



# The Reel Thing

## SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING IN AMERICA'S FINEST CITY



Branch members in a demonstration set at the IDA Festival, February 2008

### Chairman's Message

By Marjorie McLaughlin

I'd like to extend my thanks to those of you who participated in the International Dance Association's Festival at the Balboa Park Club on Sunday, February 10th. Despite heavy traffic and congestion in the Park due to the Vietnamese New Year's Festival, we did have Branch members support the event. Amy Hoffman, Betty Ribble, Bill & Ellen Ewing and Ron Vosacek arrived early to get our table and display set up. Jim & Sandy Mosteller, Cy Chadley, Lloyd & Sue Fero, and Jake & Sondra Talbot added to the group to demonstrate our dancing to the crowd and then assisted with the participation dancing. We had more than 6 sets on the floor, so coordinating the efforts of the uninitiated was a challenge! Jim & Marieke Thayer were also at the Festival, but cleverly disguised as Morris dancers! Nancy Holland and Leo Zofrea also attended. Nancy wasn't able to dance due to upcoming surgery at the end of this month, but she graciously gave her time to staff the table, talk to prospective dancers, and help with clearing up.

The Tuesday Poway Class and the Friday Balboa Park Class have both been welcoming new dancers. On Fridays there is now a separate basics class for newer

dancers and those who want to refresh their dancing skills. That class is in Room 203 of Casa del Prado at the same time as the Social class - 7:30 p.m.

We have several special events coming up on our dance calendar in the next few months, so save these dates!

### BACK TO BASICS WORKSHOP

A very special afternoon of dancing is planned for Saturday, March 29, 2008. This will be another in our very popular Back to Basics Workshop series. Dancers of all levels will have a chance to improve their dancing skills and learn some excellent new dances. Our special guest instructor is Tim Wilson from the San Francisco Branch. Many of you have met Tim at other workshops in Southern California. He is a wonderful dancer, teacher and terrific dance deviser. After the morning workshop he will teach some of his new dances.

The event will be held at the San Marcos High School dance studio (same location as last year's workshop) with registration beginning at 9:00 and the workshop from 10:00 to noon. Lunch will be available and then we'll have more dancing in the afternoon. Cy and Maria Chadley have one again graciously agreed to host a party at the their home after the workshop. Information will be posted on the Branch website and flyers will be available shortly.

### ORANGE COUNTY 25TH ANNIVERSARY BALL

This event scheduled for Saturday, May 3, 2008 has been announced before, but we have more details now and tickets are available for sale. The deadline for tickets is April 12, 2008,

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## Chairman's Message

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but this will likely be a sold-out event and space is limited, so you are encouraged to send in your order soon. Tickets must be purchased in advance so don't delay. The Women's Club of Orange is a beautiful venue for the reception, banquet and ball. The music will be provided by the fabulous duo of Muriel Johnstone and Keith Smith. A flyer is attached to the Reel Thing and will be on our Branch website. This will be a wonderful opportunity to support our friends from Orange County and to enjoy a great evening of music and dance.

### SAN DIEGO BRANCH AGM

On Friday, May 16, 2008 we will be holding our Annual General Meeting just before the Friday evening social class in Balboa Park. In the coming weeks a nominating committee will be putting together a slate of officers for the next year. While some of current Branch Board members will be continuing to serve the Branch for another year, some are ready to take a well-earned break from service. Membership on the Branch Board is actually an enjoyable way to support our activities. The members are congenial and help each other with their various jobs. If you have never served on the Board, please consider taking on one of the positions. If it's been some time since you participated, maybe this is the chance you've been waiting for! A slate needs to be presented to the Branch membership by March 31, 2008, and additional nominations can be accepted in writing by April 15, 2008. We will vote on the slate at the AGM. Jack Vandevor and Amy Hoffman are on the nominating committee so you may be hearing from one of them soon!

### FUTURE EVENTS

The San Diego Highland Games will be on Saturday and Sunday, June 28th & 29th at Brengle Terrace Park

in Vista and more information will be forthcoming. <http://www.sdhIGHLANDGAMES.org/>

For now, put the dates on your calendar, as we anticipate a chance to demonstrate our dancing and will once again have a tent to meet and greet new dancers and to publicize our classes. Your participation is always appreciated.

We've just heard from the San Diego County Fair about this year's opportunities for performances at the Del Mar Fairgrounds. The Branch Board hasn't yet had a chance to review the application or determine the best dates, but the Fair runs from June 14th through July 6th. We normally want to avoid a conflict with the Highland Games, and have often participated during the last weekend of the Fair, which this year will be July 5th or 6th. Last year we were unable to participate, but have a long track record of enjoyable afternoons at the Fair - both for our dancers and for the audience who participates. We'll keep you posted on the plans.



Dancers at the San Diego Christmas Ball, December 1, 2007



**Dancers at the San Diego Christmas Ball,  
December 1, 2007**

### 2007 Christmas Ball

We had a wonderful turn out for our Christmas Ball at the Portuguese Hall in Point Loma on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007. Of the 67 people who attended, 11 were beginner dancers. We were delighted to have so many of our new dancers attend, and from what I heard, they had a very good time and plan to keep coming back! We also got to enjoy the company of many friends from LA and Orange County; 13 people took the time to drive down and dance with us, and two other spectators also were from out of town. The delightful program was devised by Ward Fleri, and the excellent music was performed by John Taylor on fiddle and Barbara Magone on piano. Eric McLeod coordinated the logistics and printed the programs, and the Mostellers hosted a lovely after-party. It was a festive and fun evening that was an excellent way to start the holiday season.

### Tri-Branch Burns' Ball

By Amy Hoffman

On January 25 of this year, the three RSCDS branches to the immediate north of us hosted a Burns' Ball and Dinner at the Ports 'O Call restaurant in San Pedro. Jeanne and I attending this formal evening. We drove up on Saturday afternoon, arriving just as the first drops of a storm started falling, and checked into a hotel across the street from the restaurant; we had decided not to drive back at midnight in the storm! This restaurant is

right on the water at the Port of Long Beach/San Pedro, and at one point we sneaked into a dining room to watch the wind-whipped waters.

Ports 'O Call restaurant served a lovely dinner, accompanied by haggis home made by Jon Reeves, an LA Branch member—after the appropriate ceremonial entry, of course "wi' a' the honours:" a piper, a "Poosie Nancy," henchmen, and Jim Bell to give the address. They also held the traditional memoriam to Burns and toast to the lassies (and laddies), after which we were up and ready to dance! Callum McKinnon on fiddle and Lisa Scott on

piano provided the excellent music! The program also was quite delightful, although we had to dance it on a small, sticky floor (an interesting change from the too-slippery floors we most often have to negotiate!). I noticed that the entire program had only one fast-time dance with a circle in it!

If you've never been to a Burns' Dinner, it's quite a delightful event, so be sure to go next year!

Our plan to wait out the storm was a good one, and we got to drive home in sunny weather after a delightful breakfast at a local café. If you are ever up in San Pedro, we recommend eating at Rex's Café on 22<sup>nd</sup> and Pacific.



**The Haggis, "wi' a' the honours", Burns' Ball,  
January 29, 2008**

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## Technique Doctor

Spring

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2008

*Editor's Note: This article was published in the RSCDS Member's Magazine, Scottish Country Dancer, in October 2007, and is reprinted here with permission from the author and from the Scottish Country Dancer editor's permission. Geoffrey is a well known North American guest teacher, tutor, and RSCDS examiner, as well as being co-author of the Handbook for Scottish Country Dance Teachers.*

### Technique Doctor

By Geoffrey Selling

At a recent Summer School dance, having just completed a classic but simple strathspey with an energetic young partner, she asked me, "Can we do a "fun" dance next time?" I knew that by "fun dance" she meant one with a new formation, or a challenging transition or something more unusual than the plain vanilla strathspey we'd just done. With more than 13,000 published dances (according to Keith Napier) and more coming every day, increasingly many people want to learn that next new formation or clever bit of choreography, rather than focus on dance fundamentals. To some extent, that's understandable; novelty has always been attractive.

Yet when danced with good technique and attention to the nuances of the formation, even a simple movement like set and cross over can become the occasion for beautiful and fun dancing. In our thirst to learn the next clever dance, many of the simpler movements get neglected and are simply used as filler or set-ups for the more challenging movements. Here are some technique tips to make those simple movements just as exciting as that new formation or intriguing dance.

Advance and Retire: All too often, the lines are wavy and the hands joined erratically, with the dancing couple almost dragging their neighbors forward. The dancing couple should aim to stand just behind the supporting dancers rather than in a straight line. With arms very fully extended and palms upward, they can "lead" the others in and out. This makes the supporting dancers feel attended to and gives purpose and structure to the formation. It looks very grand!

Set and cross: Instead of phrasing this evenly, dancers should aim to do most of their crossing on bar one, using the second bar turn into place, and begin joining hands for the next setting. This can make set and cross look very dynamic. Otherwise, everyone arrives at different times and there is much groping for hands, sometimes too late for the setting.

Lead down the middle and up: I often notice that dancers "attach" themselves to their partner by the right hand, and head down the middle, side by side, as if their partner was merely a prop. As the dancers curve in to join hands, make eye contact at the start and from time to time during this entire movement. The leading dancer (usually the man) should attend to his partner with eyes and head, so that the partner actually feels led. Avoid the opposite tendency to "stare" at your partner for all eight bars. That feels and appears unnatural. Additionally, if the leading hand is fully extended, it draws the dancers forward so that the movement gains a kind of "urgency" that makes the formation more fun and energizing. A similar awareness of partner also enhances the allemande and knot where people often dance with no real social contact between them, save the obligatory hands.

Hands around and back: So many dancers let the hands fall well below shoulder height and sometimes as low as the waist. This formation is so exciting in all tempos when the hands are really lifted and kept at shoulder height (compromising between those of different heights). Shoulder height hands lift the posture and give the circle energy and unity. Also, dancers are less likely to slip because the higher hands require better grips and more strength.

Hands across and back: Many dancers "stick" their hands in the middle and make a messy pile of fingers, which feels so unsatisfying. Try always to take the diagonally opposite hand in a "shake-hands" grip. This unifies the movement, gives everyone someone to hold onto and makes the formation look like a "hands across." After all, that's its name!

Turn and cast: Since the twos are usually required to step up during the cast, it's necessary for the first couple to complete their turn and be back out to the sides, heading into their cast at the end of the second bar. This is both challenging and fun, and more importantly, leaves first place open for the dancers stepping up.

# Technique Doctor

Technique Doctor, cont. from page 4

Set and cast: When casting off, the man must anticipate slightly to prepare his right foot for the cast. The woman must anticipate similarly when casting up. All too often, dancers "over-anticipate" by setting for one bar and whipping the body around on the next. The movement gains elegance and social spirit if one maintains eye contact with the partner for the whole two bars, even as the lower body begins a slight turn to anticipate the cast. It's more fun that way! The same is true of setting to corners. Even if the first couple must begin their movement towards their second corners on bar two, maintain that eye contact with the first corner for both bars. It will make your corner feel danced with, instead of "abandoned."

"Dancing' down or up the set: In shorter movements when the dancers will separate, we usually give inner hands. Frequently, as the dancers separate, they push away from each other with those nearer hands, and the hands go well above the shoulders in what almost appears like a "throwing" movement: not pretty! Strive to keep the hands at shoulder height throughout these partings and the movement looks social and gracious.

Stepping up or down: All too often, this is either forgotten or resembles a kind of shuffling movement to get out of the way in the nick of time. Make stepping up part of the dance! Catch your partner's eye just before the movement, then rise to the balls of the feet and step up right on the beats of the music. Keep your body parallel to your partner's rather than facing diagonally up. Suddenly, stepping up becomes social and elegant, even in quick time.

Balance in line: When dancers actually make a line, they can't see each other. Instead, stand slightly back of the line, forming a kind of W. This allows dancers to see and greet each other with just a slight turn of the head, rather than an awkward turning and leaning.

Summing up: In looking over these points, I am struck that none of these technique points is about footwork, but rather about phrasing, handing and upper body control. Even the less athletic and the newer dancers can learn these nuances that so improve their dancing. By paying attention to the frequently danced and more ordinary movements, our beloved Scottish country dancing can be even more joyous and social (and fun!).

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## Travel Notes

### Milestones

Chuck and Joanne West are happy to announce the engagement of their son,

Charles James (Charlie) to Laura Eve Kass

A summer 2009 wedding is being planned.

### Travel Notes

#### A note from the Buchans

Joe & Gillian Buchan still very busy working for the cruise lines. However, they are taking a brief vacation from work and sailing on a roundtrip Hawaii cruise in March for a couple of weeks.

#### Las Vegas Travels

By Harlyne Geisler

Jud and I went to Las Vegas to go to nephew Joseph and Kiera Farrar's home so we could play with 1 year-old Elyse. What can I say? The Farrars always have darling children. (Kiera will have a baby son in April.)

We stayed at the South Point Hotel, which is a couple miles south of the Strip. It was a nice room, and we were actually impressed by their breakfast buffet, which for \$6 had the large selection of food you expect at a \$20 breakfast buffet. About a mile away a huge shopping mall has opened with all the usual suspects.

Elyse Farrar, January 2007.



As always, the Bellagio Hotel had the Asian New Year theme for January/February in their garden. It's the Year of the Rat. Rats are considered courageous, very fit, and enterprising. If you were born in these years, you are a Rat: 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008.

Todd Paul was a very good comedian at the Comedy Stop. He started as a street performer in San Francisco, which you can tell by the way he involves the audience. He did a routine with one guy from the audience involving juggling hats and with another guy involving a unicycle and a card trick. I'd recommend seeing him if you get a chance. He wouldn't come across on TV as well as in person.

We went to the art exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum inside the Venetian Hotel. It was 36 modern pieces from Marc Chagall to Picasso to Manet arranged in rooms by subject: portraits, still lifes, landscapes, and genre.

We're walking around the Venetian near Emeril Lagasse's Delmonico Restaurant when who walks by but Emeril himself! He was talking to some woman about his signs near the entrance and then sitting with her in the restaurant. I tried to get photos, but felt very funny taking them, so they're pretty rotten. Well, if you've seen his Food Network show, you know what he looks like.

Year of the Rat decorations at the Bellagio, January 2008



# Upcoming Events

## Ongoing:

**Tuesday Night Classes** 7:30 PM in Poway, 12227 Poway Rd., Poway CA (just behind the Denny's in the shopping center at the corner of Oak Knoll Rd.)

**Friday Night Classes, Beginners and Social Classes:**  
Both classes continue on Fridays at 7:30

## March:

**March 29:** Saturday, 9:00 AM Back to Basics Workshop at San Marcos High School. See Chairman's Message

## May:

**May 16, 2007:** Friday, 7:30 before social dance class: Annual General Meeting. See Chairman's message

## Other Branches:

**May 3, 2007:** Orange County 25th Anniversary Ball. Orange County Women's Club. Music by Muriel Johnstone and Keith Smith. More information to follow: <http://www.rscds-oc.org/>

**May 3, 2007, English Country Dancing Ball**  
From Janet Arnold: Although it is not Scottish, the English Country dancers are having their first ball ever on May 3rd. We would love to have some of the Scottish dancers come and join us. It should be quite an event, with dancers coming from all over the West Coast and beyond. Take a look at our web site at: [www.sdec.org](http://www.sdec.org). This site leads you to our Ball web page. That web page is: <http://www.thesandiegoball.org/>. We will have Bonfire playing for us, and Judee Pronovost, Ellen Riley and I will be calling the ball. It will be at the Soledad Club. Janet also says: Tell everyone I miss dancing and seeing everyone and will be back as soon as I am able (Plantar Fasciitis).

# THE REEL THING

## 2007-2008 Board Members

### Committee Members

Chairman: Marjorie McLaughlin

Vice-Chairman: Steve Drew

Honorary Secretary: Betty Ribble

Honorary Treasurer: Jim Mosteller

Dance Director: Ward Fleri

Program Chair: Eric McLeod

Publicity Director & *The Reel Thing* Editor:  
Amy Hoffman

Member-at-large: Karen KuKuk

Member-at-large: Cy Chadley

### Branch Teachers

Ward Fleri

Marjorie McLaughlin

Joe Buchan

Pat Grivetti

Gillian Evans

Lucinda King

Jeanne Moody

Steve Drew

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