



DEAN LINSCOTT AND THE KOPACHKA DANCERS

Dean Linscott was a talented man – a leader, a teacher, a dancer, a hiker, a gardener, a person with many interests, in the dance world and beyond. He was a man who put his heart, soul and endless energy into all undertakings.

Born to parents who taught folkdance in Bakersfield, Dean took an active interest in dance in his teen years. He was a member of his high school marching band until he was bitten by the dance bug and at that point dance became more important to him than playing music.

When Dean accepted a position to teach at the UC Medical School in San Francisco, he and his then-wife Nancy moved to Mill Valley. They looked for a group that danced for fun and did performances, that mixed line dances and couple dances in a balance to their liking. When they didn't find what they were seeking they formed their own group, the Kopachka Dancers of Mill Valley.

There was a wonderful camaraderie within the group, thanks to the energy and talent of both Dean and Nancy. In addition to occasional weekend snow trips, a backpacking trip, learning to decorate Ukrainian Easter eggs, and sewing dance costumes, each year Kopachka held a dance weekend for its members. A guest teacher, recognized as a leader in a particular dance nationality, was invited to share his or her expertise. While some new dances were taught, the focus was more on learning the fine-points and styling of a particular dance type. This way, everybody in the group had the opportunity to learn first-hand from expert teachers. The guest teacher was also invited to share related folklore. Johnny Pappas taught the words to some of the Greek dances we already knew, Jan Sejda taught Polish paper cutting, etc.

Jan Sejda also related to Kopachka members the celebration of St. John's Eve in Poland where women decorated wreaths with flowers and candles and sent them floating down the river. The young men would rescue a wreath, and then dance with (and maybe subsequently marry) the girl whose wreath he had. Dean thought this would be perfect material for a performance. After learning the dances, we had wonderful fun decorating the wreaths with real flowers. Three candles (tiny, rigged flashlights) were put on each wreath, then at dusk (in our case, as the stage darkened) we flicked on the

"candles", set them on a roll of cellophane paper which was reeled-in from offstage, thus making the wreaths appear to float along a "river".

While not the focus, performance played a significant role in club activities. Some of the performance material was culled from the many movies Dean taped while on vacation in Europe. A memorable performance was the Romanian Loggers Dance that Dean taped while it was being performed in Europe and later taught to the Kopachka men. It required the use of hoe-like instruments to carry a 12' log as the dance was being performed. This particular dance was chosen for an exhibition at a festival in Santa Maria, but transporting the log was a problem. Dean's solution was to rent the bus and driver who provided transport to those working at the U. C. Med Center, so the log (and the dancers) traveled to Santa Maria together.

While dancing was always Dean's love, in the early days that love did not stretch to one dance genre - tangos. One summer when Dean was on vacation, club member Fred Sweger, with great glee, got busy and taught a dance never before done at Kopachka but often included on Federation programs, Tango Poquito. I regret we don't have a movie of Dean's response as we "performed" it for him on his return!

Kopachka was fortunate to have a "feeder" group when the high school P.E. class to which Nancy taught folkdance became so enthusiastic that a number of them joined the Kopachka Dancers. Under Dean's tutelage many of these became talented dancers, some joining the performing groups that were popular in the early 70s. What a wonderful and impressive tribute it was to Dean that so many of these ex-Kopachka dancers came from so many parts of the country to the Celebration of Life that was held in his memory in May. They traveled from New York, from Washington State, from Oregon and from Southern California to participate.

In addition to being directors of the Kopachka Dancers, the Linscotts successfully ran the Mendocino Folklore Camp after the death of its founder, and also masterminded, and for many years ran, the North-South Teacher Training weekends.

Dean will be remembered for his incredible memory for dance detail, his enthusiasm for teaching dance, his talent as a dancer - and an incredible, incomparable love of ice cream! He died March 24th at his home in Santa Rosa after a battle with cancer.

**May his spirit live in our hearts and his dance
enthusiasm permeate the world of dance.**

Margaret C. Harrison