



CDS Boston News

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RALPH PAGE 1903 - 1985

The entire world of traditional dance was saddened to learn of the death of Ralph Page of Keene, New Hampshire, on February 21. Ralph was known to the world as an authority on New England dance and folklore, but he was also known by many of us as a friend.

In 1937, with Beth Tolman, Ralph published The Country Dance Book (Countryman Press), an important book that captured the essence of contra dancing at that time. By 1938, he had begun on his career as a full-time dance caller.

Ralph's first regular appearance in the Boston area was in the early 40's, for a bi-weekly dance for the Belmont Country Dancers. In 1943, Ralph began a stint as the caller for a Tuesday night dance at the Boston YWCA. He participated in the CDS "drop-in" series that ran from 1940 to 1975.

With Mary Gillette and Phillip Sharples, Ralph founded NEFFA in 1944. Ralph and Mary were honored at the 1984 Festival.

Ralph leaves a legacy of publications. Northern Junket is the title of his homespun New England Journal, published irregularly, that contained dances, folklore, news, recipes, and unabashedly candid opinion. Ralph also wrote The Ralph Page Book of Contras (EFDSS 1969), Heritage Dances of Early America (Lloyd Shaw 1976), and An Elegant Collection of Contras and Squares (Lloyd Shaw 1984). His calling can be heard on the 78rpm Folk Dancer disks.

I'll remember Ralph for his steadfast reverence for tradition. He frequently campaigned against developments in Modern Western (Club) Square dancing, where he felt the proponents had lost sight of the essence of enjoyable dancing. I'll also remember his unflappable Yankee demeanor and earthy wit.

Ralph's life is the stuff of which legends are made. Callers, dancers, and friends the world over will see that the legends live on, of the man who was "too old to run and too fat to fight."

-- Daniel Pearl

BOARD NEWS

The Board of Directors met at the Church of Our Savior in Brookline on Friday, February 1.

Membership chair Mary Blomberg reported that as of December 31 CDS had 426 members, a significant increase over last year's total. With membership renewals and new member applications, the total is expected to rise.

The Tuesday night American Series at 7 Temple Street is doing well, according to Treasurer Harvey Cohen's report. The series is operating at close to the break-even point.

A new membership incentive program was accepted by the Board. In the period from January 1 to March 1, each new member will receive a chit redeemable for free admission at a CDS-sponsored dance, excluding pre-registration events.

The Board spent some time reviewing the CDS Objectives as stated in the by-laws. An interesting discussion ensued, raising questions about the society's long and short term goals. This discussion will continue at future meetings.

The April meeting had not been scheduled at press time. Contact Mary Stafford for more information. All members are welcome at Board meetings.

-- Deborah D'Amico, CDS Secretary



DANCE NOTES

Two benefit dance events in the near future might be of interest to CDS members. CDS is helping Muddy River Morris produce a dance to raise money for their tour of England this summer. It will be held on Saturday, March 23, at the First Church Congregational in Harvard Square. There will be an afternoon dance workshop with Genny Scheimer, a potluck dinner, and an evening dance featuring both English Country and New England dancing, with calling by Genny Scheimer and Dave Kaynor, and music by Karen Axelrod, Unstrung Heroes, and assorted drop-in musicians. Admission is \$5 for either session or \$8 for both. Your donations will be gladly accepted, even if you can't make it to the dance. For more information call Cathy Mason at 396-5229.

Bare Necessities and other CDS musicians will be performing at the Folk Arts Center's annual Dance Musicians Development Fund dance, an all-afternoon, all-evening gala event that features many local dance leaders, musicians, and performing groups. It will be held on Saturday, March 30, from noon to midnight, at the Brimmer and May School Gym in Chestnut Hill. The DMDF sponsors the development of local dance music and its practitioners in a variety of ways, and helps make this area as rich in excellent live music as it is. Admission is \$8 for the whole day, or \$5 per session; each session includes the potluck dinner from 5 - 7PM. For information call Susan Worland at 625-8303.