love, light and music at my door
The winds of change will whisk away the pain
So over and over again I begin anew with love and laughter and joy
Until unbalance leads the way to a new measure

Retuning life like a never-ending thread of strings
Strings, strings, strings
How many strings are there on stage
With 2 Nyckelharpas, 2 guitars and a 5-string violin
"64" I shouted
"Right you are..."

Sometimes my strings are no good
They need to be replaced
How many strings do I wear out in a year?
I play and play and play
The strings wear away...

Mine don't die, they break or
Stretch until they can sing no more
Guitar after guitar, violin or Nyckelharpa
Banjo, mountain dulcimer, mandolin...

He sings of a cassowary...
And I know not of what one is
I've heard of killer whales
But never of a bird...