

Puzzling Out Ease and Elegance

by Paul Ross

We all want well-earned ease and affordable elegance, but can you get that in a book? If you've ever danced Leah's Waltz, The Chocolate Round O, or 6 for the 6 Proud Walkers, you'll know the answer is yes. *Ease and Elegance*, Fried Herman's classic sixth book of dances newly reprinted and available from CDSS, contains these and many more dances that add ease and elegance to your dancing pleasure. So many fine dances are waiting for an invitation from you to light up the dance floor!

The story of how it came to be reprinted after being out of print for almost a decade reveals a puzzle often encountered when trying to follow the posthumous wishes of any artist. What did the artist really intend?

Marking a Special Anniversary: As those of you who know me are aware, I've been a devotee of Fried Herman's choreography and approach to English country dancing for decades. The same holds true for joyful dancer Susan St Germain of Country Dancers of Westchester (CDW) and Jane Bridges, Fried's literary executor. The three of us were determined to recognize the tenth anniversary of Fried's death this coming January. When I asked Jane Bridges what would be the most meaningful way to mark the occasion, she immediately answered, "Reprint *Ease and Elegance*."

Susan contacted two printers in Westchester, one of whom, Airborn Printing and Graphics, had worked for Fried in the past and remembered her well. When they submitted the winning bid, Susan obtained an original camera-ready copy of *Ease and Elegance* from Jane Fried and brought it to the print shop along with an extra printed copy that was among the many papers I had inherited from Fried.

4 Dances Missing: When the printers looked through the camera-ready copy, they discovered that over the years, the Scotch tape that Fried had used to paste up her artwork had stained the paper to the point where many pages were unusable. So they resorted to the extra printed



Fried at Country Dance New York's True Brit Weekend, 1993. Photo courtesy of David Green. Learn more about Fried online—the 2006 Lifetime Contribution Award Recipient

copy that I offered as backup. When the first proof came through, Susan discovered that four dances were missing! Oh, no, what else was different from the published version that both Susan and I had in our collections?

To make a definitive comparison, Susan carefully read through the printer's proof, comparing it to the camera-ready copy and the published version, and in the process discovered other discrepancies. Apparently the bound copy that I had inherited was probably a late, very convincing, but incomplete mock-up of the final text. To complicate matters, the camera-ready copy and the published versions also diverged in other places.

Discrepancies and Their Resolution: At Faina Ross's suggestion, we checked the Table of Contents and Index and found one dance repeated in the index. There were also some chord differences in comparing the three versions. Susan took the initiative to confer with CDW pianist Peter Roberts, to get his input as to which chords should be used. Happily, she and he were of the same opinion about which worked best, and so just like the late Leah Barkan before him, Peter helped with the chording of one of Fried's books!

In the case of "Iantha the Lovely," the printer's version had no chords, so the decision was made to swap in that page from the version that had them. And finally for the dance "Since First I Saw Your Face," which had two sets of chords, Susan and Peter decided to leave things that way, so that musicians would have a choice.

The reprinted edition of *Ease and Elegance* is on acid-free paper and should last as long as Fried's unique choreography and insights into English country dancing continue to appeal to dancers and musicians. Be sure to read the hugely important essay on ECD in the book's front section, and then delve into the many delightful dances waiting to be discovered or rediscovered.

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