



Bay Area Country Dancer

No.103– September 2015

www.bacds.org

Watching the Talent Grow: Report from Pinewoods

By Sharon Green

I've just returned from Pinewoods English Week, where I had an unusual experience. Normally when one attends a week-long dance camp, one expects prime time staff—teachers and musicians who are at the top of their game, on whose expertise the dancers can rely. This time I got something more.

Joanna Reiner was this year's Program Director at Pinewoods. Back in 2010 and 2011, when I programmed Pinewoods English Week, I played it very conservatively. I taught only a couple of classes, leading one discussion session and one workshop for all. Joanna went way beyond that. She led three full dance classes, one of them advanced, all of them taught as brilliantly as any sessions I've ever attended. Clear, concise, passionate about encouraging her people to think and to take responsibility for themselves on the dance floor, she is, to my mind, the best English country dance teacher/programmer of this generation.

Don't take my word for it. See for yourself. We at BACDS are lucky enough to have Joanna as the program director of our Fall Frolick weekend this October 16-18. She is sharing the teaching honors with two excellent ECD leaders, Barbara Finney (lead teacher at CDS Boston Centre) and Rosemary Hunt (choreographer and caller from Dorset, UK), and with Scottish dance teacher Linda Henderson (originally from near Edinburgh, now a stalwart of the San Francisco RSCDS). We are going to have uniformly fine teaching and calling, but keep your eye on Joanna. She's gotten better.

It's not too late to apply for Fall Frolick, at the Monte Toyon Conference Center, Aptos, CA, from October 16-18. Musicians include Charlie Hancock, Jim Oakden, Lyle Ramshaw, Michelle Levy, Rebecca King, Shira Kammen, and Susan Worland. Some work-trade, youth, and needs-based scholarships still available. For more info, pick up a flyer at your regular dance or go to bacds.org/camps/fallwk2015.

Come Twirl with TDOGS!

Looking for something to do just before Thanksgiving week? Then come to the second annual 12-Hour Twirl, on Saturday, November 21, in Hayward!

The 12-Hour Twirl is presented by Traditional Dancers of the Golden State (TDOGS), the regular sponsor of the Hayward Contra Dance series. It takes place at the Hayward Veterans Memorial Building at 22737 Main Street, Hayward, beginning at 11am and continuing until 11pm. Just like last year, this event will feature some of the best callers and musicians in the dance world, guaranteed to keep you a-Twirl in great dance, music and entertainment:

Bands:

- Contra Sutra from Seattle, WA (Dave Bartley, Ryan McKasson, Marni Rachmiel, Russell S.)
- The Nettles from Corvallis, OR (Laura Brophy, Kevin Johnsrude, Michael Proctor, Brian Bucolo)
- Uncle Farmer from San Francisco (Ben Schreiber, Michael Sokolovsky)

Callers:

- Susan Petrick from the Bay Area
- Frannie Marr from Southern California
- Michael Karcher from Seattle, WA

Admission is \$40, payable at the door. No pre-registration is necessary.

For more information, check out our website: <http://bit.ly/TDOGS12hrTwirl>.

And more to come ...

Fall Ball: This year's Fall Ball will be on Saturday, November 14, one week *before* the 12-hour Twirl, so that those of us who enjoy both Contra and English dancing can get a full helping of both. This year's Ball program is put together by Graham Christian, and the music will be provided by **Roguary** (Anita Anderson, Dave Bartley, Shira Kammen, and Jim Oakden). Once again, there will be a dinner offering between the afternoon rehearsal and the Ball: Mediterranean cuisine, catered by Sunrise Deli of San Francisco. Online registration is now open. See bacds.org/fallball for details.

No Snow Ball: Our annual Contra Dance party will be on *Sunday*, December 6, this year, at the Oakland Dance Center on Lake Merritt. Rachel Wallace and Jean Gorrindo will be calling to music by **Maivish** (Jaige Trudel and Adam Broome) and **Tunestone** (Edward Wallace, Christopher Jacoby, Josh Van Vliet). This year we will have two rooms full of dancing: contras in the main hall and couple dancing in the refreshments room across the corridor. And you can get a double dose of Maivish; they will be playing the regular San Francisco Contra dance on the Saturday night before.

Spring Fever: Our *Spring Fever* dance weekend (March 11-13 at Monte Toyon) will be bigger and better than ever. We have three *hot* bands this year:

- **Triple A Plus:** Audrey Knuth and Amy Engleberg of *The Free Raisins* have toured with Andrew VanNorstrand (of the *Great Bear Trio*) in the past as *Triple A*. Now Andrew's brother Noah joins them to make it *Triple A Plus*.
- **Wilson's Arch:** A new powerhouse band featuring fiddler Karina Wilson with Larry Unger and Sam Bartlett.
- **The Whoots:** Some of the absolute best of our local musicians: Charlie Hancock, Shira Kammen, Michelle Levy, and Jim Oakden. You can't import talent this good.

Callers will be **Gaye Fifer**, **Adina Gordon**, and **Nikki Herbst**. *Spring Fever* offers a full three-track program of Contra, English, and music all rolled into one absolutely fabulous weekend. Visit bacds.org/springfever to sign up.

How is Irv doing? (part 2)

by Laura West (his granddaughter)



These days Irv's caregiver Joe or his "daughter in law", Rosemarie, takes him to the North Berkeley Senior Center most Tuesdays, where I can bike over and meet him. We have lunch with his old radical Berkeley friends, and he plays pool. Just like at dances, most folks there appreciate him and sort of watch out for him. Irv usually gets out at least two other days a week, with Julie, (his other granddaughter) to help him with medical and other affairs, plus visits. Len (his nephew) takes him out for more pool at the Senior Center.

A few times dancers Karen or Anita have brought me up to the horse ranch in Orinda (where Irv has lived since the 1991 Oakland Firestorm burned down my grandparents' house). They've persuaded him to get out his poetry, and we've had some great visits.

Still, it has been a challenge for him (and us) to make life interesting without dancing. He only likes limited sedentary activities: no computer, no reading (except the NY Times) little TV (just the ARTS channel) and music (classical only).

It's the visiting and physical activity that makes him come alive. But the reason he is a pretty healthy, mid-90-year-old is being active all his life -- exactly what all the scientific studies are confirming.

He and I used to do swing dancing at the Oakland Dance Center, and he reminded me that he danced swing when it first came out. Like doing ECD, his sense of fun always came out when he and I danced.

Back in the early 1950s, he met my grandmother at international folk dances, and moved in when my mom was 13. (He now lives with Mom's brother, Peter Rich.) Around that time, they'd all go dancing together. He and my grandmother would go on long hikes around Mt. Tamalpais, followed by dances in Mill Valley.

In the 1960s, I remember watching them dance, and trying to copy their buzz step. By age 12 I was dancing in Girl Scouts, so I was very delighted when they took me to the Mill Valley dance. Irv would help me on the dance floor -- just as I and so many of you helped him when he forgot the moves during the dances of the last few years. (Thank you all!)

By the time my grandparents stopped dancing, (in the early 1970s, because of grandma's arthritis), they were living on the peak above the Claremont Hotel. Irv had been doing weight lifting (free weights) at the YMCA since the 1950s (he only stopped going to the Y last December). They also had up to four biggish dogs, and so from the 1970s to the 1991 firestorm, Irv did two to four dog walks per day in the hills.

After the firestorm, my grandparents moved to my Uncle Peter's horse ranch in Orinda. My grandmother died in 1998, and that was when Irv restarted his dancing career. He did Berkeley Folk Dancers, Contra, English and Swing. So up to about a year and a half ago, Irv was averaging three to four dances per week.

May we all also keep dancing just as long as we can!



In Memoriam:

Jodene (Jody) Distler-Dill

September 10, 1942 – June 14, 2015

Jody Distler-Dill passed away peacefully at home in Castro Valley, California after over twenty years living with congestive heart failure, and nearly seventy-three years of making the world a better place. She leaves a legacy of love that will be cherished by all who knew her.

Jody was a dancer and a dance organizer, not a caller or a musician. She began dancing in 1981, when the Bay Area Country Dance Society was just getting started (she is member #158), and her volunteer service includes over 25 years on the Playford Ball committee (frequently as chair), 14 years on the Board of Directors, and (most visibly) her many years as manager, programmer and guiding spirit of the Friday Night Palo Alto English Country Dance. She was always a welcoming presence and an effective recruiter. More than one newcomer to the Palo Alto English dance went home that very evening as the newest member of the Playford Ball committee. She was a stabilizing presence on the Board of Directors, quiet most of the time, but never hesitating to speak out when she saw the need. We miss her.

There will be a memorial dance in Palo Alto on what would have been her 73rd birthday, September 10. For more information or to post your memories, visit jody.wellhall.org.

The President's Corner



From the President: This message is about community. *Our* community. The dance community here is a truly wonderful thing. On the 14th of June, I lost my wife of 16 years, Jody Distler-Dill, to a long-standing health condition that had finally gotten the better of her. During the next week or so, I went to every dance I could get to, and received hugs and offers of help and support from hundreds of people. And that was only the beginning.

The dance community provided me with a network of contacts that meant that I was almost never alone or without something to keep me busy. I had houseguests. Not just my family, who came out to help when and as they were able, but dance friends. Howard and Bryce Carlberg happened to be traveling around the west coast and were looking for places to stay and work to do to pay for their travels. Some of you may remember the Carlbergs as the family that did the dance gypsy thing a few years back in a bus that Howard had rebuilt into a gorgeous motor home, and Bryce as the 7-year-old who petitioned to attend the Playford Ball as a dancer in 2000. They settled in Berea, but kept their links to our community. Howard and Bryce stayed a couple of weeks and did some needed work for me. And now I have a housemate, also from the dance community (thank you, Kelsey).

And I had lots of BACDS committee work to do. *Balance the Bay* was coming up in August, and I was registrar and co-chair of the committee. When Jody was ill, we were not able to consider taking in out-of-town guests for the weekend on top of everything else we were doing, but now that I was rattling around in an empty house, it was easy. I ended up playing host to one of the bands and both callers. And as soon as B-t-B was over, I had to get working again on planning for *Spring Fever* weekend in March. If you manage things properly, you can use the volunteer opportunities in a community like ours to keep yourself just as busy as you need to be.

Volunteers from the dance community did most of the work to organize Jody's memorial service and more than three-quarters of the people attending were dancers. At the end of the service, as Ruth Anne Fraley and Anne Bingham Goess played a closing waltz, dozens of people got up and danced in the aisles as a final tribute to Jody. It was a truly magical moment, and one that the non-dancers in the crowd found most touching and memorable.

There will be a memorial dance for Jody on Thursday, September 10 (what would have been her 73rd birthday). And it too is being organized and run by volunteers from the dance community.

Death is part of the circle of life. Jody's passing was a completion, celebrated and supported by her dance community, just as they celebrated and supported her in life. Jody is not the only person we've lost recently. Dave Thompson from the Berkeley English community passed away in July, and I remember many others who went before: Joan Maramonte, Vanessa Schnatmeier, Karen Candin, to name just a few. All brought their warmth and friendship and volunteer time to the community, and the community is better for their having been part of it.

And life goes on, and the dance community supports us as we support it. Thank you all for being part of it.

~ Jens Dill, BACDS President, bacds-president@bacds.org

Volunteer Thanks

- ♪ Thanks to *Cassandra Vlahos* who is off to graduate school at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston. Cassandra is stepping down from the BACDS Board of Directors and numerous other programming and calling jobs that she had picked up. We will miss her.
- ♪ Thanks to *Bob and Ruth Anne Fraley*, who are moving to Eugene, Oregon this fall. The Palo Alto English dance will not be the same without them. Everyone is welcome to come to their Farewell party at the September 18 Palo Alto dance.
- ♪ Thanks to *Derya Akin*, who is off to college in Davis.
- ♪ Thanks to *Chris Knepper* and *Stacey Carr* and those who helped them get the No Snow Ball back on track. The No Snow Ball committee could use some more volunteers.
- ♪ Thanks to *Yoyo Zhou, Stephen Connelly, Randall Cayford, Jens Dill, Costello, Joyce Cooper, Judy Rose Dornbush, Bowen Lee, Claire Matthews, Ken Karp, Maria Markoff, Janet Pape, Kelsey Hartman, Lynn Ungar, Ray Grott, Diane Frank, Kai Barnwall* and rest of the Balance the Bay committee and volunteers for putting together another splendid Balance the Bay weekend. Thanks to *Patti Leonhardt* for making all the lemon bars even though she couldn't come for the full weekend.
- ♪ Thanks to the *American Week* committee, the *Family Week* committee, and the *English Week* Committee for giving us another season of splendid summer camps.
- ♪ Thanks to *Kelsey Hartman* for taking charge of the BACDS camp bedding and making some wonderful new canvas bags to pack it all in.
- ♪ Thanks to *David Buesch* for picking up the ball for planning the next *Contra College*. David will probably need some help.
- ♪ Thanks to *Patti Cobb* for finding the BACDS keyboard bench that *Judy Rose Dornbush* thought she lost.
- ♪ Thanks to *Liz Macera, SharYn Peterson, Ruth Anne Fraley, Anne Goess, Peter Hiltz, Shirley Worth, Sharon Green, Susan Petrick, Patti Cobb, Stan and Susan Kramer, Erik Ievins, James MacQueen, Annie Rodier, Rita Morgan*, and all the other people who helped organize Jody's memorial service and dance.
- ♪ Thanks to *Allison Horton*, who is helping manage the Berkeley dances.
- ♪ Thanks to all the invisible volunteers who keep things going behind the scenes.
- ♪ I can't possibly remember all the people who need to be thanked for their efforts. If I fail to mention someone, let me know, and I'll add them next time. I can't even fit everyone in, because of all the events they create.

Twirly Skirt Update

By Jens Dill

Back in December of 2013 I wrote a President's Letter on the subject of men wearing skirts at Contra Dances. At the time, I did not have a contra dance skirt of my own. I'd worn my kilt for years, and had occasionally borrowed a skirt or cobbled one up from a bedsheet. The following summer, I found my first contra dance skirt at a TJ Max in Massachusetts. Since then, I've acquired two more, and things have not been the same. Some observations:

- A real twirly skirt is much different from a kilt. Now that I've worn both, I can feel the difference. Interestingly, when I asked Laura Gorrin to help me count the men-in-skirts percentage at Balance the Bay in 2014, we got different numbers. She wasn't counting kilts as real skirts.
- You get more than used to it. A few weeks back, I went to the Berkeley Contra, and decided not to put on my skirt just to save the effort. The first dance had a petronella figure in it, and I felt "unbalanced." I went and put my skirt on immediately after.
- You learn a lot about alterations and sewing; suddenly you are concerned with the proper hemline length, the proper waistband, and Kelsey's discussions of skirtmaking at various dance camps become things to pay attention to.
- You get more creative about avoiding hemline clashes. When there are three or more twirly skirts in a petronella foursome, I've started spinning over my left shoulder instead of my right, so that my skirt's hem doesn't clash with the hems of my neighbors. It's like meshing gears. If two opposite corners spin right and two spin left, then the hemlines are always moving together. Besides, when you spin over your left shoulder moving rightward around the square, you get more twirl. It's a 5/4 spin instead of 3/4.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, Sept 10	Free English and Contra dance party	<i>Memorial dance for Jody Distler-Dill</i>
Friday, Sept 18	Free English dance party, Palo Alto	<i>Farewell party for Bob & Ruth Anne Fraley</i>
Fri-Sun, Sept 18-20	Echo Summit Contra Dance Camp (SCDS)	<i>Nils Fredland, Mary Wesley, Elixir, and more</i>
Saturday, Sept 19	Special Family / Contra in Monterey (MCDC)	<i>Mavis McGaugh, Evo Bluestein, Noel Cragg</i>
Monday, Sept 21	Special Palo Alto Contra	<i>Eric Black with the Echo Summit Super Trio</i>
Fri-Sun, Oct 16-18	Fall Frolick English Dance Weekend	<i>Barbara Finney, Rosemary Hunt, Joanna Reiner, more</i>
Fri-Sun, Oct 30-Nov 1	Foggy Moon Dance Weekend (MCDC)	<i>George Marshall, Mary Wesley, Warren Blier</i>
Saturday, Oct 31	Halloween Contra in Palo Alto	<i>Susan Petrick with Triple Newt +</i>
Saturday, Oct 31	Halloween Contra in Sacramento (SCDS)	<i>Jean Gorrindo with the Crabapples</i>
Friday, Nov 13	Special Circle Left Contra (QCD)	<i>Michael Karcher with Dave Bartley, Anita Anderson, ...</i>
Saturday, Nov 14	Fall Ball	<i>Graham Christian with Roguery</i>
Sunday, Nov 15	Special San Jose Contra	<i>Susan Petrick with Roguery</i>
Friday, Nov 20	Special Santa Rosa Contra (NBCDS)	<i>Frannie Marr with The Nettles</i>
Saturday, Nov 21	12-Hour Twirl (TDOGS)	<i>Susan Petrick, Frannie Marr, Michael Karcher</i>
Saturday, Nov 21	San Francisco Techno Contra	<i>Ethan Hummel with DJ Balance/Swing</i>
Sunday, Nov 22	Special Hayward Contra (TDOGS)	<i>Kelsey Hartman with Contra Sutra</i>
Saturday, Dec 5	Special San Francisco Contra	<i>Rachel Wallace with Maivish</i>
Sunday, Dec 6	No Snow Ball	<i>Rachel Wallace, Jean Gorrindo with Maivish, Tunestone</i>
Friday, Dec 18	Palo Alto English Holiday Party	<i>Sharon Green with Nonesuch Country Dance Players</i>
Friday, Dec 18	Santa Rosa Contra Holiday Gala (NBCDS)	<i>Kelsey Hartman with the WiNgNuts</i>
Saturday, Dec 26	Berkeley English Boxing Day Party	<i>Cavalcade of Callers</i>
Thursday, Dec 31	Palo Alto New Years' Eve Contra	<i>Lynn Ackerson with StringFire</i>
Thursday, Dec 31	Mill Valley New Years' Eve Contra (NBCDS)	
Thursday, Dec 31	Sacramento New Years' Eve Contra (SCDS)	<i>Susan Petrick with the Whoots</i>
Fri-Sun, Jan 15-17	Contra Carnivale (CCCDS)	<i>Bob Isaacs, Nils Fredland, Susan Michaels</i>
Sunday, Feb 28	Playford Ball Workshop (Peninsula)	
Saturday, March 5	Playford Ball Workshop (East Bay)	
Fri-Sun, March 11-13	Spring Fever Dance Weekend	<i>Gaye Fifer, Adina Gordon, Nikki Herbst, and more</i>
Friday, April 1	Playford Ball Rehearsal	
Saturday, April 2	Playford Ball	<i>Lise Dyckman</i>
Fri-Sun, April 8-10	Queer Contra Dance Camp	<i>Frannie Marr, Kalia Kliban with the Syncopaths</i>

See bacds.org for more information. For events sponsored by our neighbors, see nbcds.org (NBCDS), sactocds.org (SCDS), sffmc.org (SFFMC), santacruzdance.org (TDSC), montereycdc.webs.com (MCDC), cccds.org (CCCDS), haywardcontradance.org (TDOGS), lafd.org/sf (QCD)

This issue was edited by Chris Folger and Jens Dill. Send corrections to TheDancer@bacds.org. Deadline for the Winter Dancer: Nov. 20, 2015. Send submissions to TheDancer@bacds.org. Please join the conversation.