



March 2007

The Mid Winter Meeting now an annual event first held in Chicago in 1996 when Cathy Hynd was FUSTA President. The four officers and six regional delegates attended with some trepidation and little or no funding. In some cases regions funded a portion of their delegate's expenses. In other cases expenses were personally absorbed. Aileen Robertson, FUSTA's head delegate in Scotland, participated for a short while courtesy of a speaker phone in the conference room. The meeting was held on Saturday; everyone flew home on Sunday.

That meeting proved to be so valuable that it was held again the following year in Phoenix, Arizona. In the early years, the location changed from year to year depending upon which member of the Board of Directors (BOD) was willing to coordinate hotel reservations and meal arrangements.

The last itinerate Mid Winter meeting was in 2003 when the BOD traveled to Kansas City, Kansas one snowy February weekend. Flights were delayed and major airports closed making it impossible for one officer to attend. It was decided that future meetings should be held south of the "snow belt" and in a central location that did not require anyone to fly clear across the U. S. to attend. Diane Krugh was attending her first Mid Winter meeting invited us all to come to Houston, Texas the following year.

It proved to be a good decision. Since 2004, the Mid Winter meeting has been held in Houston. The four officers, the National Judges' Committee Chairman, National Registrar, and the six regional delegates stay and work at an Amerisuites Hotel that has very reasonable room rates, on site conference rooms, and is close to the airport. For the last three years Aileen Robertson has been able to attend and has been of invaluable assistance.

Draft agendas comprised of standard items as well as issues/concerns brought up by the membership during the year are sent out to all those who will be attending. They are asked to look over the agenda and make additions, corrections, or suggestions. The final agenda is sent out no later than the week before the meeting.

All officers are required to submit reports covering the time from the July BOD meeting until the Mid Winter meeting. The regional delegates must also submit reports using a template developed several years ago.

The meeting begins Saturday morning at 9:00 am and breaks for a quick box lunch about noon. The meeting resumes and continues until at least 5:00 pm. Some years, the meeting has gone longer depending on the agenda items. Since coming to Houston, the BOD has enjoyed dinner together on Saturday at Papasitas famous for its Tex-Mex cuisine.

The Board assembles again Sunday morning at 9:00 am and works for two or three hours until people have to leave to catch flights home. Following the meeting, the secretary assembles all the reports presented at the meeting and sends them to the membership along with the minutes.

The Mid Winter meeting is the only time that the Board of Directors has the opportunity to meet face to face for a day and a bit and devote time to items of concern, proposals submitted for consideration, overseas issues and items for the good of the order. The BOD does meet briefly at the USIR on Wednesday evening, but it does not compare to the energy and focus of the Mid Winter meeting.

This year the agenda was lengthy and the items challenging to say the least. Aileen reported that during the time of transition in the leadership of the SOBHD, nothing has happened with Ad Hoc committee investigating the possible restructuring of the SOBHD. This committee is of great interest to FUSTA since changes in the composition of the SOBHD will likely effect overseas organizations.

The Mid Winter meeting can be intense, is often punctuated with humor, always respectful and always driven by what is in the best interest of FUSTA and its members. Personal agendas have no place at this meeting. Not all of the decisions made at the Mid Winter meeting are popular and some are strongly questioned. It would be disappointing if they were not since it would be a grim indicator of a disinterested membership.

This organization has survived and thrived because good people with FUSTA's best interest at heart have from time to time found themselves on opposite sides of issues. Respect for and understanding of other points of view are what have permitted strength instead of deterioration to come from opposing views and the discussion they generate.

This year is no exception. The proposal to allow a fourth dancer in each age group to qualify for the USIR has gotten more people to respond and participate than any issues in recent memory. Clearly it is a hot topic that is either cursed or praised depending on one's point of view. I applaud those who voiced opinions, sent emails and voted. As long as FUSTA's members are passionate and not apathetic, responsive and not mute, this organization will continue to flourish. Please, continue to exercise the privilege of participation. It is there equally for all members.

Ann Johnson, FUSTA President

USIR Update



USIR 2007

Orange County, CA

usir2007.fusta.us

USIR 2008 -
Denver, CO

USIR 2009 -
Nashville, TN

USIR 2010 -
Traverse City, MI

USIR 2011 -
TBD in Northwest

USIR 2012 -
TBD in East

2007 USIR - Regional Selection

Southwest	April 28
Southeast	May 5
East	May 12
Northwest	May 12
Western	May 26
Midwest	May 27

2007 USIR Judges

From Scotland:

Jacqueline Aird, Rhonda Lawrench and Aileen Robertson

From Canada:

Irene Baird, Sheryl Joyner and Lorraine Symington

The West region is keeping busy doing fundraising for USIR 2007. Bonnie Larsen organized a wine pairing dinner in San Clemente. There were five courses and a winery in the area provided a different type of wine for each course. It was a fabulous evening, highlighted by Lawren Wylie, Cosette Aguirre and Kari MacNaughton performing for the dinner guests. Bonnie, who last competed a few years ago, did a challenge Highland Fling, and raised \$500 for her efforts, just for the dance. It was held at the San Clemente Country Club.

Shout out to Bonnie, she has done a remarkable job in fundraising for the region and all the rest of FUSTA will be able to see the results of her efforts when you come to the Irvine Marriott this summer.

Just a note: The Thursday evening outing and introduction of the reps will be at Newport Dunes. It is going to be an all day/evening beach party. The region is requesting that the reps be presented in some type of appropriate beach wear, i.e., a sundress. No bathing suits allowed for the presentation. The area for the presentation will be paved so appropriate footwear as well, not barefoot. Just a reminder to the reps to NOT go out looking for a formal outfit this year, a nice sundress would be better.



FUSTA Scholarship



FUSTA Scholarship applications are available online through the website - www.FUSTA.com. Dancers who are seniors in high school and continuing on to college should download the application and submit by March 1.

Please note: although the newsletter was published after the scholarship deadline, please keep it in mind for next year. If you have any students who are Juniors in High School this year, they will be eligible next year. It's never too early to think about scholarship opportunities.

Editor's Notes

Hope all is going well for everyone this spring. I am keeping busy getting all of my dancers ready for the competition season. I don't know about any of you, but I'm really excited about this next year. It's always so wonderful to see your dancers grow and improve with each passing year.

I hope you all enjoy this issue of the newsletter. I have decided to continue a section on the USIR Update, as I think it is important for everyone to stay informed about our biggest event of the year. Not to mention that there are always some exciting and wonderful things going on that you should all know about!

I also added a new section called "Ask The Teacher." I posed three questions to a teacher from each region, one relating to parents, one to young dancers and one to advanced dancers. Hoping to hit on at least one thing that each teacher could find useful. If you have any questions that you would like to "ask the teacher" please e-mail them to me and I will include them in future issues.

If you have any other ideas or comments for the newsletter, please let me know. I would love to hear what everyone thinks.

Until next time - enjoy the spring, good luck in the new competition season and at your regionals and I hope to see you all soon.

~ Bree Erin Brownlee
FUSTA Newsletter Editor
Midwest

Letter to the Editor



Comments Regarding the 4 Dancer Rep Proposition

I am disappointed, not necessarily in the result of the vote, but in how the four dancer proposition was put together in the first place. I was not at this meeting, but as I understand it, originally there was a proposition co-authored by the Southeast and Midwest regions submitted at the Mid Winter Meeting. The purpose of that proposition was also to allow more dancers to qualify for the USIR, but through a wild card competition. The Board made the correct decision to vote down that proposition due to flaws in how it could be implemented. That proposition was put together over weeks of discussion and collaboration between groups of people, but still had flaws and, rightly, never made it to the membership for a vote. Because the FUSTA Board liked the basic idea some brainstorming continued and the four dancer rep proposition basically was put together out of that discussion. Although I think it is admirable that the Board tried to do something good for FUSTA I question the methods the Board used to push their alternate proposition onto the members. The membership was asked to vote on an alternate proposition that was put together on the spot, more or less as an afterthought. The result of a relatively short discussion in the middle of an intense nine-plus hour meeting that had many, many more issues that still needed to be discussed. I'm sure the board did as good a job as they could putting the proposal together with the limited time they had. My point is that the Mid Winter Meeting isn't the ideal venue to try to put together a proposal from scratch. Especially one that has so many underlying, and possibly unforeseen, issues attached with it because the meeting doesn't allow for adequate discussion to take place on something like this proposition. You might start the proposal at the Mid Winter Meeting, but then it should be given adequate time for people to think it over and see all the various consequences of the proposition before finalizing it and sending it out to be voted on, especially when it is a major departure from a twenty-plus year practice, with many people and organizations involved. Or, you might finalize a proposition at the Mid Winter Meeting after in-depth discussion had already taken place prior to the meeting, but there was no discussion about this particular proposition prior to the meeting.

My disappointment grew when, not only did the Board decide to put the proposition out only one day after the Mid Winter Meeting, but they also told us that we had only one week to vote on it. Not only did the proposition not get adequate discussion from the FUSTA Board before going before the membership, the Board also made the time frame to vote so short that they made it impossible for the membership to discuss it enough to fully understand its merits and drawbacks before voting, either.

None of the four propositions needed to be voted on immediately. Originally, as I understand it, it was hoped to be able to have the four dancer proposition in place for this year's USIR, but the organizer made it clear to the Board very early on that the West region would not be able to make the arrangements necessary to honor the proposition if it passed due to increased and unbudgeted costs and space restrictions. Once the Board was aware of that, there was no need to hurry the vote. The board had ample time to pull the 4 dancer proposition from the ballot or simply let the members know that they were going to table that proposition for further discussion before taking a vote on it. None of the other three propositions needed to be acted on immediately either, so why the rush? I've asked that question,, but I haven't been given an answer to that question.

Yes, I realize that if this doesn't work out we can always put in another proposition to change this one. I'm also sure that, at the time, the proposal seemed like a great idea for FUSTA, but that really isn't the point, is it? The point is that it is the responsibility of the Board to do their best to get things right the first time. That means taking whatever time is needed to tweak any flaws in the proposition before it is sent to the membership to be voted on. It also means giving the members the time needed to read, digest and discuss the merits and flaws of any proposal before being asked to vote on it. If any FUSTA member or FUSTA region submits a proposal it goes through two steps before being voted on. First the proposal is written, discussed and approved at the regional level, and then it goes to the Board who reviews it and sends it back for any necessary revisions. Only after that does the proposal go to the membership for a vote. Shouldn't the Board expect the same of itself when presenting a proposition? I would hate to think that any future issues are going to be sent out to members asking for a seven day turnaround. It is hardly the best way for member involvement and participation in the voting process that is a key element to effective communication, and involvement within our organization.

Bill Weaver
FUSTA Immediate Past President
Midwest Region

Ask The Teacher



How do you deal with parents who are disruptive during class time, but you would like to have them still attend to either help their child practice at home, or because their child is very young?

Christie Freestone, Midwest

Unlike most teachers, I prefer to have parents attend class. I believe that parents can be extremely helpful if they learn what to look for when their dancer is practicing. It is important that parents watch for my corrections, not the things that they feel are important. If the parents are being disruptive, I ask them to watch their child as they demonstrate the correction we are practicing, thereby redirecting the parent so they are again watching their child. If that doesn't work, I'll ask the parent to write down their dancer's corrections. If still unsuccessful, I'll talk with the parent and simply ask them to settle down or move to a new location far away from the class.

Joy MacKinnon, West

It is often helpful to have a mandatory 'parent' meeting before taking on new students, and this is also useful as a review with the more established parents also. We are a well-established school of various disciplines, including Highland Dancing, so the issue of disruptive parents does not often surface; nevertheless, we are quite prepared in case it should at any moment.

Heather Donehoo, Northwest

I simply do not tolerate that. The only parents I allow into the class are the New Beginners. I have three new beginners right now and the parents are allowed to sit and take notes. I have made it very clear they are not to interrupt. After each step that we go through I ask them if they have any questions and demonstrate for them what I am trying to get the student to do. I let them get up and go through the movement if they want to and I answer their questions. It works really well and I have asked them to please keep quiet and not talk among themselves. I find if you are firm up front with this it is not an issue

“How do you help your primaries remember each step as it changes (Fling & Sword)?”

Christie Freestone, Midwest

My students have learned that the brain is wired to perform a skill only when the skill is practiced from 50-450 times in a row. I try to teach them from an early age that they will be able to do steps without making mistakes by practicing methodically when at home. Sometimes, working on the transitions from step to step will help some students to excel. Practicing while watching a video of an older dancer

will sometimes be the visual cue that some dancers need to remember the steps until the movement is wired into the brain and becomes an automatic part of the dancer's motor memory

Jo Kalat, Southeast

It would seem that after teaching as many years as I have, I would have a great answer for this question. For better or worse, repetition is the mother of learning. So I use every trick I can think of to get them to repeat what I want them to learn over and over. Sometimes we go to a different part of the room, turn around to make it different, sing and dance, clap and dance, give out stickers, or maybe I just act silly. With each group of students, it might be different, but I try to find ways to keep them repeating what they need to learn. Calling their attention to the tricky spots – “Here comes a thinking cap moment” sometimes gets them up for a challenge. But in the end, we must remember they are young. All children mature at different rates. Our job is to reward them for the positives and keep them interested long enough for that maturity to take place. With primaries, rewarding the positive is so important. I worry a lot more about effort than I do about mistakes. If they are paying attention and trying, they will eventually get it. Keeping them positive and motivated until they get it is the important job. I also think that forging the relationship between the student and the teacher is more important at this time than getting the steps right.

“With the Championship Reel for this year, what stamina builders do you have your premier dancers do?”

Jo Kalat, Southeast

I have attacked this in a variety of ways. You've got to have the strength to go for 3 minutes and 15 seconds. We began by jumping rope for that amount of time. I always make sure that my classes have one or more aerobic component that last that long. Then we moved to doing just the setting steps before we moved on to doing the whole dance. I have incorporated some step aerobics and plyometrics in class as well. These make training a little more fun.

Linda Vinson, East

Wow! Well, I like my dancers to go over and over movements at the bar until perfected, and use what the boxers have always used...the old fashioned jump rope! I like to encourage them to jump 15 to 20 minutes a day. I also make sure they are always well hydrated, drinking plenty of water each day and staying away from sodas and sugar as much as possible.



The Big Adventure

the Hamilton family's trip across the country

Recently, my husband took advantage of an early retirement opportunity from the U.S. Public Health Service. Looking for a needed change, we sold our home in Pinetop, Arizona and decided to move to New York. We also thought this was a once in a lifetime opportunity for our family of three to leisurely travel the countryside. So with joy, sadness, excitement and trepidation, we packed up the 5th wheel and left Pinetop on December 1st heading for California to begin our coast to coast trek. We dubbed our trip "*The Big Adventure*".

While looking forward to our trip, we knew there would be many challenges, with the biggest being home schooling and where and how to get dance practice in while staying at RV parks. From our years of RVing, we knew that parks often have clubhouses with activity rooms. So we thought this would be our approach. Our back-up plan was to call local dance companies, to see about renting space if needed.

First Stop: California. We made our first stop in Temecula, CA. Temecula is a wonderful town about 60 miles north of San Diego. It's nestled in the middle of wine country, with quaint shops in the "old town" area, and close to Sea World and the San Diego Zoo. Unfortunately, our first resort surprised us without rooms available for dance practice. With the holiday season at hand, the rooms were all being used. We needed a place to practice and the cement drive was not going to do for the four week stay, even with the dance pads we brought. And we all know that a week without practice will not do! Attempts at calling local dance studios also proved unsuccessful.

Then, one evening while taking a walk after dinner, we noticed one of the buildings at the resort had a covered porch and the wheels started to turn. Mark and I both jumped on the porch followed by Bonnie. The porch seemed to have some "give" to it. There's nothing like the give of an old, sagging porch. There was also a railing, which was pretty sturdy at that. Now we have a bar. And the French doors, well they made a fine mirror. "If there's a will, there's a way", and there is always a place to practice. We learned that we will have to be creative about dance and make whatever was available work, including the occasional cement drive and dance pad combination, along with the tailgate of the truck as a bar!

Bonnie was fortunate to have a few lessons with Catherine Hope while we stayed in Temecula. Catherine has so much energy and really kept Bonnie on her toes. After Temecula, we decided we needed more ocean time, so we headed for San Diego for 10 days. This RV resort provided us with a nice upstairs room for practice, so we were pleased after our last stop. Bonnie also had the wonderful opportunity to attend one class with Margo Naismith. Bonnie loved Margo's enthusiasm and direction. She also enjoyed being with other dancers and everyone made her feel welcome.

Next Stop: Arizona. Back to Tucson, Arizona to see Bonnie's regular teacher Trish Thorne-Nuzzo for a week before heading to Texas. We were welcomed to Tucson by cold temperatures and a snow storm. Yes, snow in the desert! What a beautiful sight to see the white fluffy stuff resting on prickly green cactus.

Bonnie spent the next six of seven days dancing three to four hours each day with her teacher Trish Nuzzo. Trish has been more than a teacher to Bonnie; she has become her friend and mentor. Trish is a big part of our family and we truly will miss seeing her smiling face. It is her knowledge, constant positive reinforcement and love of the dance that has touched our lives. It is because of her I went on to become a teacher myself. It is people like Trish Nuzzo that keep Highland Dance alive in Arizona.

Next Stop: Texas. Once, we set out for Texas there was no looking back ! We were finally on our way (Go EAST young man!). Houston greeted us with The Johnson Space Center, the Moody Gardens, the Museum of Natural History, Donna Cusack and Diane Krugh.

Bonnie was also very fortunate to dance with the students of the St. Thomas Episcopal School. Donna and her students welcomed Bonnie into their classes for two few weeks. Donna's attention to detail and direction was invaluable, while reinforcing the need to practice (Did you practice this week ?). And thanks too to Diane for all of her help with our transition to the eastern region.

Highland Dance may be very competitive but it is also a very small community filled with many people willing to share their knowledge. And it's in that knowledge that Highland Dance will continue and it will grow stronger in number. Thank you to all of the teachers, dancers and FUSTA delegates that have helped us on our travels. A special thank you to David Tague for all of his assistance, support and encouragement !

We'll be in Texas for awhile so until next time...

Keep Dancing !

Mindy, Bonnie and Mark Hamilton

Regional News

East

Lynne Erbrick became a mom mom again to Elizabeth Reed Eberz. Elizabeth was born on August 11 to Lynne's son and daughter in-law Drew and Dana Eberz.

The E region would like to welcome Allison Gentles. Allison hails from Scotland, and she and her husband, Derek, are living in the Pittsburgh area for a two year period. Allison is doing research in tissue regeneration at the University of Pittsburgh. She recently received her PhD. from the University of Glasgow. She is likely to be competing around the Games, so please welcome her. Allison also has her Judging credentials, but since she is still competing, at present she judges only those 16 and under. Glad to have you with us, Allison!

The Marguerite Reid Memorial trophies are presented to two dancers, one from the Junior Premier category and the other from the Senior Premier category. These dancers are chosen by the Delco Workshop teachers for demonstrating dancing that is full of strength and joy while at the same time working hard and persevering to improve. The 2007 Junior Trophy was awarded to Claire MacMillan and the Senior Trophy to Laura Donlan.

Midwest

Congratulations to Jennifer (Miller) Pierson and husband Rodney who welcomed Ellie Jordyn Pierson into their family. Ellie was born on Monday, February 26th at 8:10 AM. She weighed 10 pounds, 8 ounces and was 21.5 inches long. Her big brothers, Nate & Caden, are very excited (and are already overprotective of her!)



Congrats of Bree Brownlee's student, Katie Scarlett Kaminski who was crowned a member of the Alma Queen of Scots court, by taking 1st Runner-Up after the interview and pageant in February. Katie will reign over of the 40th Anniversary of the Alma Highland Festival this May along with the Queen and other member of the court.



In August 2006, Beth Swinehart had a big weekend: she got married on Saturday the 26th to Jeff Risley and graduated with her master's degree in Natural Resources on Sunday the 27th. Congratulations Beth!



Congrats to Anne Stapleton's student Katherine Siochi, from Iowa City Iowa, won second place for best junior written paper at the 2006 B.A.T.D. Sadie Simpson Highland Scholarship, held in San Antonio, Texas in November.


Congrats to Kimberly Bennet who was married to Chris Meirose on December 30 and celebrated with a Scottish Christmas wedding. Guests included Suzy Schmitz, who MCDed the dance performance and Florence and Kitty Hart. A dance performance at the reception included some of Kim's dancers from Rhythms of Grace Dance and the Schmitz girls from The Hart School of Dance. If you are planning a Scottish wedding, please contact Kimberly for some great ideas. She rented the kilts and had great service from Colleen at kiltrental.com. The Scottish National tartan was chosen for the kilts and matching ribbon used to decorate the bouquet, cake, etc. If you would like to see more photos go to www.meirose.org





Northwest

The NW Region would like to welcome their newest members...Rachelle Hamaker, Steven MacRae, Kathryn McLean, Alyssa Mehs, R.Liberty Montague, Marcelle Ross and Meghan Tougher. SDTA medal tests were held in November 2006 - The NW extends congratulations to their new associate teachers: Mehgan, Steven, Kathryn, Lynda Ochs, and Allison Obourn.


Kendra Kostresh (9-time regional rep) is getting married early next year. Congrats Kendra!

 Elizabeth Arrowsmith, past USIR Rep, became engaged to Nathan Bales at Christmas. The wedding is planned for Sept 15, 2007. Elizabeth and Nathan are currently attending the University of San Diego working on their PHD's in Computer Science.


 Esther Hoffman has moved to England as she has been accepted into a Masters program at Cambridge University.


 Vicky MacFeidh gave birth January 25th in Valencia Spain to 3.3 pound Isabella. Isabella couldn't wait to see this big beautiful world (and maybe get a headstart on the yacht racing that Mom and Dad are involved in) and decided to make her appearance at 31 weeks! Mom, Dad and Isabella are doing well. Congrats!





 In March of 2006, Julie Santoro was married in a Scottish ceremony done Florida style. On August 31, 2006 she gave birth to her second child, Adrian Patrick. He was born 5 ½ weeks early - 7 lbs, 13 ½ oz and 21 in. long. In 2005, she started a small Scottish performance group Inverness Highland Dance based out of Citrus County, Florida. The dancers in this group do not just dance Highland, but Ballet, Modern, Tap, and other forms. They have a part in the choreographing of dances and bring many elements from other dance forms to marry with Highland Dance. The result is typically a high energy performance to Celtic rock music with dominant Highland dance movements.




 The Las Vegas Highland Dance Association held their 3rd annual Workshop and Show on January 27. This year's guest instructor was 2001 Junior World Champion Kimberlee Couper of Dumbarton, Scotland. She was a delightful instructor and the dancers thoroughly enjoyed spending the day with her. Dancers from Nevada, Utah, and California took advantage of this workshop. That evening, the LVHDA hosted a performance featuring their dancers, Desert Skye Pipes and Drums, Jerralie Orwig on the fiddle, and of course Kimberlee Couper. It was a great evening.

 Congratulations to Natalie Ann Hall Foley and husband Steve who are expecting a baby in March. Natalie, is a former Junior World Champion from Canada and now lives in Orange County.

 Congrats to Trish Nuzzo, who is expecting her second child in September.

 Congratulations to Jessica Kraus and her husband, John who are expecting their first baby in September 2007.

 Lots of baby news in the west, as we extend congratulations to Heather Gregson (Tague) and husband Doug who are expecting their second baby in October and a sibling for Owen who will be two on July 5.

note: No Southeast news provided