



SAN FRANCISCO BRANCH. INC.

Minutes of Teachers' Committee Meeting

June 19, 2004

At the home of Dwayne and Mary MacQuilliams. In Armin's absence, Alan Twhigg called the meeting to order when we had a quorum, at 1:32 pm.

Present for all or part: Armin Busse, Bruce Hamilton, Bruce Herbold, Paula Jacobson, Susie Langdon Kass, Sheena MacQueen, Lin Pettengill, Dwayne McQuilliams, Alan Twhigg.

Regrets: Ellen Aaron, Cathy Bertics, Gene Bissell, Juliet Davoren, Emily Evans, Sara Gratiot, Jo Hamilton, Alex and Marianna Harvey, Paula Jacobson, Kathleen McAdam, Pat O'Brien, Claudette Sigg, Gary Thomas, Ron Wallace. Thanks to those who sent regrets before the meeting. That makes life easier on the hosts, and on your secretary and chairman in preparing for the meeting.

Old Business

1. Minutes of meeting April 18, 2004

Moved (Bruce Herbold / Lin Pettengill) that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as distributed. **Passed.**

2. Party Program Committees

There were no new party programs due this period. The Asilomar Friday and Saturday programs are done, and the Jean Patrick program is done. Bruce Herbold renews his request for suggestions for party program dances, especially dances suitable for beginners and good dances out of recent RSCDS books.

<In Armin's absence we took the agenda items out of order. The next item is actually new business>

3. Schedule for next teacher trainer selection and notification

The selection was bumpy this year, and at our April meeting we agreed to review the process at this meeting. *Background:* we launched the process in June 2003 as usual, but in January, when we were supposed to choose a trainer we found ourselves with lukewarm statements of interest in teaching the course and few reports of demand for it. We recommended to the BC that there be no course this year. The BC, in discussing our recommendation, found more interested candidates than we had, and asked us to revisit the question. In revisiting it, we decided that one team was interested enough to teach the course, so we are proceeding with that team. *End of background.*

We decided that, overall, the process probably went as it should have given the circum-

stances, with two exceptions. First, there should have been a notice in the R&S at the start, telling everyone that the course would be coming up in a year, that interested dancers should tell their teachers, that teachers should look for promising candidates, and that teachers should make sure that the TC is aware of these interested dancers and promising candidates (we didn't post the notice, and teachers who knew of candidates were not at the relevant meeting). Second, the existing process assumes that we will hold a candidate class every two years, and thus makes no provision for deciding whether to: there is no statement of who is responsible for the decision, and no process for making it (no information-gathering step, to criteria by which to decide, etc.).

The Strathspey item is a no-brainer; **Paula** will get that on the BC's administrative calendar. The other questions are more interesting. One strong statement about who decides whether to hold a class was that it's a joint decision. As a procedural matter this probably means that the BC decides, after weighing the TC's recommendation. In practice, of course, the class requires the blessing of both committees.

That still leaves the question: should we assume there is a class every two years? We don't expect to face a lack of information again, but what if some future, well-informed meeting finds lukewarm or no demand, and lukewarm, or no volunteer tutors? We debated the issue of offering a class no matter what. (Obviously, if no one ever signs up, we cancel the class. The question here is whether to *offer* it.)

Pros:

- The scene needs a constant influx of new teachers. People stop teaching and move away, and they need to be replaced.
- An exam center seeds not only its own area, but others. People come from elsewhere to take the exam, and locally-trained teachers move elsewhere.
- It's easy to start a vicious circle: no one thinks of taking the course because they haven't seen one offered, so they don't sign up. Seeing no sign-ups, we decide not to offer a course, ...
- We are a large, healthy branch. We should offer the course because we can, whereas many smaller branches can't. (You need 5 candidates to be an exam center, by the way. A smaller class can send its candidates to some place that is an exam center).

Cons:

- There's an opportunity cost to offering the class, even if we later cancel it. From September of the previous year until it's known whether the course will be offered — call it June — the tutor must keep his/her calendar free for the following Sep-Apr. During those 10 months, many invitations will come in for things to do on candidate class days, and they must all be declined. If the class is subsequently cancelled, some of the invitations may still be open, but many will not be. If there are two tutors, this cost is doubled.
- The TC has 65 members, and the branch has about 20 classes. If everyone taught one class a week and 1/4 of them taught two, we would have four teachers per class. The added benefit of more teachers is low, while the cost of a candidate class, in money, energy, and tutor burnout, stays high.

- If the candidates and tutors are both lukewarm, what will be the quality of the resulting teachers?

We didn't settle this question.

Bruce Herbold suggested that, since our candidate classes are useful to a wider area than just our branch, maybe some years (1 in 3, say) we should offer the course in a 2-week form. This would make it accessible to people who can't travel to a regular class. This would be during an examination-tour year, instead of the regular type of class; TAC meets this need between examination years. **Alan**, as Area Rep, will ask the TAC about this: will we be seen as competition? As meeting an unmet need? Will they have suggestions? We will put this back on the agenda when he has a report.

<Alan handed the gavel to Armin, and we returned briefly to some old business>

4. Teachers' Resources

Armin reports nothing new.

5. Teachers' Web Page

Armin is going to redo this for easier maintenance, so this is a good time to request changes. One request: make it easier to print the agenda (good spacing, no stuff from the frames, etc).

We then revisited the question of an email reflector (see the Jan 10, 2004 minutes). Bruce (Hamilton) and Armin were charged to look into this. They started to work on the social/privacy issues, but didn't follow through. **Bruce** will talk to Don Pettengill about how he does the Thistles' reflector, which seems to work well.

6. 2004 Teachers' Workshop

Armin has not made any progress on this. He will get right on it. There was a suggestion (not necessarily for this year) for a workshop on how to teach children.

New Business

7. Agendas

Your secretary suggested changes to the form of future agendas. I would like each agenda item to have the owner's name, enough background information so people can prepare for the discussion, and a statement of the expected outcome (e.g. "choose a teacher trainer," and "decide whether prelims can vote," rather than "teacher trainer" and "prelims as voting members"). It was also suggested that a time estimate be included. We liked all these ideas.

I want to freeze the agenda two weeks before each meeting. This will reduce the amount of scrambling I have to do, make it easier for people to decide whether to attend, and give the people who get their agenda by US mail a chance of knowing what the agenda is. If there is an emergency I will still put out a revised agenda, and we still have the option of editing the agenda at the start of the meeting. We discussed briefly how formal to make that discussion. Letting the chair decide whether to include or table new items got a unanimous thumbs-up.

8. Tutor Training

It was suggested that we offer, at some time, a class for prospective tutors (candidate trainers). The need is clear, and we all think Ron Wallace would be an outstanding choice to teach it. As we chewed on this we got into how long it might be (day, weekend, ...), and whether we want to admit people from outside the branch. We considered other themes for the class. It could be the usual sort of teachers' workshop (work on steps, an example lesson, dances from a new book). Bruce Hamilton has been doing a workshop on things the RSCDS doesn't teach (that's not the title) such as how to protect your voice, how to tune your attitude, how to listen to criticism, how to doodle, etc. This was suggested as a possibility for the class series between exam years. In the end we came back to a tutor's class, with Ron as teacher, time/place/format TBD.

Dwayne will approach Ron. If Ron is interested we will make a formal offer.

9. Livermore Family Class

Several years ago, Sheena MacQueen pressed her husband Don into service helping teach her family class. That worked, and Don is now teaching regularly, without direct supervision. This is still working, but Don does not have a preliminary pass (though he's planning to take the exam next year), and the branch bylaws require either a Teacher's Certificate, or a Prelim Pass and supervision.

The BC is willing to bend as far as keeping Don as teacher if he is supervised. So, we need to find people who can take turns at that. It's Friday night in Livermore. Class starts at 7:30 with warm-ups together, then adults (Don) and kids (Sheena) separately for 45 minutes, then all together. **Everyone**, if you can be in Livermore on any Fridays, please talk to Sheena. She is not expecting one person for all evenings; she can work with your schedule.

10. Date and Location for Next Meetings

- September 18, 2004, 2:00 pm (video at 1:30) at Paula Jacobson's. A teachers' dance from 4-7 pm. **Everyone**, please let Paula or Alan know what dance(s) you'd like to do, or to talk through. There will be a small fee to cover the cost of the Soquel Grange hall. Spouses are welcome and next year's candidates are welcome, but we drew the line short of candidates' spouses.
- January 22, 2005 at the Pettengills' in Montara. Video at 1:30, meeting at 2:00.
- April 23, 2005. Place TBD, but it seems like time to get back to the East Bay.

We wondered about having the occasional meeting on a Sunday. Obviously, those present can make Saturday meetings, and we're only guessing whom we exclude by holding these on Saturdays. **Everyone**, please let the secretary know if Sundays would be significantly more convenient for you. If Saturdays are far preferable, let me know that.

The meeting adjourned at 4:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Hamilton

Post-Meeting Stuff

11. Paula announced that the SF Branch will be having a 40th Anniversary Party on

June 25, 2005. We have the Greek Orthodox Church, and Green Ginger (!).

12. Susie led a great discussion on teaching dancers who are hard of hearing. A handout is attached. She also read some short notes which I repeat here. These suggest not only ways to help, but also ways to tell when you have dancers who are hard of hearing.

- They often don't 'get' figures at first.
- They may not even know that they are missing things (and thus not ask).
- They are often reluctant to ask you to repeat instructions.
- When you're not teaching, watch someone you know is hard of hearing. Notice their body language, their ways of adapting, how fast they learn, etc. This will help you spot the signs.
- People with hearing problems can find loud noises painful; so louder isn't always better!