Springfield Contra Dance

by Tom Niedermeyer

They stand in straight lines, like untwisted DNA on the lacquered honey maple floor of the college gym. The rah boo shrill trill echo of tribal games and sour splatter of sweat on red blue white lines circles still linger in the steel pipe jungle of space age vinyl bleachers.

On the make shift stage the caller offers urges pleads a recipe down to the idling throng of waiting dancers who casually assemble the ingredients into neural pathways and the spatial patterns of the waiting dance.

The feedback scream of the PA conveys live mics to the members of the band, still twisting bottle caps and tuning pegs in practiced boredom. All are ready and the fiddle's reedy buzz spits out the count of four potatoes.

As the clucking banjo, crooning mandolin and throbbing bass join in, the snake of dancers starts to roil. In hall-of-mirror segments of four they wheel spin twist in synchronous symmetries, their feet the throbbing of a communal drum.

Each turn of the dance repeats the complex undulations and contractions of dancing pairs, progressing up and down each line. An ever changing mix of hands and faces oblivious to sweat pain time bound by a fever of ecstatic now.

Tom Niedermeyer lives in Fairfield, Iowa. Our thanks to Gloria Johnson who sent us his poem. Solefest, which inspired the poem, is a dance weekend sponsored by the Traditional Dance and Music Society of Springfield, Missouri, held each October. Gloria says last year's event "was a rip-roaring good time! Music by Flapjack, calling by Cis Hinkle. [We had] folks from the Midwest and places beyond.. Come dance with us!"

© 2001 Tom Niedermeyer; published in the CDSS News, issue #165, March/April 2002.