

**Looking Back,  
Looking Ahead**

**A New Hall is Fit to  
Be Tried**

**Kerry Elkin**



Fall 2009 – Vol. XXXV #3

**Ralph Page Dance  
Legacy Weekend:  
Don't Miss This  
Great Event!**

**Notes from NEFFA**

## **Come to the Trial Contra Dance at Reconstructed Cambridge "VFW"!**

On Sunday October 25th, the Thursday Night Dance Committee of NEFFA will be running an "experimental" contra dance in Cambridge, Mass. The experiment? While the address (680 Huron Av.) may be familiar, the VFW building that was our home for years has been demolished and replaced with a brand-new building. We're going to be trying out the venue and the dancers are going to help us decide whether we should move our dance back to Cambridge.

When the plans for the site were first released, the building included a gymnasium, but no hall. Lobbying by dancers and community activists persuaded the officials of a need for a hall within the new building. The time has come to take the new hall for a spin.

So on October 25th, the first contra dance in the new hall will take place, and you'll want to be there to be part of Boston dance history. The dance will be from 7:30pm to 10:30pm and will cost \$5 each. Lisa Greenleaf will call the dance and the band will be Nor'easter (Julie Vallimont, Cedar Stainstreet and Max Newman).

The parking that used to be behind the building does not exist anymore, and the parking spots beneath the building are reserved for VFW use. (Yes, there is still a VFW on the lower level. The missile that was in front of the old VFW has been relocated to the lower/rear.) Parking is still OK in the golf course lot across the street, and on the street in allowed places. On Sunday, it is OK to park in most resident-permit spots; carefully read the signs. Taking the T? Use the trip planner tool at [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com) to help you plan your route.



*Jerry Callen*



*Cambridge 7 Architects*



*Cambridge 7 Architects*

# Remembering Kerry Elkin

by *Linda Leslie*

The music and dance community has lost a cherished member. On August 22, Kerry died from multiple sclerosis. While the disease may have stilled his fiddle, our thoughts, remembrances, respect for his hard work, and appreciation for his extraordinary talent will keep him with us. There are so very many of us who have our stories to tell, fine stories of how he touched and changed our lives.

My story starts 20 years ago. I moved to New Bedford from Chicago, and immediately looked for the local dances. I found a small dance, in a beautiful grange in the middle of the corn fields of Rochester, MA. Each fourth Saturday, Kerry Elkin, Ruth Richards, and others such as Gordon Peery, Danny Noveck, David Surette, and Jeremiah McLane, would flood that hall with the most magnificent tunes! The hall would be packed with dancers. We were lucky to have Steve Zakon-Anderson, Lisa Greenleaf, and John Alden, among many others, call the dance. Kerry's virtuosity brought us in from surrounding towns near and far. The glory days! Kerry and Ruthie would also hold potluck dinners before the dance. Gracious and warm....and oh, that coffee! Kerry and Ruthie also were the musicians who played the Rehoboth dance. Back then, the dance was once a month, and the dancers could count on hearing the very best music that New England had to offer. Did we realize how very fortunate we were to have them? Not a real question; we knew.

There were some things that folks may not have known about Kerry. He was a contra dance caller before he was a fiddler. He spent many, many hours practicing, and demanded a level of perfection from his fiddling few could emulate. Once he moved to Martha's Vineyard, he continued to play for the Rehoboth dance, packing his car with sound equipment, making the trip




over on the ferry, staying the night at our place on the Cape (he kept the key in his fiddle case), and taking an early ferry back home. His devotion to the dance was beyond superlative. But out on the Vineyard, he also found it challenging to do his day job, and put in the hours of practice that he felt were required, so he stopped fiddling for dances and concerts. A loss all of us mourned; but we waited patiently for him to take up his fiddle once again. And a few years later he did try! It was the slight tremor in his fingers as he tried to bow and make notes that caused him concern, and eventually let to his diagnosis (see the web site: <http://www.kerryelkin.com/> for more information, including purchasing CDs).

As a dancer, I was one of the admiring many. There are others who can speak much more eloquently about Kerry's mastery of his fiddle, his preferences for tunes, his trips to Ireland to discover new tunes and play with the local musicians. As a caller, however, I have a very personal relationship to remember and celebrate. I have Kerry, along with Ruthie and Amy Larkin, to thank for encouraging me to take up calling and for supporting my efforts. My first full dance was at Rochester (with my leg in a cast, propped on a chair). My most vivid memories of my early years of calling were with Kerry and Ruthie at Rehoboth. Kerry

would request me. My good fortune was beyond my wildest dreams! He could be demanding on stage, but never with me. He would look at my dance card, and pick the tunes. It was fascinating to watch him as he thought about what he would play. His encouragement was never overdone. Rather, in his understated way, like any great mentor, I knew when he was pleased, because the overall good time at the dance would show on his face and in his eyes. He will be missed.

**A celebration to honor Kerry's life and music will be held on Sunday, October 18th, 5:30 PM at the Chilmark Community Center on Martha's Vineyard.**

	<b>Editor:</b> Dan Pearl <b>Mailing:</b> Dayle Watts	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Issue</th> <th>Deadline</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Spring</td> <td>Feb. 1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Summer</td> <td>May 15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fall</td> <td>Aug. 15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Winter</td> <td>Nov. 1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Issue	Deadline	Spring	Feb. 1	Summer	May 15	Fall	Aug. 15	Winter	Nov. 1
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<b>Editorial Review:</b> Robert Golder, Shelagh Ellman-Pearl, Lisa Greenleaf, Robert Johnson												

**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 [neffa@neffa.org](mailto:neffa@neffa.org). Opinions of individuals are not necessarily the opinion of the NEFFA Executive Board.

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# From the President's Desk

Robert Golder



Two years ago, when I became president of NEFFA, outgoing President Maureen Carey handed me the NEFFA gavel. The gavel is ten inches long, and handcrafted of dark, well-grained rock maple. Its bronze band is engraved "N.E.F.F.A." in capital letters that were deeply and carefully incised by hand. The President uses this gavel to formally open and close each NEFFA board meeting, and to preside at the Annual Meeting.

How long has the gavel been in use? Who commissioned it to be made? I don't know the answers to these questions. The gavel has been part of our NEFFA tradition for so long that its origins are presently unclear. Perhaps one of our long-term members has the answers, and will pass along the information to me so that NEFFA can reclaim a little bit of our heritage.

I may not know much about the history of the gavel, but when I hold it in my hand it tells me something about the people who instituted its use. The gavel tells me that these men and women who passionately enjoyed folk music, dance, singing, arts, and crafts could also have a serious side. They intended to be focused and purposeful about preserving, protecting, and practicing the folk arts. Even as they danced and played traditional music, built musical instruments, and sang with joy the songs and chanteys of New England (with a view to the world beyond), they also worked to ensure that the New England Folk Festival Association would be around for a very long time.

The formality of the gavel, if not the actual object itself, dates back to the very beginnings of our organization. Our founders left us in no doubt of their precise intentions when in 1944 they established the New England Folk Festival Association. Here is their mission statement, which we still follow today:

*The purposes of the New England Folk Festival Association are:*

*To preserve folk traditions in New England, and elsewhere, and to encourage the development of a living folk culture.*

*To set and to encourage the attainment of high standards of quality and performance in the folk arts, to sponsor or conduct conferences and other educational services for leaders and members of folk groups throughout New England.*

*To sponsor or conduct Folk Festival events, for the exhibition and demonstration of folk activities and participation therein. To collect, preserve, and disseminate folk material.*

There's a wonderful phrase in that mission statement: "the development of a living folk culture." I thought about this phrase when I noticed, among the 450 evaluation forms that I received following the 2009 Festival, a number of

evaluations from attendees who had attended only one or two Festivals. I realized that these were festival attendees whose personal history and experience of NEFFA was entirely based in Mansfield, MA. Many of us remember three decades of Festivals at Natick, MA. Some of us even attended earlier Festivals in other venues scattered across New England. For us, these older venues helped build our sense of the NEFFA tradition. But for new attendees, the development of a living folk culture is taking place at Mansfield.



As preparations for the 66th annual New England Folk Festival move forward, I'm mindful of how so many people, over the course of many years, invested careful planning and effort, represented by the gavel, to fulfill our organization's mission statement. At the same time, I'm excited to see how our tradition is living and growing among new participants at a new venue.

Please remember that NEFFA is more than just the April Festival. Please keep in mind our other programs, such as the Ralph Page Dance Legacy Weekend in Durham, New Hampshire; the dates are January 15-17, 2010. In the Greater Boston area, enjoy the Family Dance Series and the Thursday Night Contra Dance Series in Concord, MA. And as always, thank you for helping NEFFA to create joyful celebrations of music, dance, song, storytelling, arts, and crafts for the New England folk community.

Bob Golder

President, NEFFA



## Summary of Notes from NEFFA Executive Board Retreat

On June 14, 2009, the NEFFA Executive Board took time to take a look at the larger issues confronting the organization. These are notes from that meeting.

### Funding

Pursuit of funding sources, corporate sponsorships, ads; which are we comfortable with? Where do we focus efforts? **Dan:** We're a business with a product. I encourage making changes to enhance the value of our product. **Linda:** I encourage brainstorming ideas of how to increase membership as well as a sense of ownership of the Festival by the performers. **Harold:** I'm interested in pursuing online ticketing, a separate crafts ticket, and increasing the performer sense of ownership of the Festival.

**Don:** Change is needed to prevent stodginess. What makes festivals "successful?" **Angie:** Don't change the spirit of the Festival to increase attendance. Remember NEFFA's history and purpose.

A breakout group explored **financial issues**.

We will continue ads

Should we pursue grants? YES

Sponsorships -- What do we have to do in return?

Remembering the mission of NEFFA

Individual sponsorship – For example, can you sponsor a medley?

### Membership

Membership = Ownership

There is a synergistic flow between these concepts

- look for ways to make NEFFA even more attractive
- Beth would like around 100 more members by next Festival
- car bumper stickers, special name tags ?
- Working with Thurs Night dance committee for discount (or free)
- Time for new logo? How can we conceptually tie our NEFFA events together?----a brochure to be offered at events?

### Publicity

1. Craft Fair

- Advertise with word 'crafts' to attract newcomers interested in craft tables
- Place NEFFA ads at craft fairs to attract new audience and vendor interest
- NEFFA does not have enough craft vendors to draw an audience as a "craft fair"

2. Bashes

- hold a folk music event in addition to a dancing event
- rotate location of bash around New England

3. Tailor advertising for target audience

- font, color, content

4. Who/Where

- radio
- college campuses – Get representatives for each college publicity with school
- newspaper -- stories to share
- internet (Facebook, Youtube, etc)

5. NEFFA connecting/representing in smaller groups (ways that NEFFA can support the dance community the rest of the year, and get its name more widely recognized in the process)

- grants (that NEFFA offers for starting dances)
- website recognition of smaller groups
- offering dance organizing mentors/matching program to draw on NEFFA's experience: contact info, resources, etc
- mentoring or spotlighting (afternoon jam)
- connecting young/new musicians with experienced musicians
- follow jam with dance or show
- make sure each Festival band/musician advertises to their local communities
- have volunteer regional chairs represent NEFFA

6. Internet Publicity Brainstorm

(some of these ideas are already being used)

- person to person communication (via email, Instant Messenger, facebook, etc)
- NEFFA website calendar
- ask other folk organizations and groups (crafts, coffeehouses, choral groups, musicians, community groups local to festival site) to send NEFFA information to their email lists, or to include NEFFA in a monthly email
- communication with other folk festival organizers to discuss how to effectively publicize events
- make sure NEFFA is on thedancegypsy.com and any other websites with lists of dance/music festivals
- contact educational groups and dance/music departments of schools to advertise NEFFA
- advertise the performance part of the program to elderly homes

### Programming

1. How can we balance spontaneity without changing too much?
2. Expand our hours for younger folks and other late-night enthusiasts
3. Koren suggests bringing "fusion evenings" to other events to promote International and couple dancing alongside contra.
4. New groups — How to get them and spread the word?
5. Business card with application info would be useful to give to performers
6. Promote NEFFA in September, encouraging performers to apply.
7. Info on eval. sheets asking and encouraging applications from performers
8. Spontaneity is great! (Dan) New bands should be recruited by their fans.
9. Longer sessions for dances
10. Stagger beginning/ending times for dances.
11. Clips of performers through our website to promote performers. NEFFA also gives legitimacy to performers
12. Room dedicated for teaching and learning crafts or other skills
13. Stretching and Yoga in the early a.m.
14. NEFFA history room
15. Equity for hours volunteering is a very difficult issue. We depend on all of our volunteers and their good will and support. A change in ticket policy may disrupt this support in significant ways. We are committed to continuing the present policy for performers and volunteers. We need to spend more time thanking our volunteers.
16. Program Committee will continue to solicit voluntary donations at the Performer Check-in desk. In addition, Performers will again be contacted about having ads in the Program Book. ■

JOIN US FOR THE TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL

# R·A·L·P·H P·A·G·E

JANUARY 15-17,  
2010

MARTIN LUTHER KING  
DAY WEEKEND



MEMORIAL  
UNION BUILDING  
UNH ~ DURHAM,  
NH

## Dance Legacy Weekend

An Enjoyable Weekend of Fine Contra and Square Dancing

*Celebrate the New England Tradition ~ Excellent Music, Great Callers & Friendly Dancers*

- ☞ Lisa Greenleaf & Tony Parkes Calling
- ☞ Latter Day Lizards:  
Dave Langford, Bill Tomczak & Peter Barnes
- ☞ Old New England:  
Jane Orzechowski,  
Deanna Stiles & Bob McQuillen
- ☞ Friday—White Cockade:  
Vince O'Donnell, Ralph Jones,  
Sylvia Miskoe, Cal Howard, RP Hale & Allan Chertok

- ☞ Dancing all day!
- ☞ Workshops on dance, music, calling
- ☞ Retrospective Dance Session:  
Marcie Van Cleave & Sylvia Miskoe will lead a celebration of the truly inspirational and varied life of  
☞ Marianne Taylor ☞
- ☞ Grand Dance Saturday evening

**Save This Weekend!**

**More Information:** For more information or to download a copy of this flyer, go to the NEFFA web site and click on the RPDLW link; or contact Sarah Dawson (see below). More detailed information will be available from the web site by late summer; the registration flyer will follow shortly thereafter.

NEFFA: <<http://www.neffa.org>>

Sarah Dawson: (603) 659-5612 or <[rpdlw@me.com](mailto:rpdlw@me.com)>.

## Leadership Conference Features Chrissy Fowler

The Virginia Dance Leadership Conference is an event designed for organizers and callers from the mid-Atlantic region to come together and collaborate about how to build the dance community. It will be held the weekend of Oct 16-18, 2009, in Blacksburg, Va.

It's a two track event - one for organizers and one for callers. Chrissy Fowler of Belfast, ME, will be leading sessions for organizers, focusing on creating a clear vision and running a successful community dance series. Bob Dalsemer will be leading the session for callers, focusing on a better understanding of choreography, working with musicians, and engaging new dancers.

Conference participants will all join in at the regular Blacksburg contra dance Saturday night, which will be called by Bob's calling class participants.

Registration fee of \$45 includes a Friday night social, 4 Saturday workshops, Saturday night contra dance admission, meals on Saturday, Sunday morning brunch and follow-up session. Hosting is available for out of town participants.

Find the details at: <http://www.twodogwaltz.com/conference.html>  
Workshop space is limited to 22 organizers and 10 callers. Print out a registration form (from the website) and send it in to reserve your spot! More info: Contact Gaye at 434-244-7858 or Shawn at [sbrenneman@gmail.com](mailto:sbrenneman@gmail.com) This event is funded in part by the Mary Kay Friday Fund of the CDSS (Country Dance and Song Society). <http://www.cdss.org/mary-kay-friday-leadership-fund.html>

## Upcoming Festivals!

The 20th Annual DownEast Country Dance Festival will take place on March 26 & 27, 2010, with a Survivors Dance on March 28, 2010. At the Mount Ararat Middle School, Topsham, Maine. [www.deffa.org/festival/](http://www.deffa.org/festival/)



# N·E·F·F·A

New England Folk Festival Association  
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Phone: 781-662-6710 FAX: 781-662-6730  
[www.neffa.org](http://www.neffa.org)

**Our festival, the 2010 New England Folk Festival is April 23-25 in Mansfield, Mass.**  
[www.neffa.org](http://www.neffa.org)

## For Adventurers, Culture-Lovers and Dancers

The Pura Vida Dance Camp 2010 is scheduled for January 16th-23rd. <http://www.puravidadancecamp.com>  
Camp Staff: Jay Ungar, Molly Mason, Peter Davis, Harry Aceto, Kathy Anderson, Calling & Beverly Lazar Davis, organizer.  
Your hosts: Ana and Johnny Soto and family, Albergue Hacienda, Moravia de Chirripo, Costa Rica

"Pura Vida!" means "Pure Life!" in Spanish, but in Costa Rica it is an answer to the question "How are you?" The camp is a unique cross-cultural opportunity to learn about Costa Rica and its people, both the local and the indigenous populations. Come together to experience an affordable and educational vacation in the beautiful, peaceful and sunny country of Costa Rica.

During the day you may choose natural adventures that take you deep into the rain forest with one of the most knowledgeable guides in the country. Also available are horseback riding, whitewater rafting, bird watching, biking, or relaxing by the pool. You will have musical experiences with Jay, Molly, Peter, Harry & Kathy: nightly dances - contras & squares, couple dancing and salsa - camper band, impromptu jams and sing-alongs.

Pura Vida has maintained a connection with local schools providing a social action project yearly.

See [www.puravidadancecamp.com](http://www.puravidadancecamp.com) to register or call Beverly Lazar Davis at 518-281-9130.

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