

Meet George Fogg, CDSS Lifetime Contributor 2012

by Nikki Herbst



In October, George Fogg will receive the CDSS Lifetime Contribution Award for his many contributions to traditional English and American dance. George has danced since he was a youngster, starting when his parents took him to dances at Grange halls, and continuing when, as a young man, he ventured out to folk dance clubs in the Boston area. Eventually, perhaps inevitably, he began teaching when there was a need, because he couldn't stand the thought of a dance series folding! He's been teaching since 1968, and he's still at it. He is also an organizer who has spent countless hours doing the important yet thankless tasks necessary to start up dance series, run Playford Balls, reinvigorate dance camps, and, perhaps most important, make people welcome onto the dance floor at venues all around the country. George is friendly to everyone and an expert at getting beginners out onto the dance floor, endlessly enthusiastic about dancing and dancers, and full of

good humor that quickly makes everyone around him smile, laugh and dance!

George is a storehouse of stories waiting to be told and passed on. He has maintained the CDS Boston Centre archives since the mid 1980s. Most of the Centre's newsletters these days include a little trip down Memory Lane, thanks to George, who shares old program notes, lists of dances done at past Playford Balls, helpful etiquette tips, and other fun tidbits. In honor of his long years of service, George was made a "Life Member" of Boston Centre in 1982. He still dances with the Boston Centre demo team at NEFFA, and his memories of NEFFA go back to the 1950s, when Ted Sannella was the Folk Chair and the event was held in Cousins Gym, Tufts College (now Tufts University). George remembers, "NEFFA was very 'upper' in those days. The Governor's wife gave a welcome address, followed by a Grand March, which was very impressive, because the two lines

entered from a door behind the stage up at balcony level.”

It was the entrance at NEFFA by the Boston Centre demo group that really caught George’s eye, and he remembers lots of details: “The music was a solo violin, Elise Nichols, and the performers entered in a column, men dressed in all whites and the ladies in solid gored skirts, white blouses, and black jumpers. Solid, simple, smart! The gored skirts would flare into circles on the turn singles. The skirts were all solid colors fashioned from narrow wale corduroy that hangs well. This column formed into a big ring or circle and danced, as I recall, Gathering Peascods, what else I don’t recall. [Longtime friend, now deceased] Ellen Mandigo and I were sitting in the middle of the raised bleacher section. I was overwhelmed with their beauty... [and] in my subtle quiet voice I said, ‘I wonder where they dance?’ I was tapped on my right shoulder and told they dance at the Advent Church, Charles Street, Boston. Ellen and I had a chat and decided we should give it a go some time.” George and Ellen became regulars, of course.

Flash forward a few decades: George has been the Dancing Master at the Hartford Playford Ball in Connecticut, and Sudbury Militia Balls at the Wayside Inn, and Billerica Colonial Minutemen in Massachusetts. He is a member of CDSS, CDS Boston Centre, English Folk Dance and Song Society, New England Folk Festival Association (NEFFA), Pinewoods Morris Men (PMM), and Black Joker Morris Men. He has produced over forty Christmas Country Dance Balls and George Washington Birthday Balls. George has been on hundreds of morris tours, including trips to England with the PMM and Black Jokers. In addition to teaching hundreds of one-night stands, George has taught for two dozen organizations, at a dozen dance camps, and in numerous workshops in over twenty states. His dancing, teaching, organizing and archiving also led to writing. As both an aid to scholars and dancers now and a legacy for those to come, George has published four books co-authored with Kitty Keller and the popular “Neal Book” co-authored with Rich Jackson, all of which are invaluable to our dance community (and available at CDSS).

Other organizations of which George has

been a member are 7th Degree Patrons of Husbandry Grange (over sixty years, including holding various offices) and the South End Historical Society of Boston.

In addition to dance, George has an abiding interest—glass. He has been an antiques and collectibles dealer since 1970 and is a noted convention speaker at such prestigious venues as the National Duncan Glass Society in Washington, Pennsylvania, and the National Imperial Glass Society in Bellaire, Ohio. He has lectured on glass at the meetings of many historical societies, social organizations and antique dealers associations, and has been a participant in glass identification panels. He created a glass display for the Amesbury Public Library in Amesbury, Massachusetts, and has several publications (as well as some in progress) used by glass collectors nationwide. He is an esteemed researcher in the American glass industry and will be bringing some pieces to his celebration. Please refrain from combining your love of spontaneous dancing with your examination of these lovely pieces.

George met the man who would become his life partner, Frank Maloney, in the 1950s. Together they worked in the antiques business for many, many years. Frank didn’t dance, but he knew better than to try to keep George from dancing! Frank passed away in 2010 after fifty-five years of partnership with George. Had they come of age in a different era, I feel certain those of us who know George would have enjoyed Frank as a nondancing part of the extended dance family.

Spending time with George always involves laughing. He’s not afraid to laugh at himself, either, and likes to share things he calls “Fogg Tidbits,” like this one: “I had never see the name Jockey to the Fair-O written out. I always thought it was Jockey to the Pharaoh!” Other stories are full of interesting references to history and personal memories. Here are a few excerpts:

“My parents belonged to the Patrons of Husbandry (Grange), No. 128 Amesbury. One of the members, John Clark, became Santa Claus. He would jump around, acting jolly, etc. My mother told me later the first time Santa came I was scared and cried and cried. However, as I grew older I overcame my fear because there was always a present under the tree with my name on it. After Santa left, there



Graduation from the University of New Hampshire, 1953; courtesy George Fogg

would be some dancing. It was at one of these Grange parties I danced The Virginia Reel with my mother..."

"After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, life took on a new avenue. Everything was for the war effort. The 4-H Club met upstairs in the Salisbury Plains one-engine firehouse. We had scrap drives and [learned] how to



Above: George Washington Birthday Ball, 2009; below: George with longtime friend, Ellen Mandigo, 2005; photos courtesy George Fogg



grow our own food, what to do in bombings, defense, health care, etc. I raised two pigs as part of the 4-H project and war effort...After high school in 1946 I enlisted in the US Army. I took training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and was sent over to Germany in early 1947...I graduated in 1953 from Thompson School of Agriculture, University of New Hampshire, Durham, N.H. and found employment with Joel T. Whittemore, Stoneham, MA, basically a carnation grower. I began working in the large plant and one day Lee Whittemore asked me if I'd like to go square dancing [at the YWCA in Cambridge, MA]. I leapt at the opportunity. Little did I know how the original invitation by Lee to attend a square dance would add to and change my life forever."

Beyond the six-page, single-spaced "dance résumé," forty-five-page "personal dance history" and twenty-one page "how I got started in dance" story, all sent to me by George, is the fellow I treasure most. He's the guy who makes sure beginners are welcomed onto the dance floor, who takes the time to send along a joke or a story because he thinks it will make me laugh, who himself laughs readily and tears up,

full to the brim with memories of times with special friends. He's funny, tireless, welcoming, generous, stubborn, outspoken, irrepressible and inspiring. I am proud to have him as a friend.

On October 4, just ten days before his big party, George will turn eighty-four. He is very much looking forward to this gathering of his friends and coworkers, where he will be toasted, perhaps roasted,

and at the center of the merriment. Please join us to thank George and celebrate his many years of helping to spread the joy of dancing and community, and to wish him the happiest of birthdays. I am thrilled that George will receive the Lifetime Contribution Award for 2012. He has indeed spent a lifetime contributing to the country dance community.

Nikki Herbst lives in Iowa City, Iowa, and dances wherever and whenever she can.

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**Join us in celebration of
George Fogg,
Lifetime Contributor 2012,
awarded by the
Country Dance & Song Society**

**Sunday, October 14, 2012,
Payson Park Church
365 Belmont St, Belmont, MA
2:00-5:00 pm**

**For info or to RSVP:
Judy, judyericks@comcast.net,
or Nikki, russiababy@aol.com**