

Santa Barbara Country Dance Society

dance star

Volume 8 Number 1

Summer 1997

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A Hummer of a Summer

It could be a bummer of a summer if you don't get to at least one dance camp or weekend this summer. A few are listed below along with other highlights.

May 24-25: Our eighth annual **Sprung Floor Dance Festival** is happening any second now if it hasn't happened already. Head for Oak Park on Saturday, May 24, at 2:30 p.m. for a free dance, then a potluck at 5, and our first Oak Park dance of the year at 7 p.m. Afterwards join the crowd at Rusty's Pizza on Carrillo. Get over to the Carrillo Ballroom on Sunday at 1 p.m. and dance on the cantilevered floor until 1 a.m. the next morning, Memorial Day. The Saturday night dance features caller **Charlie Fenton** and music by **Larry Unger & Elke Baker**. They are joined on Sunday by callers **Warren Blier, Chuck Galt, James Hutson, Carl Magagnosc** and **Susan Michaels**; and by bands **Growling Old Geezers, Hot Flashes, Kitchen Junket** and **Spin Cycle**.

June 13-15: Music enlivens the hills again as **KCBX** presents the **Live Oak Music Festival** at Camp Live Oak near Lake Cachuma. (805) 781-3030, <<http://www.kcbx.org/liveoak>>.

June 15: **Erik Hoffman**, and **Bruce and Audrey Molsky**, will descend from the festival and rise to the challenge to call and play, respectively, for our dance which happens to be on Father's Day.

June 22: Our Solstice weekend dance has been unilaterally designated "A Mid-summer Night's Dance." **Drew Tronvig** is manager of mirth, music by the **Chameleons**.

The Bay Area CDS runs three week-long camps this summer, described in the

correction

Erik Hoffman's article "Putting on the Style," in the spring issue, is Copyright © 1997 by Erik Hoffman.

next three paragraphs. All receive "thumbs way up" from local dancers who have attended them in previous years.

June 28-July 5: Family Week, at the Alta Sierra camp, reports that space is still available for singles, couples and families. (707) 765-6559, <emjer@netdex.com>.

July 6-13: Sierra Swing American Week, also at the Alta Sierra Camp, has space for men and women. (510) 215-2785, <smolian@aol.com>.

July 12-19: English Week, at the Mendocino Woodlands camp, is full, but with a short waiting list. (415) 856-3038, <perner@hpl.hp.com>.

August 29-September 1: Labor Day Weekend Dance Camp at Alta Sierra features callers **Susan Kevra** and the ever-popular **TBD**; music from **Bill Tomczak, Peter Barnes, David Langford, Stuart Kenney**, and more **TBD**. (310) 459-7179, see **STAR GAZER**, back page

comments & opinion

Absolutely No Contras!

This article originally appeared in the Usenet newsgroup rec.folk-dancing under the above title-in-jest, in response to a discussion ("thread") entitled "Absolutely No Squares."

I've been following the "No Squares" thread with interest, wondering when to jump in. Most of the good things have been said by now, but I still feel moved to contribute my nickel's worth.

When I started dancing in 1956, and even when I began calling in 1964, what we did was square dancing. I don't mean that we did "modern western" or "club-style" squares, although the line between styles was hazier then than now. I mean that we did squares and a few couple dances. Contras were unheard of.

My first exposure to contras came around 1965. I danced to **Ralph Page's** calling at Folk Dance House in NYC and at **Maine Folk Dance Camp**, and to **Dudley Laufman's** calling when he visited my summer camp and again when he invited

us campers to his house for a real kitchen junket. I fell in love with contras...the hypnotic repetitive rhythm of the music, the ebb and flow of the figures...and I've loved them ever since. *But* I had already fallen in love with squares, and I've never lost that love either. Fortunately, the two loves aren't mutually exclusive.

For the first several years after that, I tried to include at least one or two contras in all my programs. And it was like pulling teeth to get anyone to do contras. Dancers complained that contras were too hard to learn, too complicated, too monotonous, took too long to set up, fell apart if one couple stumbled, forced them to dance with everyone instead of a hand-picked set, and so on. I'm sure that many of their complaints stemmed from my inexperience with contras and my resultant awkwardness in presenting and teaching them, as contrasted with my ease in teaching and calling squares.

Sound familiar? I think a large part of our attitude toward squares and contras depends on how we've been conditioned to see them.

Tony Parkes

<eltigre@world.std.com>

Dance for Life

Donate blood...get a free dance

The Tri-Counties Blood Bank needs new donors and so, in conjunction with the SBCDS, announces a special program: a free dance pass to those who donate blood during the month of July.



(805) 965-7037

902 Laguna St. • Santa Barbara

Pass valid July-August, SBCDS dances only

comments & opinion

Ojai Dance Testimonial

Ojai, only a short drive from Santa Barbara, is a different world—a unique rural valley, a center of spiritual retreats and pilgrimages for 100 years with private schools, health resorts and hot springs, various music and arts festivals, homes of the rich and famous, a unique outdoors bookshop, and many great restaurants.

The Ojai Contra Dances are especially intimate, artsy, folksy, and family-friendly. Due to the generous hard work of organ-

The best things happen
when you're dancing.

Ojai Contra Dances flyer

izer Karin Dron, and more recently Ginny Mickelson too, the dances have left a legacy of wonderful memories for many of us over the years. Various interesting dancers who never make it to the Santa Barbara dances show up at Ojai.

Being so close, I'm surprised that more Santa Barbara dancers don't take advantage of the opportunity to vacation in Ojai, to get away from the coastal fog, explore Ojai, have a nice dinner there, and then come to the dance.

The dances are held at the Ojai Art Center in a beautiful, cozy setting with a good wooden dance floor and an adjoining room with a fireplace and comfortable sofas where children can camp out or play. It is a unique place where anyone could show up—a movie star or perhaps Ojai's Beatrice Wood, the "Mama of Dada," still a working potter at age 104.

Each month the dance floor is surrounded by a special exhibit of Ojai artists, everything from sculptures and ceramics to paintings and drawings. Some are quite colorful and unique as backdrops for dancing, and on occasion the exhibit includes a drawing or painting of an Ojai dancer who models from time to time.

Come to Ojai! Many of us carpool to the dances, so if you need a ride from Santa Barbara let us know.

William Noack
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Triangle Area Contra Dancing

On a recent East Coast business trip, I had the opportunity to spend a weekend contra dancing in the Triangle area of North Carolina, which consists of the tricity of Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill. Between the two local dance groups (somewhat competing) there is usually at least one dance each weekend, and occasional workshops (lindy hop, waltz, etc.)

I have made numerous trips to this area in the last several years, and I am always pleasantly surprised at the diversity of the callers and musicians. I have been asked several times about the differences between East and West Coast dances (musicians, callers and dancers). My answer is usually along these lines (with acknowledgment that my "East Coast" experience is mostly the Triangle area and my "West Coast" experience is mostly Southern California):

I think there is a greater diversity of music on the East Coast than on the West Coast. As individuals, I think the musicians are comparably talented, but perhaps the East Coast musicians are "closer to the roots" of Appalachian and New England tunes than the ones in Southern California. When these musicians play in bands, I hear many more tunes than what I hear here, and I hear arrangements that are more varied. For example, arrangements where one instrument "takes over the melody" for a period of time. The music is also louder (my personal preference) and often has a more driving beat. Wild Asparagus, in my opinion the premier contra dance band in the country, is an excellent example of this style of playing.

I find the East and West Coast callers in general to have similar ranges of talent and experience. You have great callers, just OK callers and less inexperienced callers. However, there are more well known experienced callers on the East Coast, like George Marshall, Cis Hinkle, Ron Bucha-

news & announcements

Give Blood & Dance Free

A free dance pass is yours for answering the Tri-Counties Blood Bank's call for new donors. Stop by the Blood Bank at 902 Laguna St. in Santa Barbara during the month of July and donate a pint of blood. For your community service you'll receive a coupon for a free evening of contra dancing in Santa Barbara in July or August. For donation hours or to make an appointment, call the Tri-Counties Blood Bank at (805) 965-7037.

Bring Buds & Dance Free

Bring two buddies, friends, relatives, colleagues or fiances (?) to an SBCDS dance (or one each to two different dances) and you're eligible for a free dance pass. And remember, new dancers get a pass good for their second visit.

nan, Robert Cromartie and Gene Hubert, and therefore you encounter them more often at local dances (a real treat).

I like the energy level of the West Coast dancers. I see more embellishments, more twirls, more end of the line dancing and more variations (men and women dancing together), etc. East Coast dancers seem more traditional in their dance style and perhaps more conservative. When East Coast women have a chance to dance "West Coast" style, they often enjoy the change and higher energy level.

The particular weekend I attended featured May Daze '97, a local mini-dance weekend at a community center.

I really liked several aspects of the weekend's schedule. First was a workshop Gene Hubert called. You might recognize Gene's name as associated with dances he has written, but he is also an excellent caller (too bad he only calls locally in the
see **TRIANGLE**, back page



Those who dance are thought mad
by those who hear not the music.



Unknown



Summer 1997

Santa Barbara Contra Dance Calendar

plus Ojai and San Luis Obispo listings

Calendar produced by Santa Barbara Country Dance Society • P.O. Box 21904 • Santa Barbara, CA 93121-1904 • (805) 969-1511

Come enjoy a dance to the irresistible rhythms of a live old-time string band. We'll dance flowing contras of New England, a thriving North American tradition, plus other delights. All dances are taught and prompted: no experience or partner neces-

sary. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes.

Come for the **Introductory Workshop** held 30 minutes before each dance evening. Also, generally, the simpler dances are earlier in the evening.

Santa Barbara dances are sponsored by the Santa Barbara Country Dance Society and are held from 7 to 10 p.m.

Dances at the Carrillo Ballroom are held every Sunday, cosponsored by SB Parks & Recreation Dept. And don't miss our occasional under-the-stars Oak Park dances.

SBCDS Dance Hotline: (805) 969-1511.

San Luis Obispo dances are sponsored by the Central Coast Country Dance Society.

Dance in SLO on the second Saturday of each month from 8 to 11 p.m. International folk dancing precedes at 5:30. Separate \$3 admission includes \$1 off the contra dance.

SLO Danceline: (805) 541-0201 or Cynthia at (805) 783-0112.

Ojai dances are sponsored by Ojai Contra Dances and are held from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. For more information call Ginny at (805) 646-0832.

Admission for all dances is \$6 unless otherwise noted.

Key to Dance Locations

CB	Santa Barbara Carrillo Recreation Center Carrillo Ballroom 100 E. Carrillo St.
OP	Oak Park Junipero at Calle Real, SB
SLO	San Luis Obispo 801 Grand Ave. Veteran's Hall East of 101, Cal Poly exit
OA	Ojai Art Center 113 S. Montgomery

DATE	LOC	CALLER • BAND • Etc.
May 31 Sat	OA	Drew Tronvig • Michael Mendelson & Suzie Richmond
June 1 Sun	CB	Jonathan Southard • Kitchen Junket
June 7 Sat	OP	Gary Shapiro • Michael's Mixed Nuts • No one's allergic to <i>these</i> nuts.
June 8 Sun	CB	James Hutson • Growling Old Geezers
June 14 Sat	SLO	Graham Hempel • Lime in the Harp
June 15 Sun	CB	Erik Hoffman • Bruce & Audrey Molsky • (\$7) Direct from Live Oak Fest.
June 22 Sun	CB	Drew Tronvig • Chameleons Let's call this "A Midsummer Night's Dance" in honor of Solstice weekend.
June 28 Sat	OA	Susan Michaels • Chameleons
June 29 Sun	CB	Jeff Spero • Michael's Mixed Nuts
July 6 Sun	CB	Jonathan Southard • Growling Old Geezers Please check your fireworks at the door. We'll generate our own inside.
July 12 Sat	SLO	Martha Wild • Growling Old Geezers • Go GOG-Wild!
July 13 Sun	CB	Chuck Galt • Michael Mendelson & Suzie Richmond
July 20 Sun	CB	Susan Michaels • Spin Cycle • The band that goes around comes around.
July 27 Sun	CB	Gary Shapiro • Chameleons
Aug 3 Sun	CB	Carl Magagnosc • Growling Old Geezers Why not celebrate <i>el fin de Fiesta</i> right here.
Aug 9 Sat	SLO	James Hutson • Growling Old Geezers
Aug 10 Sun	CB	Jonathan Southard • Immortal Lemmings
Aug 16 Sat	OA	TBD • TBD
Aug 17 Sun	CB	Susan Michaels • Spin Cycle
Aug 23 Sat	OP	Carl Magagnosc • Kristina & Her Right-Hand Stars Dancing under the stars and to them too!
Aug 24 Sun	CB	Gary Shapiro • Kristina & Her Right-Hand Stars
Aug 31 Sun	CB	<i>Dance cancelled.</i>

June 1997

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July 1997

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August 1997

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Triangle from page 2

Triangle). His calling style is low key, but he is very precise and knows the dances extremely well (he calls dances by other composers as well as his own).

During his workshop, in addition to no-walkthrough contras, which I always enjoy, he presented square dances he has written specifically for contra dancers. Now, I am normally among the group of dancers who express a strong preference for contras over squares, but I found myself enjoying Gene's squares tremendously. Not only were the patterns much more "contra-palatable," but he taught the patterns much more quickly than a regular square dance. (My objections to squares are normally the lack of challenge in the patterns and how long it takes to walk through a square dance.) Gene has addressed both of my objections very successfully. I would encourage local callers reading this letter to contact Gene to get copies of these recent square dances he has written.

The last dance Gene called was unique in my contra dance experience. Gene



Star Gazer from first page

<tronvig@pobox.com>.

September 19-21: As summer ends we raise a canopy to the 14th annual **Harvest Moon Dance Festival**. See the flyer mailed with this issue or contact the SBCDS and we'll send you one. With **Lisa Greenleaf** and **Nightingale** headlining, this is likely to fill up fast. HM registrar **George Cannon** reminds us to post-mark our applications by July 12 for the best chance to get in. (805) 563-0932, <cannon@alumni.caltech.edu>.

October 17-19: The **BACDS Fall Weekend** at **Monte Toyon** near Santa Cruz, features English Country Dance with **Neil Kelley**, contras and squares with **Erik Hoffman**, and an assortment of ritual dance. (415) 856-2259, <meier@SSRL.slac.stanford.edu>.

Check the literature table, or your nearest neighborhood contra addict, for information about these and many other events across the country and beyond.

called a "free-style" contra (for lack of a better term). In this dance, he changed the dance pattern *every time* through the tune. The pattern would normally (but not always) begin with a balance and swing your neighbor, but it would change after that. I have done contra dance "medleys," where the caller changes the pattern three or four times during the dance, but I have never participated in a dance where the pattern changes every time. Calling a free-style contra requires tremendous concentration by the caller, and results in an exceptional high for the dancers.

In talking to Gene after his workshop, he commented that this workshop was only the second time he has ever tried a free-style contra. He needs the right combination of dancer ability and receptivity, floor space (not too big or too small in order to maintain control), and time of day, to make it work. I applaud Gene's efforts and originality in taking contra dancing to yet another new height, and I encourage him to continue his efforts in this direction.

The other part of the schedule I really liked was the planning around the potluck dinner. Rather than stand in a (long, boring) line, you could enjoy couple dancing (waltzes, hambos, etc.) while someone saved your place in the line. Then after you got your dinner, you could listen to a concert while you ate. Someone did some good thinking in this area.

The evening dance was a great high, with an excellent local band, the Stir Fries,

and Robert Cromartie calling: a thoroughly enjoyable combination. Robert is always careful to suggest tunes to the band (or to suggest style and tempo) which matches the level of the dance he is calling. I have noticed some of the local West Coast callers do this, and I hope more of them will do so in the future.

The final late night dance mix was also a welcome addition to the schedule. It was fun to do some Cajun, swing and sleazy blues, a dance style I do not see much of on the West Coast.

So I enjoyed a great weekend of dancing in the Triangle area, and would encourage any of you who are planning trips to the area to check out the local dancing. See you there!

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Santa Barbara Country Dance Society dance star Vol.8 No.1 Summer 1997

A quarterly publication of:

Santa Barbara Country Dance Society
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Santa Barbara, CA 93121-1904

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The SBCDS welcomes articles, letters, illustrations, comments and suggestions.

Opinions expressed are those of the individual authors.



Post Office Box 21904 • Santa Barbara, CA 93121-1904

Forward & Address Correction

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