

*Santa Barbara Country Dance Society***Fiddlers' Convention***They're at it Again!*

It's October again, and that means Fall in the air, kids in school, hot days, and the Old Time Fiddlers' Convention. For twenty years, the second Sunday in October has been the host to jam sessions, great music, a little dancing, and an Old-time Fiddle Contest. This year the 21st annual Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention will be held on October 11. The location is the Stow House, 304 N. Los Carneros Rd., Goleta. The festivities start at 10 am and continue until 5:30.

The jam sessions start early, and go all day. All around the house, under the canopy of beautiful trees, both small and large, semi private and all inclusive sessions abound. So bring your instrument and be prepared to play!

The contest maintains a unique tradition, one in the spirit of fun. All are invited to participate. The only rules are, three minutes maximum and the piece you choose must be at least fifty years old. There are categories for fiddle, banjo, song, group, and "other". "Other" includes any instrument you play. There are beginning, intermediate, and advanced divisions in each category.

This breadth of division and instrument category insures a wide variety of musical treats. Every year, at least one novice fiddler, often from La Rae Johnson's adult education fiddle class or one of Phil Salazar's students, will challenge his or her nerves, and step up to the mike. There is something admirable and inspiring to see people take the risk of such a public performance.

On the other extreme, it's hard to forget Chris Floyd's (ex Growling Old Geezer) dazzling flatpicked rendition of "Over the Waterfall". He took first place, advanced other category. Past winners of the advanced fiddling category include Michael Mendelson and Jim Wimmer, two of our finest local fiddlers, which attests to the caliber of fiddling likely to occur. With so many great musicians around, you know it will be a feast for the ears.

So come on out, bring your instrument, hang out in the sun, and be prepared for fun!

Giving Weight*A Weighty Topic*

"Giving weight" is a thing we callers and dancers often talk about, and wonder why some people are naturals, others never seem to get, but most develop. So now, I take this opportunity to write a few words about it, in the hope that it might expand discussion and experimentation, and thus people might look at themselves and see if they can (or need) to take the next step in improving their dancing.

First, what is meant by giving weight? I think of it in terms of connection. The limp arm "fish grip" is the opposite of what establishes this connection. A firm connection, support in the arms, bent elbows, unlocked knees, coming from your center of gravity, moving with confidence, all this goes into this concept of giving weight.

In ballroom dance they call it making a frame, or, "framing". When a couple stands in ballroom position (close to our swing position) with the man's right hand behind the woman's back, her left on his shoulder, and the other hands joined in "free space", they make a "frame", a kind of circle with their arms and body.

If this frame is well supported, if both are operating from their center of gravity, and they are pushing ever so slightly against each other, causing a bit of tension in their arms and carriage, then they are ready to respond immediately to each other, with hardly any work. Information about where you are going and what figure is next is transmitted almost immediately through this frame. If instead one person does not hold his or her own, the other person has to carry the "weight" of both, and the conduit of communication along the frame is all but lost. This is extremely tiring for the person carrying the weight.

This is important: giving weight actually makes it easier to dance. It increases efficiency, makes it easier to get around, makes the connection between you and your partners stronger, and makes dancing all around, much more pleasurable.

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Mr. Sam's Ramble

© Michael Mendelson, 1992

(Santa Barbara, CA)

G D7

G (C) (D7) G

(G) G D7

G (D7) G

A polka! Named for my feline friend of the past 13 years, who loves to stampede through the house, leaping over furniture, and bouncing off the walls. This one's for you, Sam!

Giving Weight

So, how can you learn to give weight? The first, and most important way is to learn to dance from your center of gravity. This is somewhere in your lower abdomen. Physicists will tell you that this changes depending on how you are holding your body but for dancing purposes this is the "center" from where we move, the resting center of gravity.

One way to find it is to spread your feet apart, and stand with your knees bent. Bounce up and down from your knees, forward and back. Feel where the weight of your torso centers: the part that you seem to be moving around, where the "heft" is. This is the center that you move from.

To see it's importance, try this Aikido exercise with a friend. Stand with your feet under your shoulders, knees slightly bent, relaxed. Imagine your weight at the top of your forehead, put your attention there, breath a couple times, focusing on that lofty location. Then have your friend gently push your shoulder, and feel how well balanced you are. Now, take your stance again, this time putting your focus on the center of your lower abdomen, your "center". Breath again, from this center, and then have your friend again give the push. See if you can tell a difference.

It is from this "center" that our best dancing

comes. I find that having that center face the direction of movement opens up my dancing. When the center faces my partner it gives a firm support and openness that makes for great dancing. When the center leads my dancing, it makes dancing almost effortless.

In contradancing, the frame can be between two people, as in allemandes, swings, or promenades, or more, as in circles, lines, basket swings, and the like. When the "frame" is created, it transmits the movement throughout the figure. Weight in a circle, supportive arms coming from your center, increases the awareness of all in the circle, making it one of the most rewarding and satisfying figures. Weight in an allemande not only makes it possible to complete the figure on time, but if it's a leisurely one it makes it feel great. Giving (and getting) weight increases the flow, and improves the ability to move through the figures, as well just increasing the all around fun of dancing.

So look at yourself, see if you are a "fish gripper"; experiment with your sense of center; and see how it changes your dancing; and when it all comes down, give weight!

Erik Hoffman

Fall 1992

Old-Time Contra Dance Calendar

Santa Barbara Country Dance Society, P.O. Box 21904, Santa Barbara, CA 93121 (805) 969-1511

Come dance on the finest dance floor in the West at the Carrillo Ballroom, or under the stars at Oak Park. Join the fun! Dance to the irresistible rhythms of a live old-time string band. We do flowing contras of New England, colorful square dances of the Old West, plus a few old-time couple dances such as waltzes and hambos.

Introductory Workshop

There is an introductory workshop before each regular weekend dance! Come a half-hour early to learn the basic moves. No prior experience is necessary, as all the dances are taught and prompted. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing. Generally dances become more challenging as the evening progresses.

Phone: For the latest dance information, call the SBCDS 24-Hour Dance Hotline: 805/969-1511

- Sun Sept. 6 CB Our travelling Erik Hoffman returns from the road and the Tecolote Tune Twisters come out of their summer hiatus to kick off our fall season. Welcome back, guys! We missed you. 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Fri Sept. 11 OP With Carl Magagnosc calling under the stars and Kitchen Junket supplying the tunes, our last Oak Park dance for the season should not be missed! 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sun Sept. 20 CB If you didn't go to Harvest Moon, come to this dance to experience the enchanting, honey-voiced Kathy Anderson and the captivating Panel of Experts. Guaranteed to be a high energy dance! 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$6.
- Sat Sept. 26 CRP Swing Easy will provide cool rhythms for Carl Magagnosc's calling and our dancing enjoyment! 7:30-10:30. Intro 7:00. \$5.
- Sun Oct. 4 CB The dynamic duo, Kathy Fanning & Cara Moore, will be accompanied by the dynamic quartet, Dierdra, Erik, Greg & Kristina (formerly named Carik, but looking for a new name). Any suggestions? 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sun Oct. 18 CB Kathy Fanning makes a solo flight with the New Young Buzzards. Watch out! 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sat Oct. 24 CRP Drew Tronvig (who really knows how to put on a fabulous dance camp!) calls while Swing Easy plays up a storm. 7:30-10:30. Intro 7:00. \$5.
- Sun Nov. 1 CB Erik Hoffman is the macabre Master of Ceremonies for our Halloween Dance. The Tecolote Tune Twisters from Transylvania will strain out ghoulish melodies. Be sure to wear an outlandish costume (no cheerleaders allowed)! 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sun Nov. 15 CB Cara Moore & Erik Hoffman join forces with The Growling Old Geezers to keep us on our toes. This should be a good old dance! 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sun Nov. 22 CB Don't eat too much at the Thanksgiving Potluck - you'll need to be nimble to keep up with frisky Cara Moore & Kathy Fanning and the Tecolote Tune Twisters! Potluck: 5:30, \$1. Dance: 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sat Nov. 28 CRP We ring out the fall season with Carl Magagnosc's kinetic calling! Turtle Creek will play their stirring melodies for our dancing pleasure! 7:30-10:30. Intro 7:00. \$5.

Location Key: CB Carrillo Ballroom, 100 East Carrillo Street, Santa Barbara
CRP Carpinteria Community Church, 1111 Vallecito, Carpinteria
OP Oak Park Dance Platform on the corner of Junipero Street and Calle Real, Santa Barbara

OTHER EVENTS IN OUR VICINITY

- OJAI: Friday, Sept. 4th; Saturday, Oct. 10th; Thursday, Dec. 31st. Ojai Art Center, 113 S. Montgomery Street, Ojai. 7:30-10:30. Intro 7:00. Info: 805/646-0117 (\$5. Art Center members \$4).
- SLO: Second Saturdays. SLO Grange Hall, 2880 S. Broad Street, San Luis Obispo. 8:00-11:00. Intro 7:30. Info: 805/544-7924 (\$5).
- PISMO: Fourth Fridays. Pismo Beach Veterans Hall, 780 Bellow Ave, Pismo Beach. 8:00-11:00. Intro 7:30. Info: 805/544-7924 (\$5).
- IRISH SESSIONS: Second & fourth Sundays. Irish music jams, songs & dance. Upstairs at Rusty's Pizza on the corner of Carrillo & Bath (Free).
- LOS ANGELES AREA: Contra dances every weekend and every Thursday. Call their dance hotline: 808/951-2003.
- THE 21ST ANNUAL FIDDLER'S CONVENTION will be held at Stow House on Sunday, October 11th. 304 North Los Carneros, Goleta.

Join the **Santa Barbara Country Dance Society**. Members of the **Santa Barbara Country Dance Society** receive a \$1 discount at all regular dances (generally those in the main listing). Membership is \$18 per calendar year, from January 1, to December 31. The cost is pro-rated for each calendar quarter, so, from April 1 - December 31, the cost is only \$10.50. From July, \$9. And during the last quarter starting in October it's \$4.50. To join simply send a check to:

SBCDS
PO Box 21904
Santa Barbara, CA 93121

LOOKING FOR A WAY TO JOIN IN MAKING
OUR DANCES HAPPEN?

SBCDS is looking for:

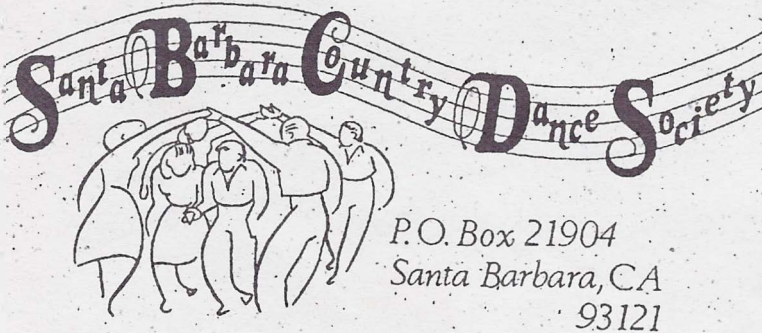
- Someone to greet people and help with signing in at the door at some dances.
- Someone with a garage to store dance decorations (including the famous Harvest Moon Paracute!).

If you are one of these people, call Bob Hamber at 964-1445, or leave a message on the Dance Hotline, 969-1511.

Lost something? Our lost & found is kept at the Carrillo Ballroom, as at the front desk at one of our dances.

Dance Star

Got something you want to write about or say about dance? The Dance Star is always looking for articles, letters, artwork, or ? All communication and contributions should be sent to SBCDS, or call and leave a message at (805) 969-9777.



Address Correction Requested.
Forwarding & Return Postage
Gauranteed.

You will not receive SBCDS mailings after date on label unless you sign in at a dance or notify us.