

Newsletter of North Alabama Country Dance Society • Group Affiliate, Country Dance & Song Society • Established 1982 http://secontra.com/NACDS/html • Linda McAllister, Editor • email: wmca@hiwaay.net • (256) 534-8354

Square Dancing

By Jane Ewing

For those of you who read the Yahoo chat page, that NACDS sponsors, you already know that I had a "Square" party recently. If you did not make it to the party let me explain briefly why working parties are necessary for callers like me.

Contra dance calling is, generally speaking, a matter of timing. The caller must finish prompting a move just before the dancer is to start the move.

We all know how enjoyable it is to dance with the music and be right on time! This can be practiced, just about anywhere, by someone learning to call. There are many smaller nuances that are learned by watching or taping and listening to other callers and a variety of bands.



Then there are many small, but very important, items regarding teaching, enunciation, and voice projection that are learned in classes conducted by some of the great callers across the country. But primarily, we hone our skills by calling and working with live dancers.

Square dance calling, on the other hand, can be a different animal than calling contra dances and circle dances. I say "can be" because there are several different types of squares that we as contra dancers do. Two styles, Western and Southern

squares can be a mixed bag of worms. This is kin to a "Rubik's Cube". I like to mix it up and then reassemble.

During the first week of August I went to the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins, West Virginia. I spent all day in class with a caller that has been calling squares for 49 years. There were six callers in class and we had a very busy week learning and

> practicing techniques. Once I got home, however, I could not practice unless I had some willing dancers to come and practice with me.

My square party offered that opportunity. I appreciated the dancers' willingness to show up and participate with me.

We had good fellowship, good food and some very interesting squares forming out on the grass of my yard.

If you would like to learn more about square dancing than is normally covered during a typical Saturday dance, we will be having a

Square Workshop -

for both the caller and the dancers - on Saturday, September 3rd. This workshop will start at 6:00 PM. We will finish at 7:00 PM in time for the regular Beginners Workshop prior to the regular dance. If you are interested, <u>please</u> come join me. I need dancers on the floor, and I promise you will have fun!

00 Getting to Know You

| \bigcirc | | \bigcirc | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Shelly Vann | Linda Harman | Linda Singleton McAllister | |
| NACDS Secretary | NACDS Membership Chair | NACDS Newspaper Editor | |
| Government Contractor | (Replacing Beth Riggs who moved) | • Recently retired music teacher and | |
| Hometown – Ft. Scott, KS | Worked at Integraph for 20 years | choral director at The Academy for | |
| Arrived in Huntsville in 1997 | Huntsville native | Academics and Arts magnet school | |
| from Germany for 4 more years of | Spouse – Max (the one with the | Native of Huntsville but left for | |
| active duty in the US Army. | green dancing shoes); 3 children – | 20 years; returned in 1993 | |
| Something Unique – first female | Hill is a graduate student in | Spouse – Bill, A&M Professor. | |
| to be assigned to NATO Airborne | chemistry at UC, Berkley, Sara is | Linda has 2 children – Melanie and | |
| Infantry unit in Heidelberg, | married and lives in B'ham, and | Brett with 6 grandchildren; Bill has | |
| GermanyAllied Mobile Force | Hannah is a 14 year-old freshman at | 2 children, Suzie and Cliff and 2 | |
| (Land). However, she was neither | HHS and she loves to dance. The | grandsons. None live here so they | |
| Airborne nor Infantry but was | first grandchild is due in October | are out of town often visiting them. | |
| executive administrative assistant to | and Linda and Max hope the arrival | Enjoys cooking, entertaining, | |
| the commanding general. No | will not interfere with dance | decorating, reading, gardening, | |
| parachuting was required! | weekends! | traveling and singing – sings with | |
| Enjoys contra & ballroom dancing | • Hobbies – sews, quilts, reads | First Presbyterian Church Choir and | |
| and traveling | fiction, plays hand bells at church | the Eugene Brasher Chorale. | |
| • Began contra dancing in January, | and fishes with her dad - catching | • Linda began dancing with her late | |
| 2004 at Gorham's Blufffirst | 20-30 lb redfish | husband in Nashville when they | |
| impression was that it was fun and | • Linda is a newcomer to contra | moved there in 1987. She enjoyed | |
| made her dizzy. She also felt like | dancing $-2\frac{1}{2}$ years but now she | the folk music, friendly people, | |
| she would never learn to do it well. | cannot imagine not dancing. Her | multi-generational and diverse | |
| (Wrong, Shelly) | favorite part is the flow of it all – | group of dancers and felt she had | |
| • She likes the energy at dances | swirling skirts, perfect timing of a | found a new venue in her music | |
| when all dancers are doing the same | balance and swing, the beat of the | world. She felt doubly rewarded to | |
| thing at the same time. "It's really | music, and how it continues to flow | meet Bill while contra dancing in | |
| great to be in a square that manages | even when the caller quits calling! | Nashville! | |
| to keep it all togethervery | • Linda said, "At my first contra | • "I remember my first contra dance | |
| exhilarating," says Shelly. | dance, I danced every dance and at | weekend in Nashville very well. | |
| • Shelly often goes to dance | the end of the night, I could not walk down the steps. I had to use | By late Saturday afternoon I had to | |
| weekends – Nashville, Knoxville, | 1 | take Ibuprofen, a hot bath, and a | |
| and Mentone, most recently.This gal has a new flame and she | the handicap ramp! The next morning was painful, but I was | nap with the heating pad to | |
| • This gai has a new flame and she said to wish her luck! | hooked." | rejuvenate me for the big Saturday | |
| Salu to WISH HEL LUCK! | nookea. | evening dance," said Linda. "But hey, the dancing was great!" | |
| | | ney, me daneing was great! | |
| | | | |

Guest Passes (All members – bring new folks!)

By (NACDS member)

This guest pass admits bearer to any regular Saturday night dance (1st & 3rd Saturdays) of the NACDS. All dances are at 7:00 PM at Faith Presbyterian Church (corner of Airport Rd. & Whitesburg Dr.) Call Bryan 256 837-0656 or Doug 256 882-6378 for more info. \$7 value Good thru November, 2005

Presented to

By (NACDS member)

This guest pass admits bearer to any regular Saturday night dance (1st & 3rd Saturdays) of the NACDS. All dances are at 7:00 PM at Faith Presbyterian Church (corner of Airport Rd. & Whitesburg Dr.) Call Bryan 256 837-0656 or Doug 256 882-6378 for more Good thru November, 2005 info. \$7 value



Huntsville dances are the 1st & 3rd Saturdays of each month in the gym at Faith Presbyterian Church, 5003 Whitesburg Dr., South, (corner of Whitesburg & Airport Rd.). Beginners Workshop is at 7:00 PM then the regular dance is from 7:30 – 10:30 PM.

Admission is \$7 (\$6 for members), \$4 for teens, free for ages 12 & under. Remember to bring comfortable, non-scuffing shoes for dancing. Bring someone new to a dance this month! You will find 2 free guest passes in this newsletter.

Contact Bryan Walls (256) 837-0656 or email: <u>bwalls@pobox.com</u> or visit <u>http://secontra.com/NACDS.html</u> for more info.

| Date | Caller | Band |
|--------------|--|---|
| September 3 | Jane Ewing Special Squares Workshop 6:00 PM | Kaleidoscope - Chuck & Katrina Weber, Mike Bush |
| September 17 | Harry Delugach | Biscotti Boys - Chip Gulbro, Steve Nix, Eric Torstenson, & Jim Holland (an eclectic mix of tunes and instruments) |
| October 1 | Seth Tepfer | Ed Baggott & Elsie Peterson |
| October 15 | ТВА | Kaleidoscope – Chuck & Katrina Weber, Mike Bush |



Area Dance Gypsy Calendar

| DATE | LOCATION | CALLER | BAND |
|------------|-------------|------------------|--|
| Sept 10 | Birmingham | Doug Singleton | Smoke & Mirrors – Sandy Goldring & Ann Whitley |
| Sept 10 | Chattanooga | Nick Boulet | Nashville Weather |
| Sept 22 | Sewanee | Barb Kirchner | Ed Baggott & Elsie Peterson |
| Sept 23-25 | Chattanooga | George Marshall | Wild Asparagus & others (Dance Weekend – see Web site) |
| Oct 28-30 | Nashville | Robert Cromartie | String Beings (Dance Weekend – see Web site) |
| Oct 28 | Sewanee | Bryant Haynes | Fiery Gizzard Stringband |

CTDS (Chattanooga) dances 2nd & 4th Saturdays at All Saints Academy, 310 E. 8th St., downtown, 8:00 PM. Contact Steve at (706)937-4991, Claire & Bryant at (423)876-7359 or http://contranooga.org

Misty Mountain Dancers (Sewanee, TN) dances at the Legion Hall in Sewanee, TN. For dates, call (931) 598-0814 or check http://www.mistycontra.zoomshare.com/).html

NCD (Nashville) dances almost every Friday at 8:00 PM at Woodbine Community Center, Burbank & Oriel. Contact Chrissy at (615)210-6808 or John, email: <u>DanceFools@aol.com</u> or <u>http://dancenashville.org/</u>

A Bit Farther Away, But Well Worth The Travel

CCD (Atlanta) dances on Fridays & alternate Tuesdays. http://contradance.org KCD (Knoxville) dances every Monday. http://www.kornet.org/kcd/ MCD (Memphis) dances on the 1st & 3rd Fridays. <u>http://hometown.aol.com/horselovers/index.html</u> Sautee Community Dances (N. GA) once a month from Sept – May. <u>http://sauteecontra.home.mindspring.com/</u>

Upcoming Dance Weekends

Chattaboogie - Chattanooga's 1st ever dance weekend. Sept 23-25. <u>http://chattaboogie.com/</u> **Music City Masquerade** - Nashville's weekend. Oct 28-30. <u>http://mistycontra.zoomshare.com/0.html</u> **Balance the Bell** - Louisville's fall dance, Sept 23-25 - Joseph Pimental and Grand Picnic **Dance Tapestry** – Atlanta's 29th annual dance, Nov 11-13 - Robert Cromartie, Cis Hinkle, Airdance, Elftones & Smoke & Mirrors

Tips for Contra Dancers Old Timers or Newcomers

• **Have fun!** Do not be nervous about mistakes. Everyone was once a beginner – listen, laugh & enjoy.

• Callers generally do a "walk through" and it is <u>very</u> <u>important to listen –</u> even if you know the dance, someone else may need the practice. Ask for help if you do not understand something

• It is customary to change partners for each dance and it especially helps newcomers learn quickly. It's also okay for women to ask men to dance or if there are not enough of one gender, be brave and try dancing another part. If you are a woman and you're dancing the male part, it helps to wear a tie to indicate which role you are dancing. We don't have any hair ribbons yet for the guys who dance the women's part.

• All dances happen because of volunteers. NACDS has had a faithful few doing all the work for years. So, jump in and help. Members who helped August 20 realized how much the faithful few had been doing all these years! Thank you.

• Eye contact is important and flattering!

• "Give weight." Hold your arms firm but flexible. Guys, when you swing the gals give the gals support with that hand on the back; otherwise, they feel like they are falling. Gals, lean back a bit. Giving weight helps the dance to flow smoothly.

• Have a firm hand grip but don't squeeze the hands (arthritis- ouch). You may want to leave big rings at home.

• Remember – no alcohol, smoking or perfumes in dance hall, but yes to breath mints and deodorant!

• Timing is important. The music for most contras and squares has four beats per bar and the dance moves are generally multiples of four. Generally the moves are eight beats. For example, circle left eight, circle right eight, swing eight beats, etc. Occasionally, there is a lucky sixteen beat swing. Practice being on time for each move even if you have to skip a move to catch up. Fancy twirls and footwork are fine if you and your partner are comfortable with the extras and are on time for the next move.

NACDS North Alabama Country Dance Society 4304 Holmes Ave., NW, Huntsville, AL 35816 Address correction requested



Send just \$10 for one, or \$15 per family, to the address above.

> Make checks payable to NACDS. (mailing label shows renewal date)

> > Members receive monthly newsletter, 2 guest passes, and a \$1 DISCOUNT to each regular dance!