

CDSS Lifetime Contribution Award 2006—Fried de Metz Herman

by Allison Thompson, Chair, CDSS Awards Committee

We are pleased to announce that the 2006 Lifetime Contribution Award is being given this year to Fried de Metz Herman, master choreographer, teacher, composer and dancer. For many years, Fried has immeasurably enriched lovers of English country dance worldwide through her demonstrated creativity in reconstructing old dances, writing new dances and creating new dance figures, and her insistence on teaching us not just to dance, but to dance *well*.

Fried (pronounced Freet) began dancing in her native Netherlands in 1942, at age fifteen. Around 1954, encouraged by Patrick Shuldham-Shaw, she began to teach—"Had to!" she writes. "There was nobody else to take that group." Fried was deeply influenced by Shaw's creativity. Her other teachers of English country, morris and sword dancing included Marjorie Sinclair, Thora Jacques Watkins, Olive and Rhoda MacNamara, and William Ganiford. Fried holds two teaching certificates in Scottish dancing from St. Andrews, as well as certificates in morris, sword and country dancing from the English Folk Dance and Song Society.

Even though Fried prefers "live" dancing to demonstrations, she has often performed. In England in the early 1960s, she belonged to the Whirligigs, a group led by Marjorie Fennessey and associated with Pat Shaw. After she had come to the United States in 1963, Fried performed at the World's Fair in New York in 1964 and 1965, at the invitation of May Gadd, CDSS's director. Fried remembers that "it was a big thing." May Gadd's group also performed at many festivals at Barnard College in the 1960s, and Fried remembers the performances as wonderful—"happy, colorful and fun," reflecting May Gadd's "vision of theater."

Fried has been active on both sides of the Atlantic. Membership in CDSS, the NVS (Nederlandse Volksdans Stichting) and EFDSS has helped to keep her connected with dancers in the United States and Europe. She has taught in the Bay Area, Seattle, Boston and elsewhere, as well as in the New York area where she is associated with the Country Dancers of Westchester which she helped found. She has taught at CDW since 1974, been on staff

at Pinewoods Camp numerous times, and in the spring of 2002, she was, for the fourth time, invited to England for a six week teaching tour. She has also taught dance groups in the Netherlands and Belgium.

It is hard to imagine a country dance ball that does not include one of Fried's many popular compositions. The dances that she choreographs are varied and inventive, inspired by music, events and people. Above all, her dances provide a close fit of music and movement which makes them memorable and worthwhile, and her new and reconstructed dances are known worldwide. Her publications include: *Pinewoods Fund Collection* (1980), *The Road to Ruin* (1984), *The Naked Truth* (1986), *Choice Morsels* (1989), *Potters' Porch* (1992), *Ease and Elegance* (1995), *Fringe Benefits* (1999), *Serendipity* (soon to be published), and the CD *Measured Obsession* by MGM, a collection of tunes (with dance instruction) for fourteen of Fried's dances.

Not only has Fried written numerous dances, she has created unusual and distinctive figures that have moved the modern English country dance style in a new direction. Among these figures are the face en face, chevron, open star, crossed hands poussette, double dance, closed star, meander, zig-zag hey, island setting, Russian gypsy and many more.

Pleased to have been described once by British dance instructor Andrew Shaw as "that bossy lady from America," Fried is known as a precise and demanding teacher, one who cares about the fine points of dance style and who drives them home. But precision does not obscure her deep love both of dance and of the people who enjoy it. She writes: "I see the task of the English country dance teacher as a very important one. It's not just getting a bunch of people through a prescribed pattern of movements. Rather it is making people live the beautiful tunes by showing them how to move to, and then into, the melody . . . for all people, dancing is making music. And making music with friends is relaxing, uplifting and altogether necessary for life. I honestly believe that."

Presentation of the award will be Saturday, April 22, 2006, at Country Dancers of Westchester's dance in White Plains, New York. This article appeared in the CDSS News, issue 189, March/April 2006.



Top: Fried with Pat Shaw, Zeist Christmas Course, mid 1950s; below: Fried at Country Dance New York's True Brit Weekend, 1993. Photos courtesy David Green; used with permission.

