
May Tornado Story

TAPESTRY FOLKDANCE CENTER HISTORY

by Ceil Swanson

Here in Minneapolis, before we [Tapestry Folkdance Center] had our own building and dance floor, we rented in a community center. We danced in an old junior high gymnasium. After hosting decades of sweaty teenagers, the gym reeked of their funk and their hormones, which were steeped into every surface. After the first vigorous Contra, it smelled to high heaven. The ceiling tiles also had the propensity to randomly come loose and crash onto the dance floor.

One steamy night in late May, we heard the tornado sirens blaring. If you know anything about the Midwest, you know to take tornados and violent weather seriously, but we kept dancing until we were told to stop, then directed to the hallway where there were no windows (to be safe from flying glass, just in case). The electricity had gone out, so the emergency lighting only illuminated one end of the hallway. We stood around for awhile, but then (and I don't remember whose idea it was), we lined up down the dark hallway, the band played acoustically, the caller bellowed out the calls, and we danced! I vividly remember how dark it was at the far end of the hall, and was glad that the experienced dancers kept things in order.

I was relatively new to dancing, and I was deeply impressed with how avid and dedicated the community was, that we were dancing up a storm inside, as the storm raged outside. After the all clear, we headed home, which took significantly longer than usual, as straight-line winds had knocked down hundreds of trees, and the roads were frequently completely blocked. I think that was the night that I realized that I was totally hooked on Contra dancing!



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