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# Santa Barbara Country Dance Society dance star

Volume 8 Number 2

Fall 1997



## The Call of Fall

Lots of excuses are coming up to dance, to hear great music, to eat yourself silly and/or to dress up funny. Here's some of our favorites:

*Aug. 29–Sept. 1: Labor Day Weekend Dance Camp at Alta Sierra* features callers **Ron Buchanan** and **Susan Kevra**, and an equally impressive lineup of musicians. (310) 459-7179, <tronvig@pobox.com>.

*Sept. 19–21: 14th annual Harvest Moon Dance Festival.* At press time there's a small waiting list for women and men are being accepted. Contact registrar **George Cannon**, (805) 563-0932, <cannon@alumni.caltech.edu>, for the latest info.

*Sept. 21: The post-Harvest Moon Sunday night dance* is open to the public. The synergy of festival-crazed dancers, well-rested non-festival dancers, the sprung floor and the great Harvest Moon staff of **Lisa Greenleaf** and **Nightingale** will be something to behold if not film for one of those TV shows about the supernatural.

*Sept 19–21: If mountain cabins are more your style*, you might enjoy **Echo Summit Dance Weekend** near Lake Tahoe, with callers **Susan Michaels** and **Erik Hoffman**, bands **For Old Times' Sake** and **Jigsaw**. (916) 921-2976 or 444-2712.

*Oct. 10–12: Camp Sturtevant Hike and Dance Weekend* in the San Gabriel Mountains, with **Susan Michaels**, the **San Gabriel Mountain Boys**, and the last pack mule train in the Angeles National Forest. (310) 831-1975, <navep@earthlink.net>.

*Oct. 17–19: The BACDS Monte Toyon Fall Dance Weekend* features English Country dance with **Neil Kelley**, contras with **Erik Hoffman**, an assortment of English ritual dance, English Ceilidh with **Alisa Dodson**, and music by the **Contra-Bandits** and others. (415) 365-2913, <meier@ssrl.slac.stanford.edu>.

*Nov. 2: The annual Halloween Masquerade Ball* welcomes a creepy caller (to be determined), an orchestra of ogres (also TBD), and a convergence of costumes from the dark depths of your twisted imaginations. Or just pick one up at Longs.

*Nov. 15–16: Fifth annual All-City Acoustical Jam*, 10–4 on Saturday and 12–4 on Sunday at 1535 Santa Barbara St. It's free! Come to play or come to listen, or just to see some of our contra dance musicians up close. Speaking of same, for see STAR GAZER, next page



## comments & opinion

### Dancing the Woman's Role

*This article originally appeared in the Usenet newsgroup, rec.folk-dancing.*

I feel that my dancing improved a great deal when I deliberately invested some time in dancing the woman's role. Any man can try this at a typical contra dance event; there's no requirement for you to be particularly interested in gender-free contras. See what it's like to do a traditional courtesy turn in the woman's role. Try a single twirl. Try multiple twirls. Learn the ladies' chain from a woman's point of view. Learn how to do a ballroom swing with right hand extended and left arm curving around toward your partner's shoulder blade. Learn to roll out at the end of the swing so that you finish the swing on your partner's right.

When I returned to dancing the man's role, I found myself correctly anticipating where I should be (in space and time) to

meet my partner or neighbor for a balance and swing, a courtesy turn, or a right-and-left-through. I found it was possible to simultaneously be a smoother dancer and (if desired) a more energetic dancer, because less physical energy was wasted in "Black & Decker" twirls or meaningless flourishes which contributed nothing to the real intensity of the dance experience. Where spontaneous flourishes occurred, they tended to flow with and be appropriate to the particular dance. Female partners and neighbors responded favorably to these developments, and my enjoyment of dancing increased.

In dancing the woman's role, I discovered for myself what works (and what doesn't work) with regard to timing and twirling. As Russell says, it should be the woman's decision to twirl or not twirl. When some flashy fellow practically yanks your arm out of its socket, you'll understand exactly why some women always refuse to dance with that person. And you'll suddenly have some insights about how to do a courtesy turn—with or without twirls—in such a manner that those same women will always be pleased to share a dance with you.

*Bob Golder  
Woods Hole, Mass.  
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### Dancing in the Northwest

I have just returned from three weeks in the Pacific Northwest where I managed to experience contra dances in Vancouver, Seattle, and a truly unique Ferry Boat Contra Dance.

In the heart of downtown Vancouver amidst the skyscrapers of the peninsula is Robson Square. In winter it holds an outdoor ice rink and in the summer outdoor contra dancing surrounded by outdoor cafes. The dance I attended had about 100 dancers. Included in the band was one musician who showed up to dance at the first Santa Barbara dance upon my return. It's a small world!

The Vancouver group announced that they were getting ready to host their an-  
see NORTHWEST, next page

## Northwest from first page

nual Chehalis Dance Camp (October 3–5), featuring California's favorite caller, Susan Michaels, "who calls using her Zen of the dance method to encourage dancers to enter altered states and reach new heights of euphoria with her humour (Canadian spelling), energy and emphasis on the 'fundamentals—perfect timing, whole set consciousness, and community mind meld. Blend the weird and wonderful with smooth transitions and challenging figures, add a heaping helping of flirtation, and put it all on a speeding locomotive."

It seemed rather strange to have an announcement about Susan Michaels at the Vancouver dance, and then the caller mentioned someone had traveled all the way from Santa Barbara just for that night's dance. (My friend's mother had told the caller about my visit!)

Seattle has several contra dances per week as well as English, Scottish, Irish, Folk, and other dance opportunities. I suppose if someone's life was devoted only to dance, one should live in either Seattle or San Francisco. Unfortunately I could only make it to one Seattle dance, where I ran into a couple of familiar faces vacationing from Santa Barbara. The Seattle dance I attended was called by Kate Charles of Baltimore, and the band was the excellent Singularity with driving Celtic Alasdair Fraser-based tunes. Seattle also gave me a chance to visit the northernmost Trader Joe's in the world!

The most truly unique dance experience of my trip was a Ferry Boat Contra Dance, sponsored every year by the Bellingham Contra Dance Group. Around noon the ferry boat leaves Anacortes and travels to Orcas Island, making a couple of stops en route. Then it turns around and travels back to Anacortes, arriving four hours later. The music was fabulous—the Moving Cloud Orchestra, among best of the West Coast—and the caller was from Port Angeles. It was an incredible dance experience to be able to contra dance and look out the windows on either side to see the beautiful islands and blue ocean moving by. There were about 175 contra dancers coming from as far away as Vancouver and Seattle and we

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If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies.

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Nadine Stare (at age 85)

## Star Gazer from first page

more info call **Tony Johansen**, (805) 687-1045.

*Nov. 23:* Another annual tradition, the **pre-Thanksgiving Potluck** at the Carrillo Ballroom starts promptly at 5:30. Bring a dish to share, tableware and \$1. Turkey provided. Then stay for the dance that follows at the regular time.

*Nov. 30:* Possibly a new tradition, our second **post-Thanksgiving Dessert Potluck** takes place during the break. A perfect opportunity to empty the fridge of those extra pies, or show off your baking skills with a fresh creation. Okay, or your

shopping skills.

*Dec. 31:* Our friends in Ojai are planning a **New Year's Eve Contra and Folk Dance Party**. This is in the early planning stages but **Susan Michaels** is confirmed to call. Contact Ginny, (805) 646-0832, <mickelv@vcss.k12.ca.us>, if you can't wait to learn more.

For more information about these and other events, check the literature table in the lobby during a Carrillo dance, and talk to people with well worn dance shoes.

news & announcements

## Recruiting New Dancers

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

## Every Sunday Status

The every-Sunday dances are just breaking even. In January, the SBCDS Board will decide whether or not to continue based on data from all of 1997.

Meanwhile, the Recreation Center is reserving one Sunday per quarter for other groups. On the summer calendar, it's August 31, and on the fall calendar it's November 9. For the latter date we're trying to line up an alternate site. Check the hotline or our internet resources (see masthead, page 4) as the date nears.

## SBCDS Board Meets

The SBCDS Board of Directors holds meetings about once per month and interested parties are welcome to attend. The meeting date and time is announced at the Sunday dance preceding it, or you can ask the SBCDS hotline or any board member.



took over the whole top half of the ferry boat. After docking at Orcas Island, eliminating the boat's motion, the caller called a dance with a basket swing, then we had a waltz and a potluck lunch. The cost for the whole event was only \$5 for the dance and ferry boat. The Bellingham dance group had bought commuter ferry tickets for less than \$5, so sold the tickets at \$5 to cover the cost of the band and the ferry boat trip. That was the best \$5 I've spent in a while. I'm planning to make it to next year's Ferry Boat Contra Dance. What an experience!

*William Noack*  
<noack@west.net>



# Fall 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, one of the best dance floors anywhere, are held almost every Sunday, co-sponsored by the SB Parks and Recreation Department.

Call the SBCDS Dance Hotline at any time: (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. (Exception: this October.) International folk dancing precedes at 5:30.

SLO 24-hour Danceline: (805) 541-0201.

**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

<b>CB</b>	Santa Barbara Carrillo Ballroom	Carrillo Recreation Center 100 E. Carrillo St
<b>SLO</b>	San Luis Obispo Veteran's Hall	801 Grand Ave. East of 101, Cal Poly exit
<b>OA</b>	Ojai Art Center	113 S. Montgomery

## DATE LOC CALLER • BAND • Etc.

Aug 31	Sun		<i>Carrillo Ballroom dance canceled.</i>
Sept 7	Sun	<b>CB</b>	Gary Shapiro • Growling Old Geezers
Sept 13	Sat		Graham Hempel • Lime in the Harp • Special free dance from 12 noon to 3 p.m. at Marigold Center, Broad St. & Tank Farm Rd., San Luis Obispo.
Sept 13	Sat	<b>SLO</b>	Greg McKenzie • Lime in the Harp
Sept 14	Sun	<b>CB</b>	Jeff Spero • Chameleons
Sept 21	Sun	<b>CB</b>	Lisa Greenleaf • Nightingale • (\$7) This post-Harvest Moon Festival Dance is open to all. With energy and excitement that will transcend the material world, it would be a mistake to miss this event.
Sept 28	Sun	<b>CB</b>	Erik Hoffman • Kristina & Her Right-Hand Stars
Oct 5	Sun	<b>CB</b>	Gary Shapiro • Michael's Mixed Nuts
Oct 12	Sun	<b>CB</b>	Carl Magagnosc • Possum Chasers • David Roine's band's new name.
Oct 18	Sat	<b>OA</b>	Jeff Spero • TBD
Oct 18	Sat	<b>SLO</b>	Warren Blier • Hot Flashes
Oct 19	Sun	<b>CB</b>	Donna Howell • Hot Flashes • Special guest caller from El Paso, Texas.
Oct 26	Sun	<b>CB</b>	James Hutson • Growling Old Geezers
Nov 2	Sun	<b>CB</b>	TBD • TBD • The annual Halloween Masquerade Ball. Costumes: yes!
Nov 8	Sat	<b>SLO</b>	Gary Shapiro • Growling Old Geezers
Nov 9	Sun		<i>Carrillo Ballroom dance canceled.</i> An alternate location may be scheduled. Check the hotline and listen to announcements as the date approaches.
Nov 16	Sun	<b>CB</b>	Gary Shapiro • Kitchen Junket
Nov 22	Sat	<b>OA</b>	James Hutson • Growling Old Geezers
Nov 23	Sun	<b>CB</b>	Carl Magagnosc • Michael Mendelson, Suzie Richmond, Mike Mullins & Tom Lee • Preceding the dance it's our annual pre-Thanksgiving potluck at 5:30. Admission is a dish to share and \$1. Turkey provided.
Nov 30	Sun	<b>CB</b>	Leda Shapiro • Michael's Mixed Nuts • During the break, a dessert potluck for those leftover pies. Fresh creations are welcome too, of course.

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<b>30</b>						

comments & opinion

## Psst...Pass It On! or Guts and Glory

What good is a skill if you can't pass it on?

I believe that those who are the good contra dancers among us have the pleasure and responsibility of passing on their skills. This is done by example, and by dancing with those less or differently skilled.

A definition of a good dancer was discussed at length by Erik Hoffman in the spring issue. (I still have a few copies and would be glad to give one to anyone who is missing it.) For this article, I'm thinking that good dancers:

- Start figures on time
- Have a good time
- Help those around them have a good time
- Give weight
- Stay centered
- Dance safely
- Continue to learn, change and improve
- Don't take all this too seriously

When I talk about skills in this article, I'm thinking of those qualities.

### I. THE GLORY

This spring I attended a dance weekend, May Madness, in Prescott, Arizona. It started on a Friday night and ended on Sunday afternoon. I couldn't help but notice that the general skill level of the local dancers was somewhat less than what I experience here in Santa Barbara. In addition to the local dancers, many dancers from other communities attended. These visiting dancers differed in one or two respects. One, they may have come from a larger or older dance community that had evolved to a greater overall skill level. Two, dancers who are willing to travel to a dance weekend are generally more committed dancers and therefore tend to have greater skills.

As each dance progressed, as the weekend progressed, the local dancers got better and better. By Sunday we couldn't help but notice that the general skill level of the local dancers had substantially increased. What a pleasure it was to dance and play and observe this process happen-

ing right before our eyes.

I must mention that if there was any center set syndrome, it was hard to spot. Everyone danced with everyone. It was glorious.

### II. THE GUTS

How did this happen? Why? Does it happen here? If not, do we want it to happen here and if so, how do we make it happen?

At a dance festival, the expectation is that everyone is "serious" about contra dancing and committed to improving their dance skills. I think this is about 99 percent true. Most people will not shell out for a whole weekend unless they are committed. Also, the expectation helps make it so. Sensing this, even the most snobbish dancer will ask anyone to dance and dance in all the sets.

At an evening dance, the expectations are lower. But I think that most, say about 97 percent, of the dancers at an evening dance want to learn and improve—it's only human. The other three percent is made up of curiosity seekers and the dancers who think they're great with nothing more to learn. But certainly some of the osmosis described in Part I takes place. Several, perhaps many dancers among us have discovered the great pleasure in dancing with those with different skills, in dancing with them in all the sets.

To make it happen here to a greater extent, no one needs to guilt-trip anyone.

The caller doesn't need to implement aggressive set management. We don't have to wait for the center set syndrome to disappear in a poof. All it needs is one person at a time. One person to decide to aggressively seek out new partners, to dance in all the sets. Perhaps to even book ahead with a less skilled dancer and say "meet me at the top of the center set" from time to time.

Just helping one person improve, say, by helping them get a better sense of dancing to the music, or feeling more confident in a half hey for four, is a great pleasure. I've seen it happen, and it's glorious.

Gary Shapiro

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

Opinions expressed are those of the individual authors.



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