

Santa Barbara Country Dance Society

HANDS FOUR

Picture yourself moving down a contra line twirling, swinging, gracefully weaving in and out of lines, squares, stars and countless intricate patterns that to a beginner must fascinate, boggle the mind and more than likely appear incredibly intimidating; "I can't possibly learn all that? How do I know where I'm supposed to be? What are my partners and opposites expecting me to do?"



Let's not kid ourselves, these are good, honest fears and becoming a competent and enjoyable dancer doesn't come over night, but each time you get back out on the floor it gets easier and before you know it your thinking less about pattern and more about style. In an effort to make dancing more enjoyable for beginners and experienced alike I have come up with a couple of helpful rules that can free your minds for the more lofty pursuits of style, form, and flirtation.

**WOMEN ARE ALWAYS RIGHT,
MEN SHOULD KNOW HOW TO
PUT WOMEN IN THEIR PLACE.**

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Five Common Myths About Beginning Contra Dancers

It is tradition in contra dancing that newcomers learn at regular dances, not in separate lessons. Experienced dancers know that dancing with beginners is an integral part of the dance form. Some do it out of a sense of duty. Some actually enjoy it. I personally find it one of the most satisfying experiences in contra dancing. If you find that surprising, it may be because of several "myths" about dancing with beginners.

What follows are five commonly held beliefs that I would like to challenge. Also included are my own "Rules For Dancing With Beginners" to contravene those myths. My purpose here is not to convince anyone to dance with beginners. My purpose is to help you enjoy it.

Myth #1

"The best location for beginners is away from the orchestra where the dancing is not so intense or confusing."

Not true. The best location for beginners is at the top of the center lines. This is where they can best hear the caller and the caller can see any problems which may develop. Unfortunately, newcomers are often slow to find partners and, therefore, tend to congregate far from the orchestra. Experienced dancers can help by using some forethought and making themselves available early. Rule #1 is "Have a plan." Don't wait for a beginner to approach you. Take the initiative and position your partner where they are not surrounded by other beginners. This means more fun

for them and for you. By helping to mix newcomers in with experienced dancers-and vice versa-you will be increasing the enjoyment of all dancers in the hall.

Myth #2

"Experienced dancers can help by teaching basic figures and principles to beginners."

By far, this is the most common mistake. Your role is not to increase your partner's skill level. Teaching is work. It's not your job. It is a distraction in the dance line. It's not fun. Rule #2 is "Do not teach." Even if your partner specifically asks you for instruction avoid teaching at all costs. Plead incompetence. You can contribute most by helping and building their self-confidence. Leave the teaching to the caller, a paid professional.

Myth #3

"Experienced dancers can help by correcting errors made by beginners."

Negative comments, critiques, or even careful suggestions almost never help anyone. Help beginners with a gentle and encouraging lead in the right direction. When talking seems absolutely necessary, express yourself in positive terms. Be creative. If your partner is bouncing up and down during swings compliment them that their swings are getting "much smoother". Rule #3 is "Be positive."

Myth #4

"When a group of dancers is completely lost an experienced dancer

Myths, continues Page 2

Hands Four, from cover

Now wait a second, before you start throwing shoes and water bottles at me, hear me out. As you and your partner move up or down a line you suddenly get to the end and have to turn around and prepare yourselves to jump back into the melee, but with everyone weaving back and forth before your eyes you don't even know who's supposed to be on which side, well unless its a proper formation dance (which is less than 10% of the time) **WOMEN ARE ALWAYS ON THE RIGHT** and right there you've saved yourself the embarrassment of the dreaded "Last Second Cross Over Collision Confusion." Also, whenever you come out of a courtesy turn, promenade, twirl, chain, etc., and especially a swing, as you fall back into line again the man should be on the left. Of course there will occasionally be exceptions to this but as a rule of thumb it is a good guide to enable you to be in the right place and at the right time.

As for the second part of my rule, I mean it purely as a dance function; like it or not, due to size, strength or just plain ego the man is usually in charge of the swing. He sets the speed according to his own ability, energy and desire (and his perception of his partner's needs) but along with this responsibility comes the problem of ending the swing. The woman is beholden to him to use weight and balance to help guide her gracefully into her next pattern which more often than not sends her off and leaves him standing there waiting for the woman that the last gentleman just sent off. Now if you are the type of man that loves to twirl the ladies any time you can slip one in (with her approval of course) then it's doubly important that you think ahead and guide her so that she can put all of her energy into the twirl and not having to think about whether or not she's going to wind up in the waste bin or on the bleachers.

As a manic swinger I know the joy of after getting the speed up to point

of my partner's euphoric disorientation and then abruptly breaking out of the swing and placing her exactly where and when she needs to be, before she's even had a chance to reorient herself with the room and contra line, unless of course she's a dancer of equal caliber and expects this of me, then that is when the magic of the dance begins!

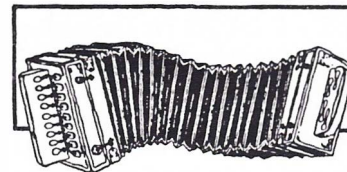
On the local dance scene the fall of 1990 is shaping into another banner season, not only will we be having our regular dances with local callers Carl Magagnosc and Erik Hoffman, with dances everywhere from down in beautiful Ojai all the way on up to the Northern cities of San Luis Obispo and Santa Maria, but we now have the added attraction of the first ever Carpinteria Contradance on Friday Oct. 5. so mark your calendar and come on down and help us start it off on the right foot.

Harvest Moon is coming up Sept. 21st, and as you might have guessed registration is completely filled up with happy eager feet anticipating 2 1/2 days of dancing magic with the contra maestro of ceremonies Bob Dalsemer. For those of you who couldn't make it to Harvest Moon or just can't get enough you'll be happy to know that we have a few other surprises in store for your dancing pleasure: this month the Dean of New England Contradancing, Ted Sannela, makes his first return to Santa Barbara since he graced the Oak Park stage at last year's Harvest Moon. This time he'll be performing at the infamous Cabrillo Ballroom with its cantilevered spring floor, so if you think you feel an earthquake in Santa Barbara on the evening of Sept. 9th then you'll know the source. This is a dance not to be missed! On Sept. 30th a special treat from Kentucky, Ralph Blizard and the New Southern Ramblers musical wizardry will work you into a frenzy while Phil Jameson calls the dances. And on Nov. 18th, all the way from Berkeley, Kirston Koths will lend his 20 years of dance leading

experience to Santa Barbara for an evening not soon forgotten.

We hope this all adds up to delightfully joyous celebration of music and contradancing, and we are looking forward to seeing all of you over and over again throughout the next few months.

Shane Butler



Myths, from cover

nearby can often lend assistance."

Rule #4 is "Help only the one(s) you are dancing with." When a problem develops nearby – particularly if your partner is involved – it is actually best to ignore it (mercifully) until it is your turn to dance with the confused dancers. Assistance from others will tend to draw beginners' attention in the wrong direction and may only increase their anxiety. You can be most helpful by providing a good example.

Myth #5

"Experienced dancers should be tolerant of beginners."

A beginners greatest fear is that, because of their inexperience, you will not enjoy yourself. If you are merely tolerant their fear will be realized. Make it your job to relax and enjoy yourself. Let your partner know that you are having a good time. Maintain your sense of humor, particularly when the entire line crumbles into horrifying confusion, chaos, and hopeless mayhem. As soon as your partner realizes that you will enjoy yourself – no matter what happens in the line – you will be able to see them visibly relax. Rule #5 is "Enjoy yourself." Remember that the greatest compliment you can pay to any dancer is to say that dancing with them is fun.

*Greg McKenzie
reprinted from the
Bay Area Country Dancer,
Spring, 1987*

WHO'S CHARGED?

A Letter to the Editors

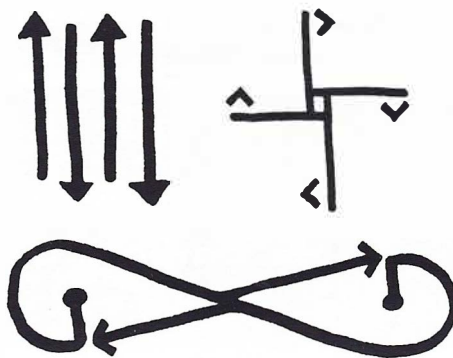
After much discussion about what makes dancing enjoyable my contradance sisters have asked me to voice their collective opinions in response to the article "Who's in Charge". We've read the article a number of times and still conclude that it does not sound like our kind of fun. Maybe that's why we've felt so uncharged and flattened after the contradances of the past half year. By the way, we all can dance quite well and can't think of anyone on the floor who is indifferent to our dancing. Yet, more often than not we keep falling short of ascending even to the first tier of "dance heaven."

In our dance heaven, the entire contraline is vitally alive, passives as well as actives. A rhythmically pulsating surf, the line surges forward and back changing with each progressive wave. The dance flows in swirls and eddies, intermingling in vortices, currents within currents, a separateness nested within the whole.

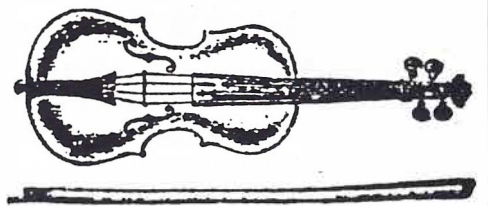
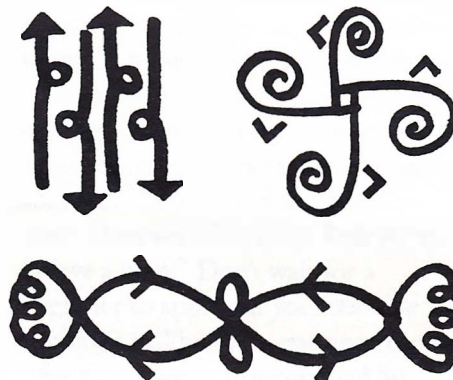
But this is not what we've experienced at our dances. Instead we're jerked and pulled out of rhythm. Ladies chain by with vacant eyes, limp elbows offer to allamande, and other android bodies tick away the time. Out of boredom we twirl ourselves and our partners think they did it. Worst of all, the beloved swings are grounded by blue jeanned rabbits hopping around in little circles and still we're forced to slacken our zeal to keep from slipping from their anemic paws. Please believe us, we're not Amazon women but we are incredibly frustrated. We come to the contradances to fly and our partners, men and women, are our wings. Referring back to "Who's in Charge", we don't come to stand sixteen beats deep in a

bear hug. We can't even entertain such an idea. But for those of you who relish the thought, there could be a waiting list for you to sign up at the back table.

The best we can do now is to attempt to illustrate pictorally the movements of a dynamic contradance and contrast them with the movements of an uninspired static dance. Imagine yourself sitting in the loft of the Carrillo Ballroom looking down upon a contraline and each movement traces the floor with its particular pattern. Two couples facing each other and passing through, a star, and a ladies chain would each look like this:



But these steps could be embellished with a turn or twirl. It could look like this:



Jay Ungar and Molly Mason Make a Rare West Coast Concert

On Tuesday, September 25, Jay Ungar and Molly Mason will give a concert in Ojai, at the Ojai Valley Woman's Club, 441 E. Ojai Ave. The concert will get under way at 7:30 and costs \$8.

Jay Ungar, of Fiddle Fever, is one of the country's preeminent fiddlers. He plays all variety of American fiddle music from Old-Time southern to swing. As a dance fiddler, Jay is second to none. He is known far and wide for his ability to propel dancers into the nirvana of dance.

Jay is joined by Molly Mason. Molly, also a member of Fiddle Fever, plays guitar, bass, and sings. She has recorded with the Rude Girls and numerous other bands and musicians on the east coast. She is definitely among the best.

Every summer Jay and Molly lead the Ashokan dance and music camps, helping to inspire new musicians and dancers to carry on our traditional fiddle music.

We look forward to your joining Jay and Molly for this very special west coast appearance!

The entire dance could be swirling away, pausing only long enough to hold hands and change directions! Those dynamic moments are so precious yet seldom rise out of the static lines of the expected. We desire so much more than vacant eyes, feeble swings, or bear hug traps.

Victims of the expected and stagnant,

— Aviva Speceal

The Santa Barbara Country Dance Society is a center of the Country Dance and Song Society of America (CDSS) which was founded in 1915 to preserve, promote, study, teach, and enjoy our English and American dance, music and song heritage. We encourage you to support CDSS by becoming a member. Members receive a bimonthly national newsletter, a yearly scholarly publication, and discounts from the CDSS Store of records, tapes, CD's, and books. Look for applications at our dances or write or call CDSS at:

**Country Dance And Song
Society of America**
17 New South St.
Northampton, MA, 01060
(413) 584-9913



Dance Star

The Dance Star is published quarterly by the Santa Barbara Country Dance Society. Please address all correspondence to SBCDS, P.O. Box 21904, Santa Barbara, CA 93121, (805) 969-1511. Editorial staff is Shane Butler, Erik Hoffman and Jungle Payne, with help from lots of other fine folk.

If there is an "EXP" on your address label, you will be dropped from our mailing list, unless we hear from you.



Check this out!

We now have a new and original bumper sticker for your car, fiddle case or fridge. The background is sky blue, with yellow and red lettering, printed on 7" wide white vinyl.

For yours, send \$1.00 each and self-addressed, stamped envelope to SBCDS, and start showing your colors.

Contradancing

NOT JUST 4 ■ ■ ■ **S**
Santa Barbara Country Dance Society



PO Box 21904
Santa Barbara, CA
93121



Date on label is the last date you will be included in our mailing. Signing in at a dance or notifying us will extend this date.

Old Time Barn Dance Calendar

The Santa Barbara County Dance Society, PO box 21904, Santa Barbara, CA, 93121, (805) 969-1511

Location

- CB:** Carrillo Ballroom, 100 East Carrillo Street, Santa Barbara.
OP: Oak Park dance platform, Junipero at Calle Real, Santa Barbara.
OJ: Ojai Art Center, on Montgomery St. just off Ojai Ave.
 Continues in far column.

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'll do the flowing contra dances of New England, the colorful square dances of the Old West, plus a few old-time couple dances such as waltzes & polkas.

Beginners' Workshop

There is a beginners' class before each weekend dance! Come a half-hour early to learn the basic moves. No prior experience is necessary as all dances are taught and prompted. Wear comfortable clothes. Generally dances become more challenging as the evening progresses.

- SM:** Santa Maria Vets Hall, 319 W. Tunnell, Santa Maria.
SL: San Luis Obispo Grange Hall, 2880 So Broad St. SLO.
CP: Carpinteria Main School. 8th St. & Palm Ave., Carpinteria.

Phone

For the latest dance information call: (805) 969-1511.

Sat, Sept 8 SL
 Erik Hoffman and the Growling Old Geezers. 8-11, intro: 7:30. \$5

Sun, Sept 9 CB
 The Dean of New England Contradancing, Ted Sannella, returns to Santa Barbara. Ted is joined by Kitchen Junket. 7-10, intro: 6:30. \$6.

Sat, Sept 15 OJ
 Erik Hoffman calls, band TBA. 7:30-10:30, intro 7. \$5.

Sun, Sept 16 CB
 Roger Miller is throwing a party and you're invited! Bring pot-luck snacks and join Erik Hoffman, Jonathan and Sylvia, music by Michael Mendelson & the Strolling Roans, and others for this fun filled dance! FREE! 3-8pm!

Sept 21 - 23
 Harvest Moon Dance Festival. Hope to see you there! (Sorry, pre-registration only.)

Tue, Sept 25 Ojai
 In Concert, Jay Ungar and Molly Mason, of Fiddle Fever. Ojai Valley Woman's Club, 441 E. Ojai Ave. 7:30. \$8.

Fri, Sept 28 SM
 Erik Hoffman. Band TBA. 8-11, intro: 7:30. \$5.

Sept 29-30 Cachuma
 KCBX's Live Oak Folk Festival. Two days of camping and fabulous music. Call (800) 549-8855 for details.

Sun, Sept 30 CB
 From Kentucky, Ralph Blizard and the New Southern Ramblers. Phil Jameson of the Green Valley Cloggers will call the dance while Ralph Blizard's wizardry will drive your feet! 7-10, intro: 6:30. \$6.

Fri, Oct 5 CP
 Contradancing kicks off in Carpinteria! Erik Hoffamn calls. Band TBA 8-11, intro: 7:30, \$5.

Sun, Oct 7 CB
 Erik Hoffman and O'Ryan's Belt. 7-10, intro: 6:30. \$5.

Sat, Oct 13 SL
 San Luis Obispo celebrates four years of contradancing with a potluck and dance. The potluck starts at 6. Then Erik Hoffman and the Growling Old Geezers lead the dance from 8-11, intro: 7:30. \$5.

Sun, Oct 14 Goleta
 It's time again for the Santa Barbara Old-Time Fiddler's Festival, at the Stow House in Goleta. 10-5:30. \$?.

Fri, Oct 19 SM
 Erik Hoffman and the Growling Old Geezers. 8-11, intro: 7:30. \$5.

Sat, Oct 20 OJ
 Erik Hoffman and Kitchen Junket. 7:30-10:30, intro: 7. \$5.

Sun Oct 21 CB
 Carl Magagnosc and the Growling Old Geezers. 7-10, intro: 6:30. \$5.

Sun Oct 28 CB
 Join Erik Hoffman and the Tecolote Tune Twisters for our annual Halloween Ball! Come in costume or just come for the fun! 7-10, intro: 6:30 \$5.

Fri, Nov 2 CP
 Dance again in Carpinteria! Carl Magagnosc calls, band, TBA. 8-11, intro: 7:30. \$5.

Sun, Nov 4 CB
 Carl Magagnosc and O'Ryan's Belt. 7-10, intro: 6:30. \$5.

Fri, Nov 9 CB
 A Special gala dance evening, co-sponsored by Santa Barbara Adult Programs and SBCDS. Two bands and two callers all evening! Leda Shapiro and Unsafe at Any Speed along with Erik Hoffman and the Tecolote Tune Twisters. 8-12, intro: 7:30. \$8.

Sat, Nov 10 SL
 Music, the Growling Old Geezers. Caller, TBA. 8-11, intro: 7:30. \$5.

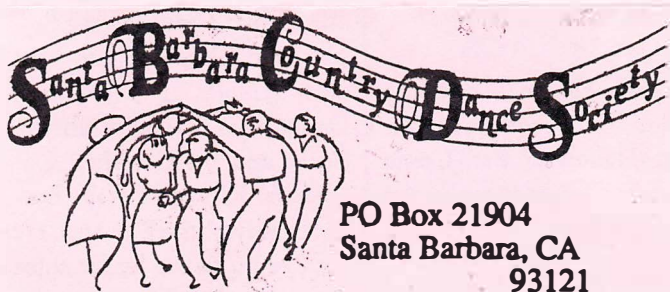
Sun, Nov 18 CB
 Start the Holiday season off at our annual Thanksgiving Potluck and Dance. Share food with friends at 5:30, then Dance from 7-10 with Kirston Koths and the Growling Old Geezers. Kirston is from Boston byway of the Bay Area. He has been a dance leader since the early 70's. Potluck: \$1. Dance: \$6, intro: 6:30.

Fri, Nov 30 SM
 Join the Growling Old Geezers and a TBA caller. 8-11, intro: 7:30. \$5.

Join the Santa Barbara Country Dance Society. Members of the Santa Barbara Country Dance Society receive a \$1 discount at all regular dances. Members also receive the *Dance Star*, our quarterly newsletter. To join, simply send a check for \$18, name, and address to:

SBCDS
PO Box 21904
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Subscriptions to *Dance Star* may be had for \$6.



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