



THE BLEETHERS



Ree Grisham, Chair *Pro Tem*

Laurie Walter, Editor

1998 Weekend Workshop: Don't forget to reserve a place for the best way to spend a weekend! Noel Chavez (708-848-9218) will cheerfully accept your deposit for the RSCDS, Chicago Branch's 1998 Weekend Workshop, to be held May 29-31 at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana. Call Mary Helen Polensky at (815) 756-7182 if you need more information. We look forward to seeing you there!

Spring Dance: Shake off the winter cobwebs at our annual Spring Dance, March 14, 7:00 PM, at St. Josaphat Parish Hall, corner of Southport and Belden Aves., Chicago. Music by our own Grace Notes (Dawn Arnold and Ree Grisham). Admission is \$5 and goodies for after will be gratefully and greedily accepted. For more information, call Melissa Whitson at (630) 655-4154. No dancing March 15.

Subscriptions due: Dancers are reminded that Spring semester class subscriptions are due. Forms are available at Sunday class. Please remit to Sue McKinnell, 1745 Indian Trail Dr., Naperville IL 60565.

Hall sought: St. Josaphat is a wonderful place to dance but let's face it, the stone floor in the basement is a bit hard (ha ha) on the Basic Class. Do you know of an accessible, inexpensive venue with two wooden floors? Check your local possibilities and let the Committee of Management know.

Tea schedule: Once a month, we have the opportunity to stick around and blether (and eat!) after Sunday night class. The following dates need volunteers to bring goodies and help set up and clean up (see Mary Lou Woods): March 14 (Spring Dance), April 5, and May 3.

Trip to Nova Scotia (cont'd.): The next day, after the banquet and ball, we had to be at the Halifax Citadel Hotel at 7:00 AM to pick up the tour bus. Met the tour director, a very pleasant young woman, who assigned me a seat on the very comfortable bus. There were about forty people on the tour but, surprisingly, no other Americans. The greatest majority was from Ontario.

I took a bit of gentle ribbing from my traveling companions, once we got acquainted, about the very favorable money exchange rate we Americans enjoy. It seemed to me they were much more aware of the U.S. than we are of Canada, even discussing the Americans' desire to annex Canada! I also met two lovely women from Quebec who are very much in favor of staying Canadian. They were not interested in Quebec as a separate country and are not too happy with their present governor.

During the whole of the trip, our guide kept up a running commentary about the areas we were visiting, the history behind these wonderful places and fascinating bits of information about the people and places we saw. Since we did a lot of traveling in the bus, it made what could have become a dull and tiring time one of extreme interest and entertainment. Between entertaining us and seeing to our every comfort, the guides did a yeoman's job.

Our first stop was another coastal drive to Peggy's Cove for breakfast and a visit to the only light-house which is also a post office. Even though it was Sunday the P.O. was open and I mailed a post card to my sister from there. The town is very small but caters to lots of tourists. There was a resident sculptor who moved there from New York and loved the place. Before he died, he sculpted a huge stone depicting most of the townspeople. We were able to visit the site and examine it closely.

Leaving Peggy's Cove, we traveled to the Annapolis Valley. Here is the Grand Pre Memorial Park, commemorating the plight of the Acadians who were driven out of Canada by the British. We were told the story of these hardy people who came from France and settled in a hostile environment. They were farmers and discovered how to drive back the sea and create rich soil for farming and growing fruit. They were very successful in reclaiming the land and after a few hundred years developed a rich agricultural area.

During those times, there were many wars between the British and the French, both of whom wanted control of Canada. The Acadians were under British rule, but spoke French and had French customs. This made the British nervous and, along with the desire to take over their rich, fertile land, eventually caused the British to drive the Acadians out of Canada. As the story goes, the men and boys were gathered into a church where a proclamation was read to them in English (which they did not understand) that they were to take only what they could carry and that they were being put aboard ships and taken away. In order to insure they did not return, the British burned their homes and everything they had left. Actually, it took many years to drive them all out and some did stay in Canada, eventually learning the fishing trade. Others traveled throughout the U.S., many settling in Louisiana, where they came to be called "Cajuns." Also, many families were separated and never found one another again.

In the Grand Pre Park, there is a building which looks like a chapel with a series of paintings along the walls showing scenes from this tragic story. One of the paintings shows the scene in the church with terrible looks of anguish on the faces of the men and boys that understood and confusion among those that didn't. A stained glass window done mostly in an intense blue shows the people, all faceless, on small boats being rowed out to the ships, looking back toward their homes which are bright red in burning flames.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow heard their story and wrote a poem about a mythical girl named "Evangeline." She was separated from her lover on their wedding day and spent the rest of her life searching for him. Although Longfellow never visited the Annapolis Valley, his poem and Evangeline have come to symbolize the plight of the Acadians. There is a statue of her at Grand Pre, said to turn her from young to old depending on the angle at which one looks at her.

We continued on our way to visit Port Royal and the Habitation. It is a replica of a settlement established by the French and Champlain between 1605 and 1613. There were Indians in the area known as Mi'kmaq and they became very friendly with the French, showing them how to survive. Living was very hard for the settlers and they never received the financial backing from France that was promised. We visited the small fort and learned how they passed the long, boring winters. One of the ways was to establish the Order of Good Cheer. Members of the colony took turns providing food for a bi-weekly banquet and arranging entertainment. Rituals surrounding this feast included the order of office worn by the chief steward and processions carrying platters of food into the dining room. Eventually, the British burned the fort down and many people returned to France. [Liz Stake's travelogue will continue next issue.]

Youthful talent: "The One and Only," jig for three couples, 8 x 32 bars. Bars 1-8: First couple dance a figure of eight around the second couple. Bars 9-16: First couple lead down the middle and up to finish in second place. (Second couple step up on bars 11-12.) Bars 17-24: Second and first couples dance rights and lefts. Bars 25-32: Second, first, and third couples dance six hands round and back. [Devised by Kathleen Proudfoot (age 9) and Leslie Proudfoot (age 7), dancers with ScotReel, on April 24th, 1997, Homewood, Illinois, USA.

CALENDAR:

	<i>Loch Mich--</i>		<i>ScotReel--</i>		<i>Silk and Thistle--</i>
Mar.	1, 8 Class		5, 12, 19, 26 Class		3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Class.
	14*****Spring Dance*****				
	15 No class.				
	22, 29 Class.				
Apr.	5, 12, 19, 26 Class		2, 16 Class		7, 14, 21, 28 Class.
			9 No class.		
May	3*****Annual General Meeting/Social dancing*****				
	10, 17 Class				5, 12, 19, 26 Class.
	29-31*****Workshop*****				