

Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, Chicago Branch

February, 1992

The Blethers

Thomas Watkins, Chair

Laurie Walter, Editor

Great New Year Ball!!! Everyone's sincere thanks to all who organized and participated in the January 4, 1992, New Year Ball at Glendora House. It was nothing short of sensational! Kudos to the Schools for organization, Caryl Inglis for hospitality coordination, the McDuff Ceilidh Band for music, Catharine Blair for the humongous brunch, and all who came from near and far to dance, eat, and have fun. (See below for Committee of Management comments.)

Workshop plug: While we're on the subject of dancing, fun, fellowship, dancing, eating, hilarity, and dancing, let me remind all of you that it's never too early to reserve your place for the 1992 RSCDS Chicago Branch Workshop. It is designed for those who have been dancing for at least a year and will be held May 29-31 at Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana. Definitely, this year's Workshop will be an event to remember!! You should have received an invitation and reservation form recently--if not or for further information, contact Marian Smith at (708) 869-7803.

Officer update: Melissa Whitson has kindly agreed to serve as Interim Treasurer to the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, Chicago Branch. Bill Cody has been appointed Interim Member-at-Large. Thanks to Mel and Bill for taking on these necessary posts.

From the Committee of Management: Elections are coming up. Our Annual General Meeting is Sunday, May 3, 1992, 6:00 PM, St. Joe's. We will elect a Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and three Members-at-Large to the Committee of Management. Anyone interested in becoming more involved in Branch management, please consider running for an office. Please speak to any of the current officers or anyone on the Elections Committee.

A brief reminder: the Committee of Management is your Board of Directors and is responsible for management of the Branch. Your current Committee consists of Tom Watkins, Chair; Ree Grisham, Secretary; Melissa Whitson, Treasurer; and the three Members-at-Large are Terry Spoering, Caryl Inglis, and Bill Cody. The Elections Committee is responsible for preparing the slate of candidates for election. Note: the Elections Committee is not the same as the Committee of Management! Your Elections Committee consists of Greta Telford, Bill Moorhead, and Robin Gaston. We will be electing one new Elections Committee member in May.

Has anyone seen our yellow tartan? The yellow tartan used for Branch decorations has disappeared.

Thank you, Dr. Ken and Peg Schoon, for chairing the New Year's Ball! The Committee of Management would like to give special recognition to Caryl Inglis, hospitality chair, and everyone who opened their homes for out-of-town guests this year! The out-of-towners help make the Ball special. And hospitality helps attract out-of-towners. Thank you to everybody who helped make this Ball a special Chicago event. Well done!

The Committee of Management would also like to recognize and thank Catharine Blair for hosting the Sunday Brunch! The Committee feels that the Brunch is an important part of the Chicago Ball event. And we are disappointed that more Branch members were not there. This was a wonderful Brunch! Thank you, Catharine!

Now is the time to start planning for next year's Ball, hospitality, and Brunch! If you are interested in helping with or chairing parts of this event, please see someone on your Committee of Management.

Remember, your Committee of Management is sincerely interested in your thoughts and comments, as well as your participation. Please give us your ideas. What did you think of this year's Ball, Brunch, and photographer? How can we make things better next year?

Letter to the Editor: As a member of the Chicago Branch of the RSCDS and a good friend of both Kent Smith and the Quarries, I'm ashamed to say that Quarrie's Jig (written by Kent) is a dance I don't know very well. It's embarrassing to go to dances in other parts of the country where they dance Quarrie's Jig all the time. People assume that because I'm from Chicago, I should know the dance. They're right. I should know it; but I don't because we rarely do it. It's a shame we have such a talent in our group as Kent Smith and we don't recognize it. Do you know anyone else who's had a dance published by the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society in Edinburgh? Quarrie's Jig was one of sixteen dances chosen from one hundred and seven entries! I would venture to guess that few of the Chicago Branch dancers can get through Quarrie's Jig without a walk-through and fewer still without a talk-through. The rest of the world dances Quarrie's Jig; why don't we? It's a wonderful dance and even more fun for us because we know the who (Kent), the what (a great dance), the when (published in Book 36 in 1990), the where (Chicago), and the why (the Quarries). I think it's time to include it in our repertoire. It's a dance we should all be proud to know. *Sincerely, Suzie Kinsman*

The search for "Alltshellach": While preparing his lesson plans for a class recently, Kent Smith tried to locate the meaning and origin of "Alltshellach," the name of a very nice dance in Book 23. In this day of computer networks, he sent an e-mail request for information to other SCD teachers. He soon received a reply from Martin Mulligan, who used to be a teacher in the Chicago Branch and is now living in St. John's, Newfoundland. Martin reported that his Gaelic dictionary listed the word "allt" as meaning brook or stream. But he did not know what "shellach" meant nor where a stream named Alltshellach might be located.

A week later, Kent received the following additional message from Martin: "Well, I decided to ask the world what 'alltshellach' means. I subscribe to a Gaelic language bulletin board and I thought that I would be able to find out an answer there if anywhere. I took the plunge and composed a notice, in Irish no less--my first time writing in that tongue in close to 20 years! Today, I received an answer. I can send you the reply (also in Irish, if you like) which came from the Gaelic College on the Isle of Skye. It said that 'alltshellach' means 'stream of the willow trees,' that it is certainly a place but probably a very small place since it is not listed in the gazetteer that they have at that institution. Bye for now, Martin"

Just another example of the lengths to which SCD teachers will go to provide accurate background information for dancers!

Martin is now the lead teacher for the newly-formed St. John's Branch of the RSCDS. He is also on a two-person committee that is drafting their Branch's Constitution and Rules, taking full advantage of his experience doing the same thing for the Chicago Branch. He suspects that the documents for the two branches will look very much alike because they are borrowing liberally from ours. *Kent Smith*

Committee of Management report: Minutes of November 24, 1991, meeting: 1. Motion to accept minutes of last meeting--approved; 2. Motion to accept Melissa Whitson as interim treasurer--approved; 3. Motion to appoint Bill Cody as interim member-at-large--approved; 4. Motion for treasurer to standardize accounting and issue quarterly reports--approved; 5. Motions to leave beginners' subscription fee at \$30 for Spring, 1992, semester, to discontinue coupon books, and to retain other current fees--approved.

Are you addicted to SCD? You know you're addicted when.... You are approaching a red light about to

change to green, and you think, "I must phrase it, so that I don't have to stop and start."...There has been freezing rain all afternoon, but you never consider staying home from the monthly social. (There are several sets of addicts like yourself at the dance, which was not cancelled of course.)...Just as you are drifting off to sleep, you have an idea for a dance formation. Much later, the whole dance is devised and you are wide awake and desperate to try it out. [Ed. note: we call this "Kent Smith syndrome."...]The home you enjoyed for years in your pre-dancing days is now inadequate, because you haven't enough room for a set. The house of your dreams features a sprung floor in the large family room...You are in your dentist's chair, dancing through your favorite dances in your mind, when you are startled to find he/she's finished and you are halfway through a reel...It is a cold winter's day and you find yourself dancing pas-de-basque at the bus stop to keep warm...You inform your son/daughter that a wedding on that week end just won't do, for it conflicts with the annual workshop...Honking horns sound just enough like the opening chord that you find yourself trying to bow/curtsey in traffic jams.

The foregoing symptoms come from assorted Canadian newsletters, courtesy of Noel Chavez and Chari Wurtzel, who have added one of their own: When you practice setting while waiting for the copier to finish. Any other distressing lifestyle changes worth noting, anyone?

The saga of the 512-some (from TACTalk): They said it couldn't be done...and it nearly wasn't. Technical difficulties in the public address system held up the proceedings...but finally **IT WAS DONE!**

On Saturday, August 17, 1991, 512 dancers, representing the Toronto Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, marched onto the field of the Grandstand at the Canadian National Exhibition to the dying strains of the Allt Gaid Healach Pipes and Drums, and danced an eightsome reel together, in the same place at the same time.

Sixteen months of planning and seven minutes of performance set a new world record for quantity in Scottish Country dancing. It was, truly, a magnificent sight and a wonderful accomplishment for the Toronto Branch.

In 1988 the Vancouver Branch and west coast dancers performed a 256-some and, following that tremendous feat, issued a challenge to the Toronto Branch to better their accomplishment. Everyone enjoys a challenge and such was the start of this whole undertaking.

In the Spring of 1990, the Canadian National Exhibition organisers agreed to programme the undertaking into the grand finale of the Warriors' Day Parade--an ideal situation for performance and exposure. John Christie, Scarborough, Ontario, choreographed the presentation and designed the field layout to depict part of the Toronto Branch logo, in the form of three concentric circles--an inner 32-some, surrounded by thirteen 16-somes, enclosed by thirty-four 8-somes--representing the circles of friendship found in Scottish Country dancing.

In October 1990 the appeal went out for dancers and six months later we had 512 'committed' dancers, 47 spares and 27 volunteer aides. Dancers came not only from the Toronto area, but from across southern Ontario, from Winnipeg, Vancouver, Buffalo, California, West Virginia, New Zealand and England, supplying truly international support. After individual practices in many areas in Spring of this year, four mass rehearsals were held in the CNE grounds. Although at the first of these confusion reigned supreme (89°F and humid--are Scottish Country dancers quite sane? [Ed. note: has this person ever danced in Hammond, Indiana, in September??!!!!]), by the third rehearsal it was coming together and enthusiasm was high.

At last the great day arrived and, in the presence of the two authenticators required by the Guinness Book of Records and a large number of spectators, the dancers came on, danced and departed in excellent order--the 'on and the off' being quite an achievement in itself. Later, in the evening, a Victory Ceilidh for 600 elated participants provided food, entertainment and dancing into the wee hours to the music of Bobby Brown and his band, a fitting conclusion to a very memorable day in the thirty-year history of the Toronto Branch.

Happiness is, indeed, Scottish Country dancing--**AND A NEW WORLD RECORD!**

CALENDAR:

St. Josaphat:

Feb. 2 Start of 2nd semester
2, 9, 16, 23 Class
16 Close enrollment
-----29 "Sadie Hawkins Day" Dance-----

Mar. 1 No class
8, 15, 22, 29 Class
15 New teachers: Ingrid Kendall & Bill Moorhead

Apr. 5, 12, 19, 26 Class

May -----3 Annual General Meeting, 6:00 PM-----
10, 17, 24 Class
-----29-31 WORKSHOP, Valparaiso University-----

ScotReel:

Feb. 6 Start of new term
6, 13, 20, 27 Class

Mar. 5, 12, 26 Class

Apr. 2, 9, 23, 30 Class
25 Dance

May 7, 14, 21 Class

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