

DANCE STAR

VOLUME 12 NUMBER 7 * News, Articles, and Calendar Dance Events For Country Dancers * Winter 2002-03

A Different Shine On Harvest Moon

By Keith Connes



This year's Harvest Moon Dance Festival had a couple of significant differences over previous HMs. For one thing, there were two callers and two bands – double the customary number. The reasons for this were to decrease the workload on the musicians and to provide variety, and to this end the organizers imported caller Cis Hinkle and Hotpoint, spelled by the familiar Erik Hoffman and For One Times' Sake.

The other difference: this was an all-Carrillo dance event. Previously, the dancing was done at Oak Park, but city regulations would have made it virtually impossible to erect our canopy over the outdoor floor. Since the ballroom dancers have a lock on the Carrillo ballroom on Saturday nights, it was decided to have that evening's contra dance at the adjoining gym and arrange for attendees to get in to the ballroom dance as well – so anyone wearing a Harvest Moon badge could shuttle back and forth between dances at no extra cost. To help dancers make the transition, there was a ballroom dance workshop that afternoon, during which veteran instructor Pat Ryan taught a number of foxtrot and rumba variations in her inimitable no-nonsense style.

How did it all work out? Well, let's get the somewhat bad news out of the way first. It turned out that the gym just wasn't the place to have a contra dance. The floor's surface had a high degree of friction – no doubt fine for basketball but not slick enough for dancing, and the acoustics gave one the feeling of being trapped in an echo chamber.

The beneficial part of it for those who ventured across the alley to our familiar floor (mostly during a contra break) was perhaps a first exposure to ballroom dancing. (Normally, there's very little cross-over. As one who does both ballroom and contra, I see very few of the same faces on Saturday and Sunday evenings.)

Despite imperfections in the environment, the dancers accepted the gym in good spirits (we were contra dancing, right?) and



Photo by Alan Snyder 2002

in all other respects Harvest Moon was, as usual, a wonderful experience. The ballroom was beautifully decorated, Cis and Hotpoint were really crackling, while Erik and For Old Times' Sake were fine as ever. Saturday's catered lunch created a lot of buzz; not only was it really delicious, but (surprise!) it was prepared by one of our dancers, Janet Berg,

who has her own catering service – and I bet everyone will want her to cook for us again next year.

We did go to Oak Park for the Sunday potluck brunch, and enjoyed a concert by both bands. After the Sunday afternoon dance party and a break for dinner, the public evening dance cooked with the energy that had built up all weekend.

In addition to being a great dance weekend, Harvest Moon is an annual fund-raiser for the Santa Barbara Country Dance Society. Financially, this year's event did not do as well as expected. Here are some details from Harvest Moon Coordinator Bettine Wallin: "The net was lower than projected for many reasons. Our attendance of 138 was lower than the 150 we had hoped for and some known receipts were missing at the Ballroom. The expenses were different, as we had two bands and two callers for the first time. The co-sponsorship agreement divides the net between SBCDS and the Santa Barbara Recreation and Parks Department. We must also rent the picnic/concert space in Oak Park. The Board had projected that the Harvest Moon receipts would pay the non-dance administrative expenses for the year such as the *Dance Star*, phone, insurance, post office box, tax filing costs, CA incorporation fees, memberships and associations, etc. This will not be true this year.

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Photo by Alan Snyder 2002

Fortunately, there is still a reserve from the past two years that will cover this loss."

I asked Bettine about plans for the next Harvest Moon, scheduled for Sept. 26-28, 2003. "The Board does not believe the gym is an acceptable location for a dance, so many options are being considered for next year. Nothing is decided, as negotiations must continue with other Carrillo users. It is hoped that we can shift the schedule to have a Saturday dance in the ballroom before the ballroom dancers begin at 8 PM, then share special activities with them in the Rec Center, using our staff. We may plan a joint or separate meal at 4 p.m. or have a buffet available, or something entirely different. We welcome ideas from creative thinkers."

If you have any such ideas, drop them in the Suggestion Box at a dance or send them to us. Incidentally, after serving as HM Coordinator off and on for 12 years, Bettine will be stepping back and acting as consultant for the event. Next time you see her, you might want to express your appreciation for the tremendous amount of work she has put in over those years.

Carrillo Lite?

At a recent meeting of the SBCDS Board, a dancer showed up to voice her opinion that the lighting at our dances is too bright. As a result of this complaint, various lighting options will be tested at several dances, and dancers will be asked to fill out a short form expressing their views on that evening's ambience.

If they can't see the form, probably the dim-lighting will be eliminated.

Fiddlers' Convention Not Just Fiddlin'

by Keith Connes

The date was Sunday, October 13, the setting was the expansive lawn areas of Stow House in Goleta, the occasion was the 31st Annual Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention – and what a grand old time it was! I saw plenty of contra dancers wandering about during the all-day affair, and while there wasn't any dancing scheduled until the very end, just listening to the jigs, reels, and other styles of old-time tunes was a treat. Several stages were set up, and on the main stage a day-long competition unfolded among practitioners of the banjo, fiddle, guitar, mandolin, etc., with vocalists as well. Listeners relaxed

them familiar faces – and it was lawn-to-lawn music, music, music!

There was also a showcase stage for non-competitors, and for me a highlight was Celtic Springs, the remarkable Wood family consisting mostly of youngsters (the oldest was a 16-year-old girl) who could not only fiddle and perform Irish step dancing, but do both at the same time. On a children's stage, there was music and storytelling for the younger crowd.



Photo by Lawrence Wallin 2002

As the closer of the convention, the program promised some contra dancing with Gary Shapiro and One Night Stan. As it turned out, the performance competition ran late, so Gary and the band were just able to squeeze in a few simple family dances before they had to vamoose to Carrillo.

The Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention is organized by Linelle Glass, Hilda Wenner, and Gary Jensen in conjunction with Santa Barbara Rotary Sunrise. The date for next year's event has not been set as of this writing, but we'll keep you advised as we get closer to the occasion. Make a note to be there – you'll really have fun.

Santa Barbara Contra Dances are
co-sponsored by SBCDS and

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
Parks & Recreation
Enriching People's Lives

The SBCDS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation
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Disclaimer: The opinions in the articles, news and letters DO NOT necessarily reflect the views of SBCDS.



Photo by Lawrence Wallin 2002

in their folding chairs or on blankets, munching picnic lunches. Meanwhile, on another spread of lawn, musicians grouped into bands and jammed – and I felt that this was the best part of the event; one could wander from one band to another as they played simultaneously, barely out of earshot of each other. The bands ranged in size from two or three players to a dozen or more, most of



Special Thanks to Allan Snyder for providing the Harvest Moon photos and Lawrence Wallin for providing the Fiddler's Convention photos in this issue of the Dance Star.



Dancers Speak Out

ViewPoint

Booking Ahead: A Disturbing Trend

by Margot Eiser

Enjoyed the articles in the Fall 2002 Dance Star. I hope dancers who need to, read it and make an attempt to incorporate the suggestions into their own dancing so newcomers will not be scared away. I am glad Chuck Sackett had a good first experience and hope he continues to do so and share his enthusiasm.

There was a time when I would have written the same article, having enjoyed contra dancing for many years and done my share of proselytizing. Recently, I have felt discouraged, disappointed and even asked for my admission fee back and walked out. Why? Because there was no one to dance with me because I did not book ahead. I get engrossed in my enjoyment of the dancing and I forget to ask someone. I believe I must not be attractive enough or not be considered a good enough dancer or there is not a gender imbalance, because I rarely get asked to book ahead. The few times, when I dared to ask, the person was already booked. How frustrating to stand alone in the line, sometimes at the top after one dance, and be gradually crowded out by people holding places for their pre-booked partners.

Until a few years ago, new partners were found, asked, and accepted right next to each other at the end of each dance — or at the break, for the first contra dance after it. Spontaneous and fun. No desolation or desperate searching and no need to remember complicated schedules...oh, how about the third dance after the break, if it is not a square or a mixer, etc.

I am not alone in disliking this trend. A long-time dancer, who helped organize dances, recently confided that she does not even go to dances anymore because of the dismay of once asking eight different men to dance and being told each was already booked. A man said he never gets to dance with certain people because they are always booked ahead. I wonder how many other people do not return to dances because of this change in procedure. I confess, in self-defense, I have resorted to occasionally pre-

booking, even using email. Sometimes I have been accepted and sometimes I remember the person with whom I booked. Actually, a horrible mix-up occurred. Because of my lack of self-confidence, when I did not see the partner I had booked, I accepted another invitation, only to be found by the first partner who had been holding a place at the top of the line! That is another reason why I object to booking in advance. I do not like to turn down someone who has asked me right there. To quote the software pirate... aaaaargh!

The phrase "booking" comes from the past, when each woman was given a little book and pencil, with a list of the evening's dances. Prospective partners would be officially recorded at the beginning of the evening. This was great for those who acted fast or were the most popular. Slower bookers either got faster or suffered embarrassment and did not enjoy dances. It might be interesting to do this at a dance sometime, except I'd like to have the men be the ones with the books.

A Response

I'm going to take off my Editor's hat for a personal reply. Margot, it's my observation that booking ahead — especially 'way ahead — is done to a greater degree at our dances than at other dances I attend. If at the beginning of an evening in, say, Pasadena, I were to ask a woman for the second dance after the break, I'm convinced she'd look at me as if I were from Mars (or Santa Barbara). Some dancers seem to arrive at Carrillo fully booked for the entire evening and perhaps the following week as well, leading me to believe that the dance book you refer to would have to be a calendar. However, it's also true that other dancers book ahead only for a dance or two, and many others don't book at all. Hang in long enough and you'll get to know the booking policy of each of the regulars. (The Dance Star might publish a Guide sometime.)

For what it's worth, my own policy is to have a partner for the next number before the current number is over, mainly to avoid the feeding frenzy that occurs among the unbooked when the caller says, "Take another partner ..." And, frankly, I participate in the booking game when I must, in order to get a partner I particularly enjoy dancing with. Here are two other strategies I use: (1) In the course of a number I will often ask a neighbor, during an alle-mande or whatever, for the next dance. (If I ask during a hey for four I have to be pretty

nimble, but I do get two shots at her.) If she declines, there are lots more neighbors along the line, and the odds are that I'll get a partner before the music stops. (2) Whenever possible, I show up for the beginner's workshops. Experienced dancers can really help out, most newcomers welcome the opportunity to dance with them, and they probably won't become dedicated bookers for at least a week.

Margot, we have great dances in Santa Barbara ... great floor, great callers and bands, great dancers. As with any type of social event, some people are going to gravitate together in nuclear groups (not to mention the Center Set) and as the more vocal members are fond of pointing out, they paid their seven dollars and are entitled to dance where and with whom they please. Booking is one way of accomplishing this (although it's certainly not the only reason dancers book), and I understand that the Board has been petitioned to install a reservation system for the Center Set as well. (No, I'm KIDDING!) Nevertheless, as I mentioned earlier, there are plenty of people who don't book, or at least don't make it a way of life. Be patient. You'll find them.

Oh, and if you'd like a dance with me, next Sunday I have the third one open in the first half and after the break the second one is available ... I think. — KC

P.S.: Now my Editor's hat is on again. Dear readers, how do you feel about booking? Let us know! This could be the start of ... well, a book.

We Want to Hear from You

It's our constant goal to make the *Dance Star* reflect your wishes and needs as dancers. Therefore, we encourage you to send us your comments and articles. The best way is to email them to the Editor, Keith Connes, at kconnes@cox.net. If you don't have email capability, snail-mail them 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 possible publication in the *Dance Star*. We reserve the right to edit all submissions.

Submission Deadline
Feb 1, 2003

CALENDAR DANCE SCHEDULE ~ Winter 2002-03

CONTRA DANCES

Enjoy dancing, a thriving tradition of flowing New England contras, plus other delights, to the irresistible rhythms of a live string band **every Sunday**. All dances are taught and prompted, with no experience or partner necessary. Generally, the simpler dances are taught earlier in the evening.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>CALLER</u>	<u>BAND</u>		<u>LOCATION</u>
Dec. 1	Gary Shapiro	Laura Light & George Paul	Dessert Potluck	Carrillo Ballroom
Dec. 8	Jeff Spero	Bog an Lochan (<i>Bay Area band</i>)		Carrillo Ballroom
Dec.15	Keith Connes	One Night Stan		Carrillo Ballroom
Dec.22	Gary Shapiro	Growling Old Geezers		Carrillo Ballroom
Dec.25 FREE	Erik Hoffman	Bayou Seco & Friends		Carrillo Ballroom
Dec.29 \$10	Leda Shapiro	Reckless Ramblers		Carrillo Ballroom
		<i>(Larry Unger, Nat Hewitt, Ginny Snowe & Sam Bartlett)</i>		
Jan.5	Susan Michaels	Chopped Liver		Carrillo Ballroom
Jan. 11	Barbara Stewart	Paddy O'Furniture		SLO Veteran's Hall
Jan. 11	Leda Shapiro	Steve Shapiro & Friends		Ojai Art Center
Jan.12	Donna Karpeles	Michael's Mixed Nuts	Potluck	Carrillo Ballroom
Jan.19	Caller's Jubilee	Southern Exposure		Carrillo Ballroom
Jan.26	Barbara Stewart	Kristina & Her Right-Hand Stars		Carrillo Ballroom
Feb.2	Chuck Galt	Michael's Mixed Nuts		Carrillo Ballroom
Feb. 8	Warren Blier	Growling Old Geezers		SLO Veteran's Hall
Feb.9	Warren Blier	The Outré Limitz (<i>Dave Allen, John Light, & Jeff Spero</i>)	Potluck	Carrillo Ballroom
Feb.16	Gary Shapiro	Kitchen Junket		Carrillo Ballroom
Feb.23	John Rogers	Kristina & Her Right-Hand Stars		Carrillo Ballroom

Carrillo Ballroom

100 E. Carrillo St
Santa Barbara

Carrillo Exit off the 101, go east to Anacapa

Time: (6:30 Lesson) 7:00-10:00pm

Cost: \$7.00 (Special Dances \$10+)

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

SLO Veteran's Hall

801 Grand Ave.
San Luis Obispo

East of 101, Cal Poly SLO Exit

Time: (7:30 Lesson) 8:00-11:00pm

Cost: \$7.00

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

Ojai Art Center

113 S. Montgomery
Ojai

Time: (7:00 Lesson) 7:30-10:30pm

Cost: \$7.00

Ojai Country Dances
(Karin): 805-933-0660

ENGLISH COUNTRY DANCES

Join us **every Tuesday** for a delightful evening of English Country Dances, all of which are taught and prompted. No experience or partner necessary. Come join fellow dancers in elegant dances of the late 1800's. The dances are varied in tempo, formation, and spirit. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes. Sponsored by Santa Barbara Country Dance Society.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>CALLER</u>	<u>BAND</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
Dec. 3	Gary Shapiro	CD's	Westside Center
Dec. 10 \$5	Gary Shapiro & Kathy Lear	Thruppence & Cassie Huse	Westside Center
Dec. 17	Kathy Lear	CD's	Westside Center
Jan. 7	Gary Shapiro	CD's	Westside Center
Jan. 12 \$7	James Hutson	Michael Mendelson, John Sonquist & Suzanne Duffy	Carrillo Ballroom
Jan. 14	Kathy Lear	CD's	Westside Center
Jan. 21	Gary Shapiro	CD's	Westside Center
Jan. 28 \$5	Gary Shapiro & Kathy Lear	Thruppence	Westside Center
Feb. 4	Kathy Lear	CD's	Westside Center
Feb. 9 \$7	Gary Shapiro	Linelle Glass, Jeff Spero, Robert Winokur & Kristina Eriksen	Carrillo Ballroom
Feb. 11	Gary Shapiro	CD's	Westside Center
Feb. 18	Kathy Lear	CD's	Westside Center
Feb. 25 \$5	Gary Shapiro & Kathy Lear	Thruppence	Westside Center

Westside Center

423 W. Victoria St. in Santa Barbara

Time: 7:30 - 9:30pm

Cost: \$2.00 (Live Band \$5)

English Country on Sundays Starting January!

Where: Carrillo Ballroom

Time: 2:30 - 5:30pm

When: 2nd Sundays

Cost: \$7

Starting January 2003 there will be English Country Dances on the **second Sunday** afternoon of every month at the Carrillo Ballroom. A potluck will be served between ECD and contra - so be sure and bring a dish to share!