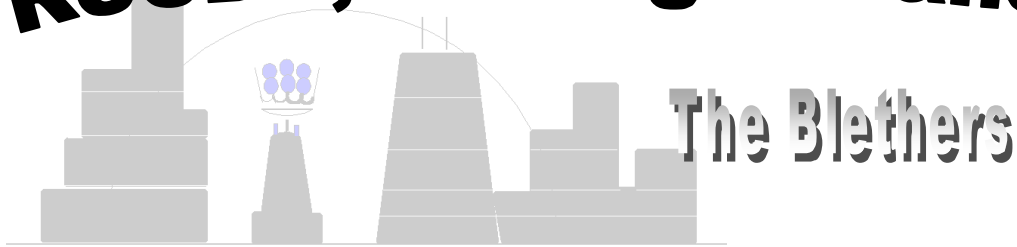


RSCDS, Chicago Branch



APRIL 2009

2009 Annual General Meeting and Spring Dance: This is official notice, pursuant to the Constitution and by-laws of the Chicago Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, that the Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, May 2. The meeting will be held at the Fermi Lab Barn, starting at 5:00 p.m. The main item on the agenda will be the election of a new Committee of Management. Anyone who is interested is invited to attend, but you must be a member of the Branch to vote.

Following the meeting, we are holding our Spring Dance. The program for the Spring Dance is below, and crib sheets are available on the Branch website. There are dances to appeal to everyone, and everyone is welcome!

Festival Interceltique	Four Dances 2008	I. Brockbank	40R C
Cranberry Tart	7 Year Itch	Glasspool	32J3
Castle Douglas	12 More Social Dances	R. Goldring	32S3
Catch the Wind	45 #5	R. Butterfield	32R3
Whirlybird	Chicago 25th	S. McKinnell	32J3 32S3
Jean Martin of Aberdeen	3 Dances for 2006	M. Johnstone	Set
Kumite	Delaware Valley Silver	K. Davis	32R2
Intermission			
The Express	20 #1		40J3 32S4
Butterscotch and Honey	Alexander Leaflets #24	J. Attwood	Set
All for Mary	12 More Social Dances	R. Goldring	32R3
Laird of Milton's Daughter	22 #10		32J3
Lea Rig	21 #5		32S2
Irish Rover	22 SCD	Cosh	32R3

Tartan Day Celebration: Just a reminder -you are also invited to an evening of celebration this Tuesday, April 7, beginning at 7:30 p.m., at the Fermi Lab Barn, where Silk and Thistle will be hosting its Tartan Day Celebration, also billed as "Bring a Friend" night. A fun variety of dances is being planned for the evening, and there will be a variety of treats for everyone to sample as well.

2009 Highland Games: The dates for this year's Highland Games are Friday, June 19 and Saturday, June 20 at the Oakbrook Polo Grounds. Stay tuned for news about Branch activities planned for the Games.

Different Kinds of Strathspeys, and How They Affect Dancing, by Chris Ronald:

"The music is the stimulus of the dance and the dance should be the physical expression of the music" - Jean C. Milligan (Co-founder of the RSCDS)

In the last issue of 'The Scottish Country Dancer' I shared some ideas about reels and jigs. This time, it's strathspeys. The first point - and perhaps you won't be surprised to hear - is that there are as many varieties of strathspeys as there are quick-time rhythms. Musicians can identify six or more different types. But there are two main types: the 'traditional, strong' strathspeys on the one hand, and the song tunes on the other hand. The

first category, the tunes with dotted notes and the so-called Scotch Snap rhythm, tend to encourage dancers to make the familiar surge at the beginning of the step. The song tunes - or slow airs, or 'pastoral' tunes, do not have this distinctive rhythm. So in dancing to song tunes, there is less surge.

We can check out the difference for ourselves. If a class dances round the room to a 'strong' strathspey tune, one sees the heads going up and down, and one notices that the forward movement is alternately faster and slower: the forward movement almost ceases half way through the step, as the feet close in third position. In contrast, with a song tune, the forward motion is much more even throughout each step. We saw this in Terry Harvey's class at Pinewoods. Terry pointed out that, for this reason, it's harder to take really long steps with the 'strong' strathspey, but it's easier to dance really short steps.

Well known 'strong' strathspeys that are used in teaching are Dalkeith's Strathspey, The Marquis of Huntly's Strathspey and Strathglass House. Well known song tunes are The Lea Rig, The Duchess Tree and Miss Gibson's Strathspey (which uses a tune called 'The Music O' Spey' by James Scott Skinner.) Ruth made an interesting and possibly controversial point here. She felt that song tunes were sometimes preferable for teaching the strathspey step to new dancers. Her reason was that dancers tend to hear the basic four-beat rhythm more easily with song tunes; she also uses 'Maggie Lauder', which has a very clear four-beat rhythm. The argument is similar to the one for using single jigs or reels for teaching: it's better to use a simple tune than one with a multitude of notes (discussed in my previous article.)

Another interesting point concerns the way the strathspey rhythm has changed over time. We now dance strathspeys much slower than they were danced 100, 50 or even 30 years ago. They used to be faster, not as fast as reels or jigs of course, but something in between the way we now dance quick and slow time dances. This means, among other things, that there would not have been much surge in earlier days. Which is ironic, as we sometimes refer to the surge as one of the 'traditional' aspects of the strathspey step.

One other type of strathspey deserves a mention. This is the more 'hoppy' or bouncy type of strathspey, the highland schottische style. As the name implies, it tends to be found in dances with highland schottische setting, such as The Robertson Rant, and tunes like that certainly do stimulate dancers to hop in the setting steps. Such tunes are sometimes found as the name tunes in other types of dances, such as Donald Bane. In these cases, the challenge for the dancer is to resist the temptation to hop half way through the step, each time one closes in third position.

Happy dancing!

August 2002, reprinted with permission of author

Chiming in With Tom Senior: Most of us know Tom Senior from Scottish Country dance activities, but Tom wears many hats, including English Country performer and teacher, Contra dance caller, Demo Team leader for the Chicago Section of the American Association of Physics Teachers, Secretary of PIRA (Physics Instructional Resource Association), and Ski Patrol veteran, to name a few.

Since retiring from teaching full-time, Tom has also been busy designing and producing of a line of intricately built inventions called "Marble Chimes." He has generously donated several Marble Chimes towards Branch raffles and silent auctions, where they have been much coveted. I asked Tom if he would tell readers a little about Marble Chimes.

Some background: When I was a child, my parents would take the family to West Burlington, Iowa, to visit with my mother's mom, my grandmother. She had a marble roll that I played with for hours. Just four grooved wooden ramps that zig zagged down. They are pretty common in the Midwest, as I've found out by attending flea markets with Barbara. We have collected a few that can be seen in our living room.

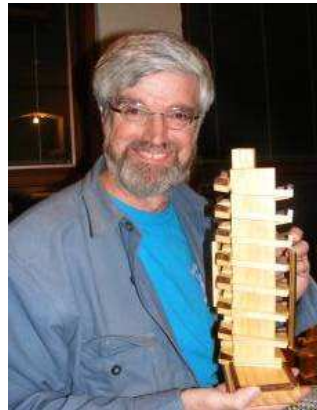
After a 9th grade shop class, I decided we needed one at our home in Maple Shade, NJ, so I went about trying to build one. I did not have the skills to use a router, so my pieces were very short, and

I branched out into 3 dimensions, rather than a plain ordinary zig zag (two dimensions). The first few used steel ball bearings, so I started calling them BBTs, or ball bearing toys.

Over the past 2 score years I have modified and simplified the design to what it is now. In the mid 1970's, I spent many weeks at Pinewoods Camp near Plymouth, Mass. For 3 years I was the lifeguard for all 6 weeks of the Camp's Country Dance and Song Society program. I helped raise funds to buy the Camp from private hands by building and selling marble machines. I also installed them in the bathrooms at Pinewoods, so many folks have been exposed to them. It was a kind of graffiti. It is now a kind of institution. For many years I also ran a marble machine class for the family week at Pinewoods. One of my current projects is to make Marble Machine Lamps for every cabin.

Last summer, after I retired, I took a few of the machines to Citywoods, a craft store in Highland Park. They made the suggestion that I make them from more exotic woods and apply a finish to them somehow. I have been able to meet their requests and have sold quite a few machines through them (4 sizes retailing at \$60, \$100, \$150, and \$200). I am working on a different design using panga panga wood (dense and dark) and am still improving the design for the chimes. Last summer I was also advised that I should buy a unique name for a web site, so that I could eventually set up a web sales outlet. With a bit of brainstorming, we came up with the name "Marble Chime" to describe the machines, so they have evolved from BBT through marble machines to the present Marble chime. You can find some movies of them on YouTube under that name. (YouTube has way too many marble machines!)

When I get some free time, maybe after taxes, I intend to set up the web site. But until then, questions and orders can be placed through my email address: thomasjsenior@yahoo.com.



New Year's Ball 2009



Carol Cook and Company, our Ball musicians



Andrea's masterpiece

Upcoming Dancing in the Midwest:

Saturday, May 2, Iowa Annual Ball
Saturday, May 9, Ann Arbor Annual Ball

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Website: <http://rscds-chicago.org>

Webmaster: Sue McKinnell

Blethers Editor: Carlyn Bromann

