

Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, Chicago Branch

December 1988

B l e t h e r s

Chari Wurtzel, Chairman

Kenneth Schoon, Editor

The New Year Ball will be held Saturday, January 7, 1989, at the Glendora House in Chicago Ridge. Elizabeth and Etienne Ozorek will be coming from Richmond, Indiana, to provide live music for us. The ball is one of the highlights of the year, and being that it help us celebrate our ninth anniversary, it also starts us out on our 10th anniversary year. Dinner starts at 6:30, but all are invited to arrive at 5:45 or so, so that they can renew old friendships, meet other dancers, and enjoy each other's company. Price of the dinner/dance remains at \$15.00.

Reservations are due December 27th. Have you made your's yet? If not, please do so right away. You may call Ken at (219) 836-8593 if time has nearly run out.

Hospitality is available for our out-of-town guests. Please call Myrtle Herman at (312) 754-4989 either to arrange a room or to volunteer space.

Sunday Brunch will be held at the home of Ann Lindsey in Oak Park beginning at 11:00. Chicago Branch members are asked to help by providing breakfast goodies. Call Ann at 386-1047 to find out what is needed.

A Ball Walk-through will be conducted, Thursday evening, December 29th at 7:25 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church, 17929 Gottschalk Avenue in Homewood. As many dances as time will allow will be walked through and danced "once and to the bottom." Call Ingrid (957-4494) or Ann (957-1968) for more information or directions.

The Auction last November was our best yet, resulting in a net profit of \$1210 including the money from the guesses from Martin's pennies. Many beautiful and useful items were donated, and [the editor supposes] many checkbooks were emptied. Many thanks are due to Ann Wood who once again organized the event. The proceeds will be used to help defray expenses at our Spring Workshop at DeKalb.

New class times: Remember, our Sunday classes now begin at 6:00 pm (continuing until 8:30 as usual.) Please arrive a little before 6, however, to chat and get dressed so that we can begin on time.

The Racine Group is hosting a Winter Dance, Tea Party and Potluck, on Saturday, January 21st, at 2:00 p.m.. Flyers can be picked up in class. Hospitality is available.

Nicht Wi' Burns: The 19th annual Nicht Wi' Burns is scheduled for Saturday, January 28th at the Oak Lawn Hilton. Another highlight of the Scottish calendar, this dinner has always proved to be a most enjoyable evening. The Haggis (piped and addressed), Highland and Country Dancing, Pipes and Drums, Toasts to the Laddies and Lassies, Burns' Songs and Poems, and Scottish Social Dancing, all combine to lift one's spirit while honoring Scotland's most famous Bard. When our demonstration team performs after dinner, the ladies will be wearing their brand new gowns.

Invitations and reservation forms will be in the mail soon. If you do not receive one, please ask for one at class. Once again, if you will mark RSCDS-Chicago on the form, we will all be seated together.

Workshop plans are nearly completed. The teachers have all accepted. The flyers are out. A \$25 deposit will reserve a place for you. The workshop committee has seen the facilities at Northern Illinois University and is very pleased with them. A splendid and worthwhile time is practically guaranteed to all who attend. Last year we had a waiting list, so don't let time get away without responding.

We are now incorporated as a non-profit organization in Illinois. Hurrah!

Class-cancellation policy: The chair and current teachers will make a decision by 2:30 on the day of the class. The decision will be put on the Branch message machine (957-4494) and on Bill's (848-2332) and will be available after 3:00. Please feel free to call any Sunday when snow is possible. There are many days when snow is closing streets on one side of town and completely unseen in others. So if in doubt, reach out and touch.

Pas de basque: Rosemary Holloway, is a member of both the San Francisco and Chicago Branches. She recently sent the following letter to their newsletter, the Reel and Strathspeyer and consented to our reprinting it here:

Greetings from Chicago! I may be "setting" up the wrong tree, but it seems that I have heard several dancers mispronounce the name of that lovely step, the pas de pasque. The step originated in the western Pyrenees, which is the home of the Basques, and the name means "step of the Basque." It is one of the first steps learned by ballet students and can easily be recognized by any Scottish dancer when seen in a ballet.

Phonetically, it should sound thus: pas = "pa" as in pat (omit the "t")
de = "du" as in dub (omit the "b")
basque = "bask" (be sure to sound the "sk")

I remember being surprised, and pleased, when the correct pronunciation of "dos a dos" was explained to me. Again, it is French and means "back to back." So, here I am with what I believe to be the correct pronunciation of pas de basque. I don't think that I have taken geographical or linguistic license, but, if I have, please bear with me.

Our 10th anniversary will be in 1990. Ingrid Kendall is chairing the anniversary committee and would still like some input for appropriate activities for the year-long celebration.

Miss Gibson, secretary of the RSCDS in Edinburgh for many years just retired. Our branch with all the others world-wide presented her with a retirement gift. Her letter of thanks was recently received by Kent and is reprinted here:

I know that the Treasurer of the Society was handling acknowledgments of contributions to my retiral presentation but I felt that I must write to express my thanks and gratitude to the Branches of the Society for their very generous gifts. I received a beautiful gold and amethyst bracelet and earrings - which I shall always treasure - and a cheque for the balance which I hope to invest.

Please, would you be so kind as to pass on to your members my very sincere thanks for this expression of their friendship for me. There is no doubt that I shall miss the frequent contacts with Branch Secretaries and Treasurers in day to day correspondence and with members whom I knew through Summer School or through visits to Headquarters. However I have very happy memories of my years as Secretary of the Society and I hope still to keep in touch.

I should have preferred to write individually to each Branch but the Society's growth to date makes the task too formidable for me, so please excuse this photocopy method and accept my sincere appreciation of your Branch's kindness.

Yours sincerely, M. Gibson

Where are you, Larry Bell? We have lost track of Larry Bell, who taught our group way back in 1982. If any of our readers know of his whereabouts, please inform the editor. We would certainly like to see him again, and would especially like to invite him to participate in our 10th anniversary celebrations.

Kevin Lesko, former member of our group, now dances in the San Francisco area. The following was noted in the Reel and Strathspey: "Outstanding dancing at the Santa Rosa Scottish Gathering and Games earned a first place in the Highland Fling for our own Kevin Lesko, and three second place awards as well."

Doug Schneider, of Boston, visited with us last month. It was good to see him.

Judith Pretty has left for home in Scotland. Our branch was indeed fortunate to have her presence and assistance this last year. We all wish her the best of luck.

Martin Mulligan, now adjusting to life in Canada, sent the following:

Dear Friends in the Chicago Branch,

In some ways it hardly seems like any time at all since I left you, though in others it seems like an age. Either way, I owe letters to many of you to let you know how things are going for me in Canada and to thank you for times past. I am not very good at writing letters in the best of circumstances, and there are so many of you to write to, so I have asked Ken to allow me some space in the Blethers so that I can write to all at the same time.

My journey to Canada went smoothly considering that it was the first time I had ever considered driving over 100 miles at one time. I want to thank Mary and Suzie who volunteered to clean my apartment on the morning of my departure. Without their help, I would never have left as little as 2 hours behind schedule. Suzie's help in the drive as far as Boston was invaluable; it meant that I was relatively fresh for the second half of the trip by myself.

I have joined the St. John's Scottish Country Dance Group and have taught a couple of classes for beginners. The group is very similar in size, and I think in spirit, to the Chicago Branch. And to make me feel quite at home, we have a Barbara Ellis in our group here. She is married to a John Ellis, no less. However, they have four children! I have danced in a number of demonstrations already. These have had quite a different flavour from those we did in Chicago. My first performance was at the St. John's Agricultural Fair. A small exhibition area was set aside that was used for all performances and exhibitions. We were followed on the programme by Jody's Racing Pigs! By and large, we were grateful that we did not have to follow them! My second performance was in Her Majesty's Penitentiary where we were the afternoon entertainment for the prisoners. Can you imagine the Branch Demo Team dancing in the Cook County Jail?

Canada is quite different from the US. We have just had an election that was very unlike the US election. Our TV debates were decidedly bloody in comparison to the US ones. Murphy's Law, however, has a uniquely Canadian aspect. This is a bilingual country and all packaging is labelled in English and French. This applies to food packages also. The result is of course that whenever one tries to read the cooking directions on anything, one inevitably turns to the French side first. The only other drawback that I have encountered so far will, I hope, evoke some sympathy from all those who attended Workshop Committee meetings in my apartment. Mountain Dew in Canada does not contain caffeine!

Before I finish, I want to advertise our Newfie Encounter 1989. A Scottish Country Dance weekend with guest teachers and musicians to be held in St. John's on 4, 5, & 6 August 1989. This is held only every other year, so if you miss it this time you will have to wait another two years. August should be a good time to visit Newfoundland. The same week as the workshop is the St. John's Regatta, the oldest continuous sporting event in North America and during the same weekend as the workshop, the St. John's Folk Festival will be held. As a further inducement, the RSCDS is promoting August 5th as a day to dance around the world. Why not come and dance in Newfoundland?

I started this letter with the intention of writing a short note that would fit in the Blethers. I have rambled on a bit and with apologies to the Editor I will now leave it in his capable hands. I must also acknowledge Kent Smith who will receive this by computer mail and deliver it to the Editor for me.

Let me finish, by thanking all my friends in the Chicago Branch for four memorable years of dancing and friendship. I do miss you all, but I'm sure that our friendship will continue. Wishing you all my very best wishes of the Holiday Season and wishing the Branch every success in the New Year.

Martin

Branch Classes: Sunday evenings at 6:00 p.m. at the Fox Center, Oak Park, Illinois
Basic and advanced. Tea and light refreshments served at 8:30.

Calendar:

December 29	Ball Walk-through	First Presbyterian Church, Homewood
January 1	no class	
January 7	New Year's Ball	Glendora House, Chicago Ridge
January 8	No class	
January 21	Dance Party	DeKoven Foundation, Racine, WI
January 28	Nicht Wi' Burns	Oak Lawn Hilton, Oak Lawn
June 2 - 4	Chicago Area Workshop	Northern Illinois University, DeKalb
June 14	Illinois St Andrew Highland Games	Glendale Polo Club
August 4-6	Newfie Encounter	St. John's, Newfoundland

Winter cancellation phone numbers: Branch Hot Line 957-4494 or 848-2332.

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Address Correction Requested