

McQuillen Gets
An Award!
So Does Larry
Jennings!



The Seamy
Underbelly of
NEFFA Housing
Filler Galore!

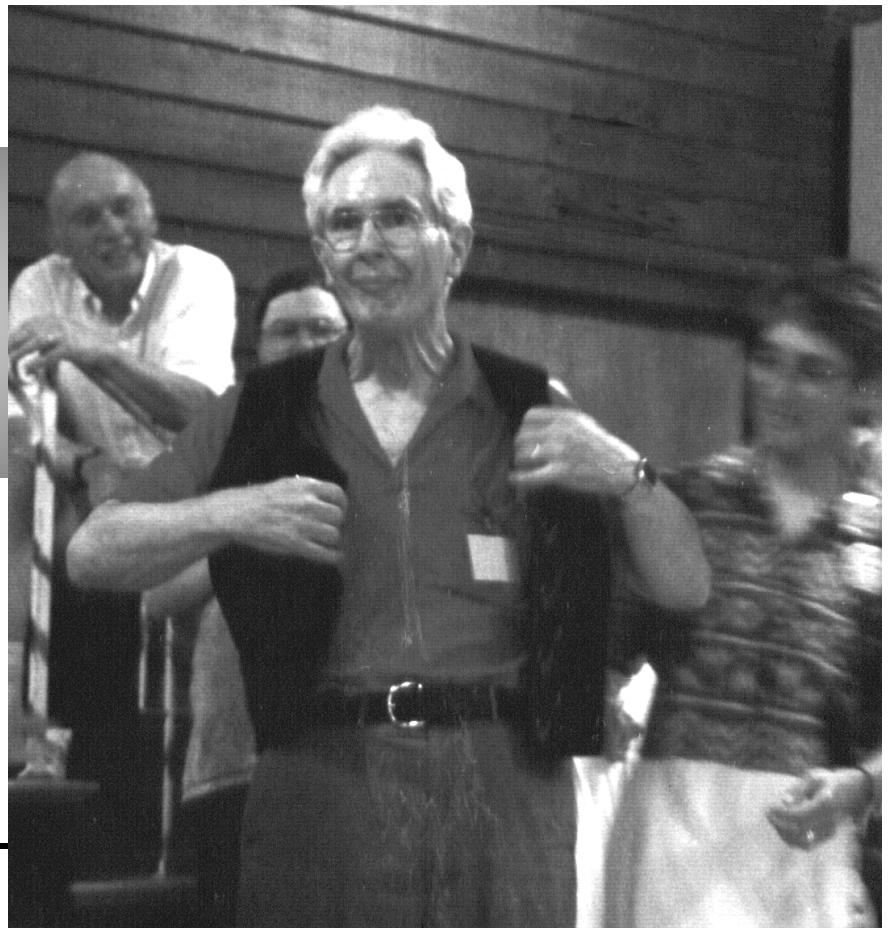
The NEFFA Board recently awarded Life Membership to three individuals who have shown long and dedicated service to the organization: **Larry Jennings**, **Angela Taylor** and **Doris Possi**.

Larry Jennings

This is the first of three interviews with the award recipients. The award presentation for Larry Jennings will be during the NEFFA contra dance at the Mt. Auburn VFW on October 24, 2002.

This NEFFA interview was conducted on August 20, 2002 by Dan Pearl.

I'm the kind of guy that naturally wanted to see things done right, whether I had any business in it or not. *Continued on page 2*



Larry and friends at the Salute to Larry Jennings evening at the Mt. Auburn VFW, 17 July 1997. Photographer unknown.

I can remember, for example, when I was just a kid, and I went to a fair. I was very upset that the cans of water were being delivered in a poor way. I had nothing to do with the water. I had nothing to do with the administration of this thing, but the only thing I could think of was the fact that the water wasn't being handled very intelligently. I was probably about 6 or 7 years old at the time. So my interest in administration (to the extent that administration is "doing things in a sensible way") goes way back, long before contra dancing or any kind of dance.

In ninth grade, during what people my age call The War, it fell to the public schools to give out ration cards, and there was a procedure to deduct for the canned goods that you already had on hand. Of course Jennings was there. It was declared a school holiday while they were doing this registration for rationing. I remember being called in to find out why two people didn't have ration books. I straightened them out: Ninth grader Jennings who couldn't stay home or listen to the radio, but instead went into school to see what was going on with this project.

One of my friends said that all the time we were in junior high is divided into "BJ" and "AJ": Before- and After-...

N: Jennings

L: You got it.

So, I had this reputation, richly deserved, I think, for butting into everything. I was interested in how things worked and why they didn't work. I hadn't centered so much on the foibles of people at that that time; that came much later. I secretly didn't think that I was different from everyone else, but everyone else thinks I'm different from everyone else, so I guess I am.

Administration is "doing things in a sensible way"



In Black Jokers kit.
Photo: Genevieve Jennings

N: When did you start dancing?

L: I went to high school in Bethesda, Maryland. The kind of dancing that I like is where someone tells you where to go and how to go there, and there wasn't much of that in high school. I came here in 1946 to MIT and four years later, in 1949-50, I happened to get sucked in to a contra dance.

I naturally gravitated toward something I now call "SAPpy" dancing: S is Structured. A is Accessible, and P is Participatory. I figured that out by answering questions about "what is NEFFA, anyway?" and what kinds of sessions we have. I think that's what NEFFA is about and that's why I get along with NEFFA.

I started my love affair with SAPpy dancing in 1949 or 1950. I was a graduate student then. Because I didn't have anything better to do than work on a Ph.D., have a wife and small child and so on, I joined the boards of RSCDS and CDS Boston. Both those organizations at that time had a central character with a dominating personality and there wasn't a need for anyone on the boards to do much. I went to Ames, Iowa from 1955 to 1959 (I did a lot of things in my career, didn't I?), and I ran an international folk dance group there, using records of course; I did everything.

When I came back here, I was informed by Arthur Cornelius that Ted Sannella's mixed international folk/square/contra was no longer the "place to go", but the place to go was the Taylors' Thursday night at the YWCA in Cambridge. That was the center of hot SAPpy dancing at that time, but there was no room for an administrator with the Taylors in charge.

(LARRY, Continued on page 5)

The NEFFA News Editor thanks Nancy Hanssen on the completion of her participation in the Editorial Review Committee of the NEFFA News.



Editor: **Dan Pearl**
Editorial Review: Shelagh Ellman-Pearl, Maureen Carey, Claire Reid, Lisa Greenleaf
Mailing: **Dayle Watts**

Issue	Deadline
Spring	Feb. 15
Summer	May 15
Fall	Aug. 15
Winter	Nov. 15

The NEFFA News, a publication of the New England Folk Festival Association, Inc., is published four times a year to communicate with its membership and other interested persons. **Please send all editorial submissions** to Dan Pearl, 15 Buffalo Run, Southborough, MA 01772, or to Daniel_Pearl@yahoo.com . Opinions of individuals are not necessarily the opinion of the NEFFA Executive Board.

Publicize your events! Display advertising is available for qualifying folk-related organizations. For more information, contact Dan at +1-508-229-2854.

Let me introduce myself. My name is Diane Mathieson. My husband and I coordinate the volunteer housing for people coming in from out-of-town to attend the annual NEFFA Festival. When we first took over the housing coordination desk, I was given a list of past housing volunteers whom I called to arrange housing for NEFFA's out-of-town guests. Housing flyers are also placed with Cal Howard and brought around to area dancers by volunteers. If any of you know where a housing flyer might be placed, please contact us at the address or e-mail at the end of this article. In the past couple of years, housing has become mostly an electronic affair as it is easier, these days, to contact people by e-mail due to their busy schedules, than to call them and play phone tag. Note: We still do paper, SASE's and phone calls for those who don't have access to e-mail. This past year was a tough year for housing, as a lot of our past volunteers were already filled with returnees; luckily there were not a lot of housing requests. In 2001 there were 150 requests for housing; in 2002 there were only 40 requests.

I thought I might write to all of you who read this newsletter to help you understand what housing does and does not do. Most of our job function involves placing people who have applied for housing with those who have volunteered to host them, by a specific deadline, usually a month before the Festival. After the deadline to apply expires, we place the guests we have already on the list with the available housing hosts that have volunteered to host them. Please note: The earlier you apply for housing, the better your chances of being placed with a host offering your particular requests. Anyway, after the deadline expires, we start a list of guests looking for housing with their particulars and hope we will have a host for them by the start of the Festival. If no housing host is found, we ask them to place a note on the Housing board at the Festival seeking housing. In the past, we have had hosts who offer beds, sleeping bag spaces, couches, recliners, tents, etc. Here in housing we only coordinate bed types, allergies, non-smoking, parking needed, etc., usually only what is on the form provided on the NEFFA web site or on the paper housing form. It is between the guests and the hosts whether or not there are any other amenities available, such as access to food, access to a kitchen, refrigerator, etc.

A funny thing happened on the way to the New England Folk Festival

By one of the housing coordinators,
Diane Mathieson



Yeah, Right.

There has been some misunderstanding this past year (2002) as to what housing provides. Our job is to match the guests up with the host that closely matches the guests' requests. We have had people request vegetarian only households, houses with females or males only, no children, transportation from the airport, etc. While it is not a problem to request these items, we only have what we have. In Basic terms we take what we can get. Generally, as I said above, it is between the hosts and the guests to work out any needed items. Another **HOT** item is that a lot of people want to be housed within 15 minutes of the Festival, but as most of housing's current volunteers come from at least 40 minutes away (some up to an hour and a half away), this is impossible. Please remember if you are a guest, to be as specific as possible as to your housing requirements. For example: Sometimes when people ask for housing, they are not specific about bed types, parking, carpooling, etc., until we contact them with a sleeping bag only space with no parking, etc.; by then it is too late to move them to another location. I also ask that when a guest is contacted with their housing placement, to please contact your host as soon as you are requested to or notify housing that you've changed your mind and don't need housing through the coordinators anymore. Then we can place someone else on the waiting list in your spot.

If anyone would like to volunteer as a host for next year (2003), please contact us at embudreau@mindspring.com or send a note to Diane Mathieson & Ed Budreau at 41 Ellington Road, Quincy, MA 02170-1905 and we will put you on the list.

We are also thankful that there are those of you who continue to host the same guests year after year. That way they don't have to contact us nor do we have to place them. To all of you who already volunteer as a host, we thank you once again for all the help you provide. We will be hosting a housing volunteers' potluck brunch or cookout during the summer of 2003 to thank our volunteers. Hopefully we can make it an annual event.

— Diane & Ed

**Reserve the dates! 2003
NEFFA Festival: April 25—27**

Beware of Imitations!



Northeast Fresh Foods Alliance

Our motto: "NEFFA, the New England Folk Festival Association: oft imitated, but never copied... or duplicated, or something like that."

Dancing in Norwalk, Connecticut

Family Dance – Circles, squares, mixers, play party games, and more. 10/6, 12/8, 2/9, 4/6, from 3pm to 5pm. Children 6 to 17 welcome.

Contra/English Dance – 1st & 3rd Fri. (ex. 4/18). 8-10:30pm.

These dances are at the Cranbury Community Chapel. For more information, call 203-226-6681

One Good Turn Workshops

Are you satisfied with just "getting by"? Or would you like to

- dance more comfortably?
- be easier to dance with?
- enjoy partner dancing more?

ONE GOOD TURN is especially designed to develop and improve partnering and turning skills in couple dancing. **ONE GOOD TURN** is a dance course for dancers at all levels, for male and female. Singles are welcome.

Starts Tuesday Sept. 24, 2002. Seven Tuesday evenings, 7:30-9:30pm Location: Park Ave. Congregational Church, Arlington Heights, MA (one block from Mass. Ave.) Course fee: \$65, payable at first session or \$60 advance registration. No part-timers or drop-ins. Instructor: Eph Weiss

Basic concepts of couple dancing will be emphasized, and partnering skills will be developed for greater dancing enjoyment. Taught through a series of dances, the skills are applicable to a wide variety of dance styles, including swing, ballroom, contras, tango, Cajun, English, Scandinavian, etc.

Both leading and following roles and skills will be taught. Instructions will be kept simple, and at a modest pace, with ample time for practice, questions and review, and individual attention and assistance, as needed. Live music is planned for some sessions.

Questions? e-mail: Eph@ieee.org (781) 862-6096 This series is supported in part by a grant from NEFFA.

The Christmas Revels

The Christmas Revels returns to Harvard University's Sanders Theater in Cambridge for 18 performances of traditional folk music, dance, songs and rituals from Armenia and its bordering nations abutting the Black Sea. Since 1971, the Christmas Revels has entertained thousands with its spectacular annual pageant. Performances run from December 13th to December 29th. Get tickets starting October 20th by phoning 617-496-2222 or at the Holyoke Center Arcade in Harvard Square. See their website for other productions around the country. www.revels.org

In Memoriam

We mourn the loss of folksinger Barbara Carns, who passed away on July 9th at the age of 76 in Berlin, Vermont. In *The Cape Codder*, Thurston Kelp wrote:

"She'll be remembered locally as a champion of progressive causes and traditional music, and the mother of a little flock of musicians, including Tommy Carns, whose debut album was one of my favorites of last year. Music clearly played a vital role in the Carns family, and again in a touching memorial service last week near Brattleboro, Vermont, where Ms. Carns also spent many years."

Barbara's most recent performances at the NEFFA Festival were in 1998 and 1999 where she did "Hard Times" blues concerts.

Memorial donations may be made to The Barbara Carns Memorial Fund for Mentoring; 106 Nasmuth Brook Road, Plainfield VT 05667.

For a full obituary on-line, see www.capecodonline.com/cctimes/archives/2002/jul/11/obit.htm

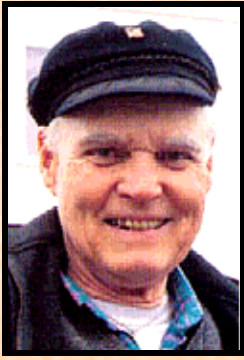


Photo: NEA

Bob

McQuillen News

NEA Awards Bob!

Contra dance musician and composer, Bob McQuillen of Peterborough New Hampshire is one of 15 artists in the country who will receive the nation's highest honor in the folk and traditional arts in a ceremony in Washington, DC in September. National Heritage Fellowships acknowledge a lifetime of artistic accomplishment and contribution to the community with an award of \$10,000.

Eileen B. Mason, Acting Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts said. "We owe a great debt to each of these talented individuals, not only for their lifetime of artistic achievement, but also for all they have done to preserve and to pass on their skills so that future generations can appreciate and enjoy and enjoy these traditions."

Benefit Dance

There will be a **benefit dance** on Sunday September 29th at 2pm at the Peterborough Town House. It is a benefit for the **Johnny Trombley Memorial Scholarship Fund** which Bob established in 2001 to encourage the passing on of the contra dance music tradition.

Musicians are invited to play with Bob at this event. Bob would be especially delighted to play with his former music students. The evening will feature an open mic for callers as well.

For more information contact: Don Primrose at dprimrose@monad.net 603 847 3093

(LARRY, Continued from page 2)

I didn't feel they did the best job possible (sure enough), so (sure enough) I and some other people joined together and ran the Cypress Hall series [of folk dances], just two blocks from the YWCA, right in the orbit of folk dancing at the time. It was an interesting trial. That was '65 to '67.

Ted Sannella's dances had degenerated. They were on Friday nights and they were used by too many people looking to make new friends for the dancing to be exciting for me.

I can't remember when I wrote the first set of bylaws for NEFFA; it was somewhere in this time period. I'm particularly proud of the NEFFA bylaws. I decided on all things that needed deciding, and Honey Hastings wrote the words.

In 1970, I had not found things that interested me to do, so I looked into the possibilities of folk music. I had had experiences with *real* participatory "I've Been Working on the Railroad" stuff. I joined the Folk Song Society and sure enough I was Membership Chairman before you know it, because I thought I could do a better job than whoever was doing it. And I did. Out of that came an invitation from Jackie Spector to do a workshop on dances that went with music they knew, like Nonesuch, contra dance music, and a smattering of tunes for international folk dancing. I held a session at the Scout House to share what I knew about these genres, and 213 people came. I was simply floored. I was floored by doing a workshop for which I was not skilled, or at least well prepared. I was flabbergasted at the potential for what could be done in Boston with Dancing With a Vision.

Ted was President of NEFFA at the time and I felt that the Program Chairman did not take advantage of opportunities that existed, so I volunteered to my friend Ted, and became Program Chairman that year. My success with the Folk Song Society dance led me to believe that there were opportunities along those lines, especially those of contra dancing, and I started the NEFFA Contra Series that year.

N: What do you see as your role through the years? Activist? Catalyst?...

L: I visualize my role as visualizing where the real problem lies, and not the fake problem. At least in NEFFA, I found a position that could be supported by virtually anyone. I visualize my greatest accomplishment was being at a meeting and saying "We've talked about this enough. I'll prepare something in writing for the

next meeting.” I don’t know whether it’s just that I cowed everyone, but I like to think that I reconciled the positions that I heard voiced – sometimes quite heated terms – and found that I could reconcile it so that everyone said “that’s what I was really thinking.”

N: Where did Zesty Contras come from?

L: I had a vision in 1973 or 4, and this vision depended on callers calling in a certain way, and in order to call this certain way, they had to have material that was suitable for this certain way. There wasn’t a whole lot of dances. There were 75 dances, none of which would be danced today; the audience would walk off the floor. I started making a collection. I had one page with 30 dances on it. I was so pleased when I had 30 dances amenable to zesty dancing. I collected at great effort the first 30. The second 30 was easier because of people like Ted, Tony Parkes, and Roger Whynot were composing dances that I had access to. They often tried them out at the NEFFA Contra series. When I had about a hundred of these dances that were amenable to the zesty vision I had in mind, it occurred to me that I could share them in some formal way. *Zesty Contras* was published only five years later; I actually did a book that took only five years from beginning till end.

N: You must have left a lot out.

L: I didn’t leave out much. As a matter of fact, for almost any problem that comes up in contra dance administration, I can go to chapter and verse in *Zesty Contras* and say “If you only had read this, it might not have cured the problem for you, but it would have identified the problem.”

N: Do you think Zesty Contras was a recording of your idea of dance nirvana, or more influential in the way that it affected contra dancing from that point on?

L: Peter Barnes was asked in my presence what turned contra dancing around, from being something that no one did or heard of much except in the back woods, to the zesty urban product we have today. Peter didn’t take a second: “The music,” he said. There’s one view. He didn’t say anything about Larry Jennings.

[Here’s an anecdote] to understand Larry Jennings: I was on the staff at the Ralph Page weekend (Ted, as chairman, invited me to be on staff once or twice). He called me in one day after the weekend, and said “I’d like to show you the evaluation sheets.” He showed me a sheet. He showed

me the top of it, and there was a big box: WHAT DID YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THE WEEKEND? I noticed to my astonishment and pleasure that 6 or 7 people wrote “Larry Jennings” in as the most rewarding thing of the weekend. I said, “Oh, isn’t that nice, Ted?” And then Ted showed me the bottom of the page: WHAT IS THE THING YOU LIKED ABSOLUTELY LEAST? “Larry Jennings,” “Larry Jennings,” “Larry Jennings,”...

I’ve learned a lot, namely that I impress some people very badly, and some people very well – hardly anyone in the middle. I’m satisfied with that characterization.

For almost any problem that comes up in contra dance administration, I can go to chapter and verse in *Zesty Contras* and say “If you only had read this, it might not have cured the problem for you, but it would have identified the problem.”

That was a prelude to my answer to the question how much influence I think I’ve had. I’ve thought a fair amount actually. During one of these very Ralph Page weekends, Dillon Bustin, who I had never met, but I had heard of, gave a talk fulfilling an obligation of the weekend to get a humanities person in. He gave reference to my book, which I had no idea that he had even heard of, and said that it had quite a bit of influence on the course of contra

dancing in the country.

N: How does the NEFFA Contra Series differ in vision from the current Thursday Night Dance Series?

L: The present Thursday night dance series is more like the vision I would have wanted than the vision I had. In other words, I think very highly of the Thursday night series. I would have never dreamed that it was possible to have what we have on Thursday. And there it is before my eyes...and I cry...

HOWEVER! To look to the future, we have to do more than we are now. There are other people besides me that think that a little bit of sharing of wealth of experience with new people is time well spent. I get the impression that connection is not as strong as it should be to meet my vision.

N: What do you think of NEFFA awarding you life membership?

L: I think they’re crazy! It wells up a lot [of feelings] in me. It’s indicative of the kind of dumb things Executive Boards will do. I recall to you at the 50th Anniversary, there was talk of giving awards, and you’ll recall that the committee, after some anguish, came to its senses.

N: You’ve said before that you’ve really valued your association with the Black Jokers morris team.

A History of Volunteerism

Highlights of Larry Jennings's contributions to NEFFA

Advisor to the Board

1982-present

Nominating Committee

1964-1966, 1977-1979,
1992-1994

Thursday Night Dance Committee

1990-present

Contra Proponent (an

acknowledgement of Larry's work on
the NEFFA Contra Series)

1981

NEFFA Contra Series

1976-1989

Activities (non-Festival)

1976-1979

Festival Program

1973-1978
(1975 program chair)

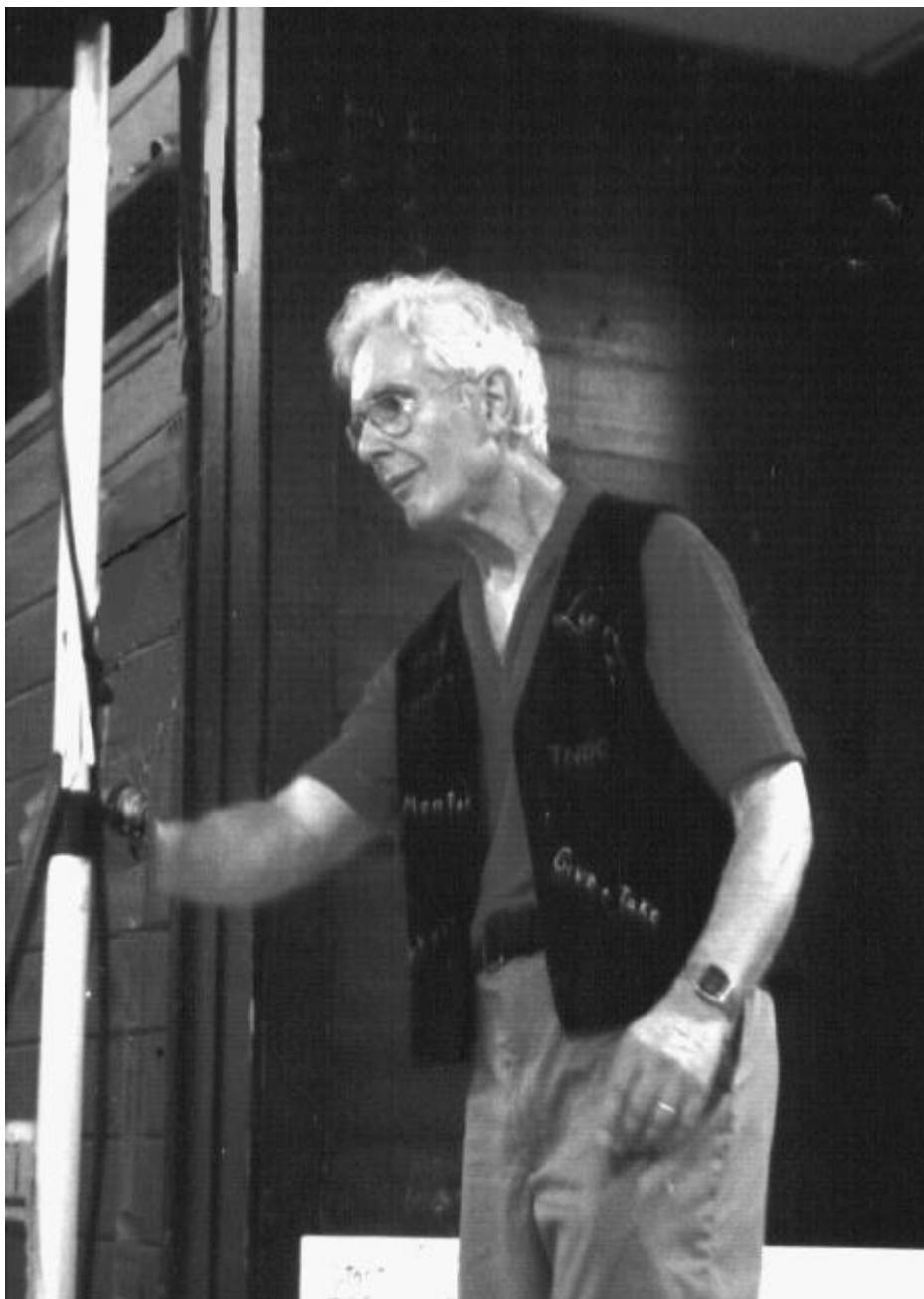
Festival Arrangements

1963

Festival Exhibits

1951

Author, "Zesty Contras"



Larry at the Salute to Larry Jennings evening at the Mt. Auburn VFW, 17 July 1997.
Photographer unknown.

L: I'll come back to the Black Jokers, but I might say that probably my finest contribution to the actual dancing was the Summer Series. I think I set a pretty good standard for...well, what it was. The Black Jokers wasn't quite SAPpy dancing; it was kind of participatory, but it wasn't all that accessible, although it wasn't inaccessible. One of the things I was proudest about the Black Jokers is that we took anyone on the team, and there were a few real "anyones." I had a role in the Black Jokers as (just what I liked) Executive Officer. I didn't have that name. The Squire made all the decisions, except that I made all the decisions. I said, "How about this?" "Sounds good," he'd say. I like this two-stage situation; I didn't have the responsibility, but I had the opportunities.

Contra Dancing is a microcosm of everything. You find the Presidents of the United States and the ministers and everyone doing just the same thing they do in Executive Board meetings of NEFFA. The same things of voting things in that on the face of it are ridiculous, and then having to go back and say... I don't know what they say. There's all these cases, if you do A, then B follows as the night to day, and everyone does A and wonders why they have situation B. Maybe they can't figure it out. I don't know. Maybe it's a knack that I have.

So, if you have a plan, and are willing to carry it out, you don't really need to go searching for authority; you just have it automatically. One person *can* make a difference, and you don't have to have a top position to make that difference. You have to have the...vision, if I may, determination to act on the vision.

Someone came up to me during the year the NEFFA Contra Series started and said "You can tell where you

were, Larry, because there was this little 'wave of order' going down the line." I like that. Such are the high points of my life.

N: Is there anything else you'd like to appear in print?

L: I love the contra dancers – all of them. It's a great thing to have exist.

This might summarize it best: I had a German guest and we had a reason to go out. It happened to be International Folk Dancing at MIT that was on that night, but it could have been the Thursday night contra as well. He said "Larry, they'll never believe it. I tell them what I saw here, and they'll never believe it." Now this was a sophisticated German scholar. "They won't believe it."

I hardly believe it, either. I'm pleased to have been part of it in an active role, and I'm still pleased to be part of it in an inactive role.

The New England Folk Festival Association, Inc. is a non-profit educational and cultural organization, incorporated under the general laws of Massachusetts to preserve folk traditions in New England and elsewhere; to encourage the development of a living folk culture; and to encourage high standards of quality and performance in the folk arts.

Membership entitles one to voting privileges, publications, and to reduced admission to selected NEFFA-sponsored activities. It is open to interested persons who support our objectives.

Annual Dues are \$7/individual (\$18 for 3 years); \$11/family (up to 2 people over 18) (\$28 for 3 years) Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. Send check, payable to NEFFA, to the office. Occasionally, NEFFA shares its mailing list for a one-time use by like-minded folk organizations. If you do not want your name and address shared in this way, tell us with your membership. **Please direct all inquiries** to the NEFFA office: PMB 282, 1770 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140 or (781) 662-6710.

Interested persons can get on NEFFA's mailing list for one year at no charge. Send request with full name and address to the office.



N·E·F·F·A

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