## Santa Barbara Country Dance Society

# DANCE STAR

Issue Number 58, Winter 2003-2004 • News, Articles & Calendar of Events

### Wendy Winkle

The contra dance community has lost a beloved member as Wendy Winkle has recently passed on after a brave three-year struggle with pancreatic neuroendocrine cancer. For the most part, during her illness and treatments, she did not dance, so many "newcomers" would not have met Wendy, even though she had been dancing in Santa Barbara since the late 80's.

Wendy Winkle (from Wauwatosa, Wisconsin) was full of life and lived it to the fullest. Her many passions included arts and crafts (beading, pine needle basketry, watercolors, etc.), biking, hiking, traveling, music, song, and of course, dance. Though she would not discover contra dance for many years, folk and ballroom spoke to her in college. She related fond memories of waltzing in the snow banks on the way to class and dancing at Folklore Village in an old schoolhouse, on a floor perfectly slippery with the drippings off the rustic candle chandeliers overhead.

She came to California, settled in Ventura and found contra dance, being immediately taken by the music, the dance, and the friendly community. From then on the dance glow never faded. Eventually, she and Paul became regulars at Harvest Moon, Alta Sierra, Fiddling Frog, and the Summer Solstice Festival at Soka University. After helping to organize a short-lived local Ventura dance, she decided that the Carrillo ballroom was the best venue. Many friendships and memories were forged there, including meeting her future husband Paul Hartloff and their wedding dance with Erik Hoffman and the Hillbillies from Mars.

Contra took her to Russia, twice. Wendy especially enjoyed the spontaneous "guerilla" dance, when in a square in St. Petersburg, the musicians started playing and the dancers would ask passersby to be their partners. Later, she and Paul went to Czechoslovakia, buying folk costumes — not knowing that these would later be their clothes for their peasant wedding.

She was a warm, fun-loving, friendly soul. Often at dances, you would know that Wendy was there before you saw her. She had a distinctive, unreserved *joie de vivre* laugh that she would readily share. She had a deep love of life and fun which was infectious, and oh, the smile! Wendy touched and was touched by many through this dance of life. The beautiful community quilt (with many dancer "squares") was often a source of great healing and comfort at home and in the hospital. Even during the

past three years, she lived her life amazingly fully, having a positive outlook. It is very sad that we no longer have her physical presence here to share and enjoy, but her memory, inspiration, and spirit live on through those with whom she has danced and whose lives she has touched.

In the spirit of community and whether or not you knew her, please come to a free dance on December 14 to celebrate Wendy in her love of music and dance, community and friendship. Her spirit will continue to smile and laugh and sing and dance with us.

—Paul Hartloff





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## **Profiles**



### Erik Hoffman

Interviewed by Keith Connes

**Q:** Erik, I know that you play a number of musical instruments. Did that lead you into contra dancing?

**Hoffman:** I don't know that my playing led me into contra dancing. When I was a kid I took piano lessons for three months and accordion lessons for less than that, and took recorder with some of my family. None of it really stuck except for a bit of recorder and then at 20 I started playing guitar and in my mid-twenties I was playing saxophone. But what really started me into contra was - well, I always liked dancing. Even in the Sixties I was kind of a hippie dancer – into free form. When I turned 30 in 1980 I was in Berkeley and I had broken up with a girlfriend and it was sort of painful, and I moved back to my home town of Santa Barbara and a friend of mine named Joanna Karl said, "Let's go to this thing called a contra dance." I said okay and off we went to Oak Park.

I fell in love with contra dancing and with the music, and for the first three or four years I never missed a dance. Joanna was one of our local dancers and a sometime-caller and did a lot of volunteer work for the dance community at that time. We started a mini dance series and rented one of the small rooms in the Rec Center, along with another dance space elsewhere on Carrillo Street, and we would invited anyone who wanted to play. The normal charge for contra dances was four or five dollars at that time and we charged two dollars just to cover the rent and didn't get paid anything; it was just for dancers to support people learning how to play the music and learning how to call.

**Q:** How did you become a caller?

Hoffman: Well, the regular caller, David Woodsfellow, kept threatening to leave town and offered to teach a caller's workshop, and I was interested, but he never actually managed to leave town. He finally gave me a private lesson, and the three dances that I got from him were two singing squares — "Just Because" and "On the Trail of the Lonesome Pine," as well as "The Texas Star."

At that point, square dancing was a much more integral part of contra dancing; anybody who did contra dancing was in for an evening of about 40 percent squares. I finally started calling an occasional dance here and there at the Caller's Jubilee.

By the end of the first year I probably had danced every single dance that David called over the next three or four years before he left. People weren't making dances up right and left in those days. My delay in becoming a regular caller was due to the fact that when David left town, Jim Borzym moved to town and he was an experienced caller, so he took over as regular caller.

In 1985 I first went to a week-long dance camp, in Mendocino. Then I went home and started doing more contra dances, more Caller's Jubilees, and next year I went back. By that time I had kind of caught onto a few things and I think I actually made up the "Rap Square."

Q: "Rap Square?"

**Hoffman:** Yes, it goes with rap music. It's in my book *Contra Comments*. I made it up kind of as a joke, because square dancing and rap seemed to me to be close, and actually they still do; the square dance lilt is closely related to what happened in rap music.

**Q:** Do you ever call that dance these days?

**Hoffman:** I do on rare occasions. I expect there to be a band that understands the kind of music I want to do. It's hard to find bands that do that in a way that makes me feel happy, because they have to get into a kind of rhythmic groove. You need somebody who can play a really funky bass-like beat and a lot of noodling-around sounds.

Around 1986, the folks in San Luis Obispo asked me to be their regular dance caller and I started going up to the Grange Hall (where the dances were then held) once a month. That was about the same time that Jim Borzym left town, and that left the Santa Barbara area to me and Carl Magagnosc.

**Q:** I notice that you sometimes sit in and play with the band.

Hoffman: Yes. A year after I started calling with some regularity, I started playing the fiddle. Jim Mueller got me to call a dance at one of the Old-Time Fiddler's Conventions. I had bought a fiddle and Amber asked me if I was going to compete at the Convention and I said, "I will if you will." So I played "Over the Waterfall" and my favorite comment from the audience was, "I recognize the tune!" Then I started taking lessons and really learning how to play the fiddle and really listening to the music. I went through what many of us callers refer to as the "acquisition stage." I would record every caller who came to town and I'd hear how they presented dances. I'd write down dutifully all the dances that they called and transcribe them onto cards, and I'd record myself and try to keep on top of things.

A year later I went back to the Convention and won first place in Intermediate Fiddle. Since then I have learned to play the bodhran, which is the Irish drum, and the dunbek, which is the Arabic drum, and shakers, and of course, I would play the fiddle and guitar. For awhile in Santa Barbara, I was in a band called Drastic Measures that featured myself on fiddle, Dierdre Linz on mandolin, Kristina Gibson (now Eriksen) on accordion and piano, and Gary Arsemont on guitar. I was also one of the conveners of a thing we called the Slow Jam that was supportive of people playing at all levels. It was held at several houses and also at Alice Keck Park. I think it's still in existence, although not necessarily as Slow Jam.

**Q:** Why was it called Slow Jam?

**Hoffman:** Because we set the tempos down to where anybody could play, and it was okay to make mistakes. Many of us were there to learn the music and to learn to play better

**Q:** When did you start writing dances?

**Hoffman:** Probably in the late Eighties.

**Q:** How many have you written?

**Hoffman:** Oh, probably fifty or a hundred – I don't know. I'd be surprised if it was more than two hundred.

**Q:** Well, that's a good range. Do you have a specific goal in mind when you write a dance?

Hoffman: For me, it's just one of those puzzles that is fun to do sometimes. Let's say I'm driving a long way in a car and I'll think of two moves that I like. Then I'll think about how I get from here to there and I try to imagine the whole dance in my head. Sometimes I've wanted to write dances specifically to commemorate something, like

## Harvest Moon a Success

the first Sprung Floor Festival that we had when I wrote the dance "There is No Way to Peace – Peace is the Way," and I wanted to come up with a dance that would allow me to use that title and do it at a Memorial Day event. I feel that we should have a Memorial Day for people who died making peace rather than making war. As long as we glorify war we'll glorify gore, and I'd rather not do that.

I'll try to have a hook in a dance – an unusual way to get into a hey, for example. Like many modern contra dance callers, I never write a dance that doesn't have a partner swing. I try to think about flow and about everybody being somewhat active most of the time.

In many ways I miss the old dancing where people didn't care about those things. You could call a dance with no swings whatsoever, and people would just enjoy dancing. But if you do that nowadays, people tend to think that you're cheating them.

Q: Thanks, Erik.

To learn more about Erik, or to order his books on contra dancing, visit his Web site at www.erikhoffman.com.



The SBCDS Board reports that September's Harvest Moon Dance Festival harvested 115 happy dancers and there was a good gender balance. The Saturday night venue at Schott Center was much more dancer-friendly than its counterpart held the preceding year at the Carrillo gym.

Lisa Greenleaf and Flapjack really rocked. Workshops included English Country Dance, singing, and schottische. The next Harvest Moon will be held on Sept. 10-12, 2004.

The Board has also announced that the next Sprung Floor Weekend will take place May 29-30 and it will be truly sprung from start to finish. That is, all of the dances will be held at the Carrillo Ballroom.

#### **Price Break**

Dancers on a tight budget can come to the regular Sunday night contra dances at the beginning of the break (about 8:30 PM) and pay reduced admission costs, as follows: For the \$7 dances, pay \$4; for the \$8 dances, pay \$5; for the \$10 dances, pay \$6. This includes refreshments.

Santa Barbara Contra and English Country Dances are co-sponsored by SBCDS and

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SBCDS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation

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Our special thanks to all the many volunteers who give their time and efforts to make the dances fun and contribute to the content of this publication.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in the articles, news, and letters do not necessarily reflect the views of SBCDS.

## Old-Time Fiddler's Convention: Great Fun

Having attended the previous year, your Editor was looking forward to the 32nd Annual Old-Time Fiddler's Convention and Festival, and he was not disappointed. It unfolded on Oct. 12 on the grounds of historic Stow House in Goleta. Other contra dancers were seen to mingle with the more than 2000 people who brought their blankets, folding chairs, and picnic lunches to the all-day event. Contra band musicians were among the instrumentalists who formed spontaneous groups for jam sessions.

Linelle Glass, one of the mainstays of the Convention, reports as follows: "It was a great success. Famed folksinger Peggy Seeger was the noon headliner but there was outstanding talent on the Showcase Stage: renowned fiddler Brad Leftwich, Jim Wimmer and Company, and banjo master Bob Flesher. Many came to attend the great jam sessions and to hear the competition. Over 120 competitors entered in the banjo, fiddle, old-time singing, band, and miscellaneous categories. Children were able to participate with Rebecca Wave and J.T. Whitney on the Children's Stage. A finale dance with caller Gary Shapiro capped the day. Look for the 33rd Convention to occur the second Sunday in October (Oct. 10th), 2004. To see the competition results and for more information, visit our Web site: www.sbsunriserotary.org/fiddlers."

#### Make Your Voice Heard!

Do you have ideas about making our dances better? Or any other dance-related thoughts, feelings, or experiences that you'd like to share with others through the pages of the *Dance Star*? Well, don't be shy – this is *your* newsletter, and your contributions are most welcome!

The best way to become a writing (Dance) Star is to email your priceless words to dancestar@sbcds.org. If you don't have email capability, snail-mail to Keith Connes, 283 Carlo Dr., Goleta, CA 93117. If you do not want your comments published, please say so; otherwise, we will assume that you have submitted your material for publication. Incidentally, we also welcome dance-related photos.

We reserve the right to edit all submissions. Deadline for the next issue is February 1.

## DANCE SCHEDULE - Winter 2003-2004

## English Country Dances Westside Community Center

423 W. Victoria, Santa Barbara (Where Victoria dead-ends at Hwy 101)

Tuesdays during January and February 7:30 to 9:30
Admission: \$3.00

Calling by Alice Williams and/or Gary Shapiro

## SLO Veteran's Hall

801 Grand Ave., San Luís Obíspo (East of Hwy 101, Cal Poly exít)

Contra Dances are normally on the second Saturday of the month 8:00 to 11:00 (7:30 Workshop)

Admission: \$7.00

Dec 20 Greg McKenzie/Paddy O' Furniture

Jan 17 Donna & Elliott Karpeles/Paddy O' Furniture

Feb 7 Gary Shapiro/The Fiddle Tunas

## Ojai Art Center

113 S. Montgomery, Ojaí (South of East Ojaí Avenue) 7:30 to 10:30 (7:00 workshop) Admission: \$7.00

Jan 17 Jeff Spero/TBA

## Carrillo Ballroom

100 E. Carrillo St., Santa Barbara (Hwy 101, Carrillo St. exit, go north to Anacapa St.)

> Contra Dances Every Sunday 7:00 to 10:00 (6:30 Workshop) Admission: \$7.00, except as noted

Dec 7 Caller's Jubilee/Porch Dogs

Blossoming callers contact Donna Karpeles:

donnabayet@aol.com or 805-682-1877

Dec 14 Guest Callers/Chopped Liver

Free Dance in Memory of Wendy Winkle

Dec 21 Barbara Stewart/Clayfoot Strutters (\$10.00)

Dec 25 Erik Hoffman/Bayou Seco Christmas Day Dance!

Dec 28 Warren Blier/Bayou Seco

Jan 4 Keith Connes/Kristina & Her RH Stars

Jan 11 Gary Shapiro/Kitchen Junket

Jan 18 2:30-5:30 English Country Dance

Annie Laskey/Thruppence 5:30-6:30 Winter Potluck 7:00-10:00 Contra Dance

Donna Karpeles/Standard Deviation

Note: Dances are \$7.00 each

Jan 25 Jeff Spero/Growling Old Geezers

Feb 1 Chuck Galt/Michael's Mixed Nuts

Free Dance (Anonymous Donor)

Feb 8 Donna Karpeles/Growling Old Geezers

Feb 15 Jonathan Southard/Turtle Creek

Feb 22 Gary Shapiro/Michael's Mixed Nuts

Feb 29 Zestv Contras

Barbara Stewart/Chopped Liver

7:00 to 10:30 (\$8.00)

Dances appearing in this Calendar are sponsored by the following organizations, listed by location:

#### **Carrillo Recreation Center and Oak Park:**

Santa Barbara Country Dance Society 805-969-1511 www.sbcds.org

#### Ojai Art Center:

Ojai Country Dances 805-933-0660 www.geocities.com/CirclesandRows/oac

#### San Luis Obispo Veteran's Hall:

Central Coast Dance Society 805-541-0201 www.cccds.org