



## KENNY FARRIS

Laurel, Maryland

Kenny has been square dancing for 58 years and calling regularly for 52. He is club caller for a one MAINSTREAM club, a daytime Basic group, and two PLUS clubs, and one PLUS DBD club. Kenny has also been the guest caller for many clubs, festivals, and weekends throughout Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, and New Jersey. He is member of NCASDLA (the National Capital Area Square Dance Leaders Association), having served as Vice President, Membership Chairman, Class Level Chairman, and Editor of the association publication "Mike & Monitor." A member of CALLERLAB, he has served on several panels, is past chairman of the MSQS Committee, contributed to the Standard Choreographic Applications Manuals, and has served on the MAINSTREAM and the PLUS committees. He has been recognized in the *American Square Dance* magazine and featured in the *Washingtonian* magazine. He has also appeared on the *Today Show* with Willard Scott.

Dancers enjoy not only Kenny's singing, but his choreographic creativity as well. He has authored several calls, including one (Box the Top) which received world-wide attention as a Callerlab Plus Quarterly Selection. For eight years Kenny authored a monthly column called *Choreo Corner* for Calls 'n Cues, the square dance magazine for the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

Kenny and Mary, his wife of 45 years, met square dancing. They have two grown children, Michael and Kristin, who also enjoy square dancing and have blessed the family with four grandchildren. Kenny has a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics and worked as senior IT professional for the Congressional Budget Office of the United States Congress until his retirement in 2008.

He enjoys square dancing with his wife, working in the yard or around the house, watching science-fiction, and playing games on his I-pad. And he is always up for a game of Cribbage, horseshoes, or corn-hole. They are now enjoying their new mountain home getaway outside Berkeley Springs, West Virginia.

In 1964, Kenny's square dancing parents, Bud and Anna Mary Farris, took Kenny to beginner classes, from which he graduated on December 5<sup>th</sup> of that year-- his tenth birthday! He called his first singing call at the Jacks and Jills in May of 1966. He dabbled in singing calls for several years with repeat performances at the Jacks and Jills and with Norm Iglehart giving him the microphone at the Spurs 'n' Spice teen square dance club once each dance. The calling career had a false start when Kenny missed his first very first calling engagement in June 1970, a first-niter at his church, as he was in the hospital recovering from an appendectomy! He came back

strong the next fall. First there was a first-niter for a foreign exchange group at his church. A first-niter at another local church soon followed. Then, later in that fall of 1970, he took over a youth class in Lanham from an ailing caller.

Soon, Kenny was booked around town and out of town, subbing for such popular callers as Chuck Stinchcomb, Ed Sparough, and Decko Deck. He had to pass up permanent club offers while he attended college at Frostburg State College in western Maryland from 1972 until 1975. While there he established a square dance club on campus, got bookings in western Maryland and in nearby Pennsylvania, and taught a class in West Virginia. He returned often to the Washington area on weekends to call for local clubs.

After graduating from college in summer of 1975 (in three years), Kenny returned to the DC metro area. He became cub caller for the Jacks & Jills (Adelphi, MD) that fall, following the death of Ed Sparough. He also took over Ed's teen club, the Yellow Rockers (Camp Springs, MD), and started a new teen club, the Farris Wheelers, in Adelphi—this club was dancing five squares of youth at its peak. At the Sashayers (Arlington, VA), one of the earliest Dance-by-Definition clubs, Kenny co-called under the tutelage of Decko Deck. He also became a regular on Paul Hartman's renowned Saturday night Randolph Summer Series.

For several years he ran the Spring Squarenade, an all-day multi-caller teen festival that drew over 300 youth dancers from all over Maryland and Virginia. He also called several years for the Dixie Teen Twirlers' winter "Bridge the Generation Gap Dance" and for their June Camp Highroad weekend. For five years he was a featured caller at the Washington Fall Cotillion at the Washington Hilton Hotel. Other major dance events included: the Ingleside Festival in Staunton, VA for four years; the Raystown Country Festival (Huntingdon, PA) for seven years; the Silver Dollar Festival (Fredericksburg, VA) for eight years; the 5<sup>th</sup> Monday dinner dances at Paul's Place in Annapolis for many years; the summer series with Nick Petrone for many years; the 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday in the Park series at Cherry Hill campground for twelve years; and the Summer in the Park dances with Ozzie Ostlund (and later Tim Pilachowski) for many years. Attending, as a dancer, every WASCA Festival since 1964, Kenny was asked on two occasions to fill in at the last minute for ailing Festival staff callers.

He and Mac McCall put on the Yorktowne Ball in York, PA for twenty years, He ran the Cacapon Getaway in West Virginia for over twenty years. And he ran the Winter Wonder Weekend in Lancaster (later Harrisburg), Pennsylvania for 23 years, twenty with Hal Barnes and the last three with Mike Callahan of Rochester, New York.

Kenny was club caller for the Allemande Leftovers family club (Reisterstown, MD) for three years. He began calling for the Andrews Jet Squares (Camp Springs, MD) and for the Village Swingers (Silver Spring, MD) in the fall of 1978. And he was hired by the Schnabelles and Beaux (Silver Spring, MD) in the fall of 1979 to be their club caller. They soon changed their name to the Ferris Wheelers and grew to as many as 16 squares of members in the 1980's. The Villagers (Columbia/Ellicott City, MD) employed Kenny as co-club-caller for over ten years. And the Gerrymanders (Kensington, MD) hired him in the Fall of 2003. Since June of 2009 he has worked with a group of seniors every Wednesday morning at the Riderwood Senior Living Community in Silver Spring, MD. His newest regular gig since 2018 is calling once a month for the Crossfires PLUS DBD club in Laurel, Maryland.

Kenny has taught many classes over the years for most of the aforementioned clubs as well as for the Tom Thumbs (Ellicott City, MD) and Friendship Squares (Linthicum, MD). He also ran

his own classes through Parks and Rec at the Adelphi Mill for over twenty years. The last several years at the Mill, Kenny brought in Jim Wass and Virgil Forbes to form the Square Roots, a multi-cycle teaching program simultaneously conducting three classes on three floors.

Kenny has called at many benefit dances over the years including: the Cancer Dance at Fort Belvoir; Toys 4 Tots; Leukemia Dance; several Heart Association Dances (one which he organized); Cystic Fibrosis; and others. One benefit near Baltimore raised over \$2000 to purchase a new wheelchair for a young friend of square dancers. He is most proud of the benefit that he organized with several of Hal Barnes' clubs to raise funds to help out the Barnes family after the tragic accident suffered by their daughter Allison. This event, attended by hundreds and supported by many more, raised over \$25,000 to help pay for an electronic wheelchair and home remodeling necessary to accommodate a wheelchair.

Kenny currently calls for Village Swingers, Ferris Wheelers, Gerrymanders, Crossfires, and his Riderwood seniors group. He instructs new dancers as they join in at Riderwood. And he calls the occasional first-niter square dances for churches, synagogues, birthday parties, weddings, and corporate events.

He is not sitting still in his retirement.

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*bio updated 05/25/22*

#### Club Schedule:

<b>Ferris Wheelers</b>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> / 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays</i>	PLUS
Sep - May	Silver Spring, MD	
<b>Gerrymanders</b>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday</i>	PLUS
Year-round	Kensington, MD	(Club dances every Wednesday)
<b>Village Swingers</b>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays</i>	MAINSTREAM
Sep - May	Rockville, MD	
<b>Crossfires</b>	<i>3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays</i>	PLUS DBD
Year-round	Laurel, MD	(Club dances 1 <sup>st</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sundays)
<b>Riderwood group</b>	<i>Every Wednesday am.</i>	Beginner / BASIC / MS
Year-round	Silver Spring, MD - Riderwood Senior Living Community	