



THE BLETTHERS



Ree Grisham, *Chair Pro Tem*

Laurie Walter, *Editor*

1998 Weekend Workshop: There's still time to reserve! Noel Chavez (708-848-9218) will cheerfully accept your \$35 deposit for the RSCDS, Chicago Branch's 1998 Weekend Workshop, to be held May 29-31 at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana, with teaching by Mary Murray (Vancouver), Dale Birdsall (Cincinnati/New Hampshire), and Kent Smith (Connecticut). The Music Makars plus Susan Worland are providing the tunes. We're in luck: the Music Makars have put out a new CD and we'll have a chance to purchase copies prior to the official release party. Call Mary Helen Polensky at (815) 756-7182 if you need more information. The final brochure will be out in the near future.

Chair Pro Tem: With regret, the Committee of Management has accepted Gary Hay's resignation as Branch Chairperson. During his leave of absence from the Chair position, Gary stayed active with the Committee, and he shall be missed. Ree Grisham will continue to serve as Chair Pro Tem for the near term. However, to facilitate the upcoming Branch elections, Ree has resigned from the Election Committee, from which she was on leave of absence, and the Committee of Management has appointed Gary Hay to fill the slot.

Annual General Meeting: Please mark the date: the Annual General Meeting of the Chicago Branch will be May 3 at St. Josaphat's. Along with reports and the election of people to serve on the Committee of Management, we will have a discussion of the current state of the Branch, what we want for the future and how we can get there. A gentle hint from the Chair Pro Tem: COME TO THE AGM. I know many people don't look forward to the AGM, but this has been an unusual and difficult year for the Branch. It is important that we take a look at what has happened and what we need to do. We need everyone's viewpoint and suggestions; we especially need to hear from those of you who observe much but say little. And, after we're done with the meeting, we'll dance, and we'll finish the evening with a lovely tea. [Ree Grisham]

Elections: Speaking of elections, think about running for a Branch office. Up for election at the AGM are the Branch Chairperson, the Honorary Secretary, the Honorary Treasurer, and three Members at Large. (The term "honorary" doesn't mean that these are no-work positions; it distinguishes the Branch positions from the Secretary and Treasurer of the RSCDS umbrella organization.) The members of the Election Committee--Ken Heinemann, Mary Ellen Endo, and Gary Hay--can tell you more about each position. Some of the current office-holders may run for re-election but that shouldn't stop you from considering a position. Another gentle hint from the Chair Pro Tem: WE NEED PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE. I know, once you've done your stint on the Committee of Management, or chairing an event, the urge is to say, "I've done my share." I've been there myself. And the Branch is very grateful for your efforts. But the Branch needs the "gray heads" who have accumulated knowledge and wisdom to offer. [Thanks again to Ree for this piece and all her hard work.]

A note from Silk and Thistle: The Silk and Thistle class continues to dance merrily through the year. We only missed dancing for a couple of weeks while the Lab was closed for Christmas and New Years.

Our program has evolved over the last year and into this year with the inclusion of two new features. We have, starting in '98, designated the last Tuesday of the month as a social class. We use that evening to do requests (previously added to a suggestion list), repeat dances done during the month and continue with repertoire development. There is intended to be minimal teaching. Also, for the last year or so, we have (at least in many of the months) done a "dance of the month." For February, this was *The Loch Michigan Rant*. We do the dance each week during the month, with less and less teaching each week. The idea is to choose a dance that offers some opportunity to develop some techniques and/or to work on some

specialized figures. “*Loch Mich*” has a R&L for 3 couples and requires that one maintain a sense of where to be at the ends of figures, offering much opportunity to improve one’s sensitivity to and command of geography. The strong support of the more experienced Silk and Thistle dancers made it possible for even relatively new dancers to join in and have fun with this interesting dance!

Access to Fermilab has changed: after hours, one collects a ticket from a machine which is then used to exit the lab by the same gate. After 8:00 PM, you have to push a button and talk to communication to get your ticket. Security assures us that there should be no problems with this procedure. No problems reported so far. If you have a problem, call the barn (extension 3486, during dance times), or give Doug a call at (630) 840-8194 (w) or 232-9089 (h) at other times.

At the end of February, we bid farewell to Nancy, the bar tender at the User Center (where many dancers gather after dancing to “wash away the dust of the dance”). She has always been very supportive and welcoming to the dancers. We wish her well. [Doug Jensen]

English Country Dancing: Upcoming English Country dances at Saint Mark’s Church in Evanston, IL: April 8 & 22, May 13 & 27. For information call Tom Senior at (847) 433-8704 or email him at: seniort@newtrier.k12.il.us

“Stranded on mountain, woman danced to live”: *Associated Press* Layton, Utah--When Karen Hartley found herself stranded in freezing temperatures and mountain snow as night fell on Christmas Eve, she knew it was dance or die. So she danced in the dark, playing tunes in her head, until dawn Christmas Day, when rescuers spotted her from a helicopter. She was unhurt, and spent Christmas Day in a hot tub, followed by dinner at Denny’s [no snide comments, please]. Hartley, a 33-year-old computer software developer, wandered out of bounds at the Powder Mountain ski area Christmas Eve and spent more than 18 hours on the mountain. The temperatures were in the single digits. “The best thing I could think of was to keep my brain occupied by playing music in my head and dancing to keep warm,” Hartley said Friday. “I went through all the old disco songs, show tunes, popular and current stuff, Christmas tunes and even camp songs I’d ever known. I sang and danced all night long, from about 6:30 PM to dawn. It was the only way I could think of to keep warm.” [Thanks to Doug Schneider and Noel Chavez.]

Trip to Nova Scotia, cont’d: On our way to our first night’s stop, we drove along the Bay of Fundy and were told that we would find the world’s highest tides here, rising as much as 45 to 50 feet between low and high tide. We were staying at the Pines Resort in Digby, N.S. As we drove, our guide told us that there was a lot of tuna fishing there, catches coming in as large as 1500 lbs. I love fresh tuna and determined to order same for dinner. (You guessed it: no tuna on the menu.) There were easy walking trails through the woods down to the beach and I meandered down a couple of them before dinner. There was also a film on reversing tides, a phenomenon caused when the Fundy tides fall below the level of the St. John River in New Brunswick, causing the tide to back in on itself. (Forgive me: my memory allows me only this simple explanation of “reversing tides” but I think that’s the general idea.)

The following day, we were due to take the ferry from Digby to St. John, New Brunswick, but we had a few hours to visit Digby first. The town was small and delightful. I picked up a copy of *Evangeline* to read on the boat and also visited a local shop featuring only hand-made quilts by the local women. This was almost like visiting a craft museum; they were lovely and lovingly made.

We rejoined the bus, drove to the dock and got on the ferry. We went up to the lounge to settle down and met a bunch of Americans from a Mayflower Tour group who also made the crossing. We got very friendly during the crossing and kept running into each other during the following week. One of the women lived quite near my sister in Jefferson Park. Unfortunately, we were fogged in for the entire trip so couldn’t do any sightseeing. Interesting to hear the continuous foghorn overhead and watch crew members at the very bow of the boat keeping a lookout. (Incidentally, I never did get to read my book until I got home.) [St. John and the rest of the trip next issue: Liz Stake]