



MARCH 2006

Volume 31, Number 3

# TFTM *news*

The Tucson Friends of Traditional Music

## LIVE AND LOCAL

by Dale Tersey

Tucson is blessed with a diverse and colorful musical community of talented instrumentalists. At least once a month for our regular contra dance, we have an Open Band composed of volunteer musicians who sit in and play. A frequently asked question is: Where do these people come from and how do they know what music to play? One answer is the Rincon Jam.

Every first and third Tuesday night, musicians and spectators gather at the Rincon Market deli at the corner of Sixth Street and Tucson Boulevard (2513 E 6th St).

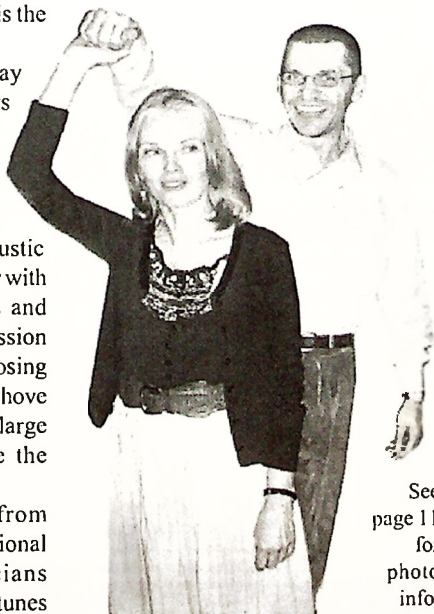
The Jam is a freeform, acoustic music session where people gather with their instruments to play tunes and learn tunes from others. The session starts about 8:00 and runs until closing time at 10:00 pm. The musicians shove tables out of the way and sit in a large circle where everyone can see the each other.

The repertoire is drawn from several standard sources of traditional music. Although the musicians generally play by ear and pick up tunes

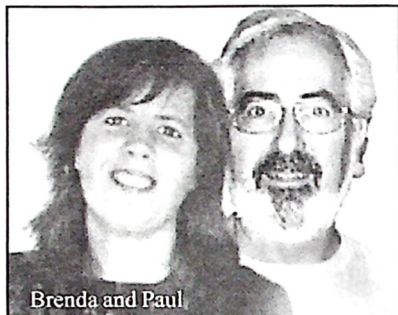
from each other, they also use written sheet music to practice at home and get down some basic fingering. For several decades, the *Tucson Tune Book* has been a constant source of traditional tunes. A second good source has been *The Fiddler's Fakebook*.

Nine years ago, the Portland Collection of over 300 traditional tunes was published and just last year a second volume, the Portland Collection

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See  
page 11  
for  
photo  
info.



Brenda and Paul

## MIKE SMITH MEMORIAL FUND

by Paul and Brenda from The Folk Shop

**W**e would like to thank everyone who made charitable donations in honor of Mike Smith.

Inspired by your generosity, The Folk Shop has matched your monies. With the dollars collected, we made a contribution to the music director, Mr. Valenzuela, at Davis School. In our eyes, Valenzuela is an angel. His program, devoted to revitalizing interest in ethnic and folk music at the school, has had a tremendously positive influence on the children.

With the money collected in Mike's honor, we hope that economically disadvantaged young people will have a chance to enhance their lives through the wonderful gift of music. Sharing the joy of music was what Mike loved and this is a beautiful way to keep his memory alive.

The Folk Shop - 520-881-7147  
folks@thefolkshop.com  
www.thefolkshop.com

TFTM Info 520-408-6181



WWW.TFTM.ORG

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: DEENA FISHBEIN

**D**ecena, a Tucson mid-town resident, has been a TFTM member for about a year but she has been dancing for twenty-five years.

Decena has a non-profit management consulting business. "It's a new venture," Decena said, "although I've worked for non-profits for 20 years. My focus is on arts and environmental groups, financial/accounting and database tasks."

A dancer with Echohawk, Decena explains that Echohawk is a small, local dance company that has its roots in contact improvisational dancing. "We performed at an orphanage in Mexico and various places in Tucson last spring. We went to Vancouver last Christmas and went snow boarding, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

Right now, Decena is in the process of landscaping her backyard with help of friends who are native plant gurus.

The live and lively music, dancing with so many different people, and the wonderful movement are her favorite things about contra dancing. She gives a thumbs-down to "the few people who have a serious/intense, as opposed to exuberant, approach to dancing."



## ABC NOTATION

Bruce Thomson  
(bthomson@unm.edu)

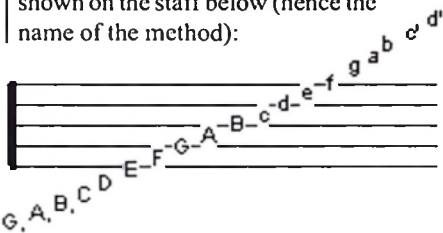
Anyone who has transcribed music on a computer knows the difficulties associated with that process. Unlike word processing or spreadsheets, no one has developed an accepted standard for storing written music files. The tunes I transcribe using one software package cannot be read by somebody using a different package.

In the early 1990s Chris Walshaw developed a very clever way of scoring music using ASCII notation (i.e. the letters and symbols available on a computer keyboard) which has come to be known as **abc notation**. Using this notation, it is possible to easily and efficiently write tunes in a format that can be typed into a computer and shared with the world.

Traditional music is especially amenable to abc notation, where most fiddle tunes can be written and stored as 8 or 10 lines of text. Here, briefly, is a summary of the abc syntax.

Each tune consists of an information field and a body. The information field contains all of the information about the tune except the music. It begins with an X and ends with a K (the key

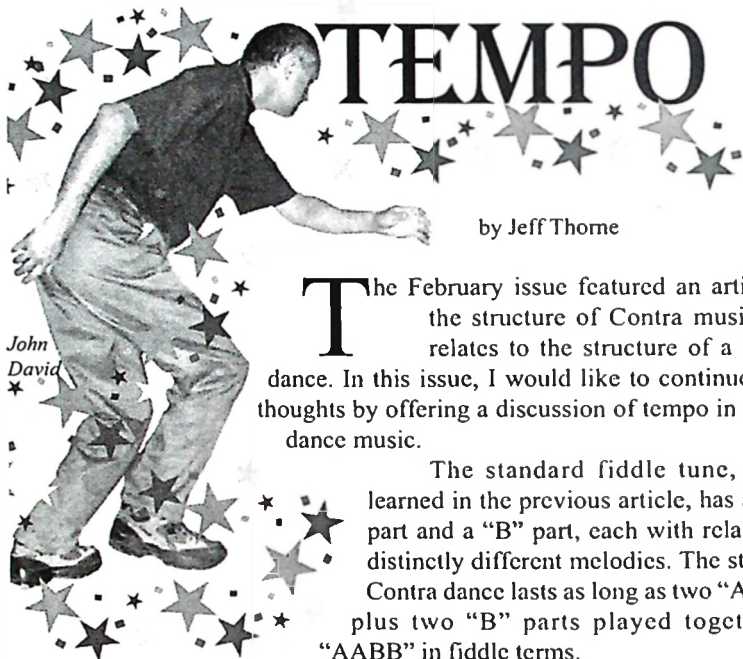
signature). Entries are preceded by a letter which identifies the type of information and can include titles (T), key signature (K), rhythm (R), composer (C), meter (M) and other information about the tune. The key signature is specified with a capital letter and # or b for sharp or flat. The notes in abc notation are represented by letters as shown on the staff below (hence the name of the method):



The information field identifies the default note length (L), key (K) and rhythm (R). The tune appears in the body of the text file, and is just a list of the notes in the sequence they appear. To get longer or shorter notes a multiplier is placed after the letter. In 2/4 time the default is a sixteenth note, A2 is an eighth note, A4 is a quarter note, A/2 is a 32<sup>nd</sup> note and so on. The symbols ^, =, and \_ are used before a note to generate a sharp, natural, and flat respectively. Each measure is delineated by a | (finally, a use for a totally unused symbol on your keyboard). There are a lot of other features that can be added including virtually all of the notation used in conventional sheet music, including the ability to add guitar chords and words.

*Bruce M. Thomson is Regents Professor and Director of the Graduate Program, Department of Civil Engineering at the University of New Mexico Albuquerque, NM. Bruce writes a monthly column for the New Mexico Folk Music & Dance Society (FolkMADS) and has agreed to share his column with TFTM.*





John  
David

# TEMPO

by Jeff Thorne

The February issue featured an article on the structure of Contra music as it relates to the structure of a Contra dance. In this issue, I would like to continue those thoughts by offering a discussion of tempo in Contra dance music.

The standard fiddle tune, as we learned in the previous article, has an "A" part and a "B" part, each with related but distinctly different melodies. The standard Contra dance lasts as long as two "A" parts plus two "B" parts played together or "AABB" in fiddle terms.

How long it takes to dance once through the whole dance or to play once through the whole tune, however, is a function of tempo. The faster the tempo, the less time the dancers will have and the faster they must move to complete the dance on time.

To help quantify this relationship, I would like to introduce the concept of steps. To my way of thinking, the standard Contra dance is 64 steps long. If the entire dance consisted of just two moves: "down the hall four in-line" followed by "come on back," then the first move would be 32 steps long as the fiddle plays "AA" and the second move would also be 32 steps long as the fiddle plays "BB." You would literally take 32 steps down the hall (a very long hall presumably), turn around, and take 32 steps back up again while the fiddle plays "AABB" at which point the dance would start all over again.

I prefer to talk about steps instead of beats because "steps" is a dancer's term, while beats is a musician's term. Beats, measures, and time signatures determine how a fiddle tune will appear when it is written down on a piece of sheet music. Musicians have to worry about whether a tune is being counted in single or double time.

Dancers always need to think about steps, no matter how the musicians

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are defining and counting beats, measures and time signatures. As far as tempo is concerned, if the standard dance is 64 steps long and it takes, say, 32 seconds to complete it, then you would be dancing at a rate of 2 steps per second (64 divided by 32). Therefore, in 60 seconds (1 minute) you would be taking 120 steps for a dance tempo of 120 steps per minute (60 seconds).

The standard metronome used by musicians to keep time is calibrated in beats per minute (bpm). By the metronome standard, 120 beats per minute is exactly equivalent to 120 steps per minute.

In other words, if a dancer were to take one step to each tick of a metronome set at 120 bpm then the standard 64 step dance would take exactly 32 seconds to complete. But what if the metronome is set at 116 bpm? How long will the dance take then?

The answer is a simple ratio: 120 divided by 116x32 equals 33.1 seconds. Likewise, at 112 bpm (120 divided by 112x32) the dance would take 34.3 seconds to complete. So, by using a stop watch (or a wrist watch), you can tell what the dance tempo is in beats per minute by using the ratio given above.

Clock the start of the first dance figure and time it until the start of the next successive figure or, more easily, just clock the time it takes for the fiddle to play "AABB." I have done this for live dances and recorded dance music. The large majority of Contra dance tempos lie in the 112 to 120 bpm range.

Musicians may struggle to play at exact tempos for particular dances.

It is worth noting that to go from a "slow" dance speed of 112 bpm to a "fast" dance speed of 120 bpm requires the dancers to take only 2.3 seconds off their total time for 64 steps. In other words, each step has to be only .036 of a second faster (2.3 divided by 64). There isn't much of a difference if you

think about it mathematically, but you can feel the difference out on the dance floor.

I would invite the reader to try this out at home. The next time you go for a walk, try to walk 64 steps in exactly 34.3, 33.1, and 32 seconds, (112 bpm, 116 bpm, and 120 bpm respectively) and see how each feels to you. Do you have a preference? Do you like the slower or faster tempos? Does it depend on the particular dance? Are there regional differences? Perhaps we can explore these questions in future articles.



## FOLKMADNESS

by Jorga Riggenbach

One of my favorite dance camps is the Annual FolkMADness Music and Dance Camp, Memorial Day Weekend, May 26-29, 2006, at New Mexico Tech, in Socorro, New Mexico.

From Tucson, it's a six-hour drive to Socorro which is 75 miles south of Albuquerque. Camp attendees sleep in the campus dorms, eat at the school cafeteria and dance on a marvelous sprung, wood floor in the old gym building.

The event is well-attended and beautifully organized. I especially like the location. The campus has lots of huge cottonwood trees and grass. Socorro is high enough, 4,579 feet, and far enough north that it is still cool in May. Once you park your car and haul your gear to your room, you are set for the weekend. Rooms have twin beds, two desks/chairs, and a shared bath with another couple. You must bring your own bedding, pillows, and towels. There is an outdoor swimming pool. It is relaxing to be able to easily walk to between the venues.

The Dance Camp is fairly evenly divided between musicians and dancers. During the day, there are casual jams in the shade and at night, after the dance, there is a big jam where everyone winds down.

The cafeteria-style food is plentiful and varied and a band plays for most meals.

There are always Tucsonans there and it's a great place to spend time with old friends and meet new friends.

One of my favorite events is the Thrift Store Prom on Saturday night. Everyone is encouraged to wear outrageous outfits and it an hilarious evening.

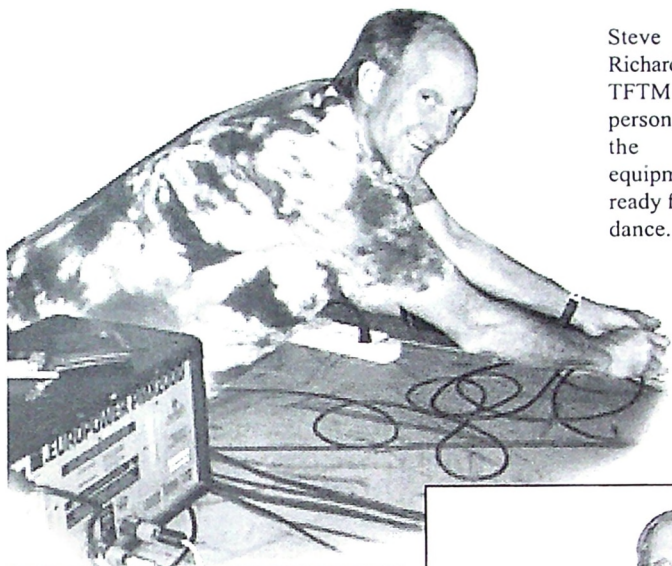
I'm especially excited about the camp this year because it will feature a fabulous English Country band, Goldcrest. I have been to dance weekends twice before where they played and I can tell you that they are a marvelous group. I am so excited about seeing/hearing them again. Also, MacAdam-Somer, Larry Unger, Gaye Fifer, Sam Bartlett, John Harrison and David Millstone will be there.

For general and registration information, go to [www.folkmads.org](http://www.folkmads.org) or contact Nancy Ford, 505-281-7837, [nancford@nmia.com](mailto:nancford@nmia.com).

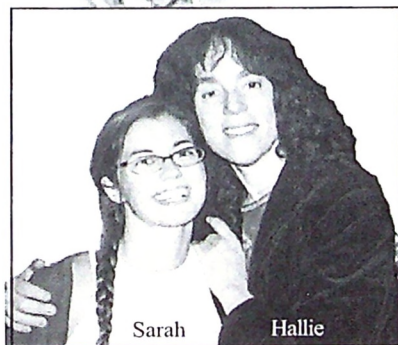
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*Tell us about your favorite dance camp. Or tell us about your experience at the dance-camp-from-hell. Send your story to [newsletter@tftm.org](mailto:newsletter@tftm.org).*





Steve  
Richard,  
TFTM sound  
person, gets  
the  
equipment  
ready for a  
dance.

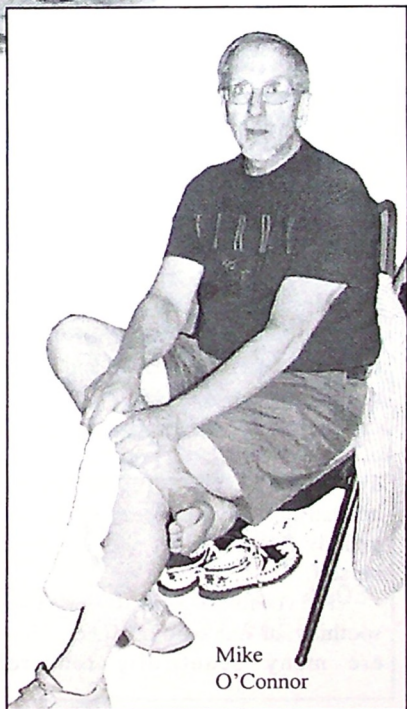


Sarah

Hallie



Gracie  
Copler



Mike  
O'Connor

## REVIEW: LULLABIES FOR NEW BEGINNINGS:

A collection of bedtime songs featuring Tucson women singers and songwriters. Mama Mama Music, 2005.

by Russ Healy

The somnolent effects of lullabies begin with the familiarity of the voice that sings them. Those under the age of three might not find many of these voices familiar, but veterans of the Tucson music scene certainly will. The singers include sisters **Nancy and Lisa McCallion**, **Catherine Zavala**, **Lisa Otey**, **Karla Brownlee**, **Kathleen Williamson**, **Jo Wilkinson**, and Round the House with **Claire Zucker**. Claire also did the graphic design for the CD.

The familiar feeling extends to song selection as well. The CD starts with a couple of bars of *Brahms's Lullaby (Wiegenlied)*, performed by **Namoli Brennet**, and includes classics such as the traditional *All the Pretty Little Horses*, and *All My Trials*, and Irving Berlin's *Russian Lullaby*.

A rendition by **Karla Brownlee** of the Edward Lear poem, *The Owl and the Pussycat*, tugged at my heartstrings. My mother sang this to a melody that I suspect she composed herself.

The vocals are generally sweet and soothing, as one would expect. There are many beautifully rendered

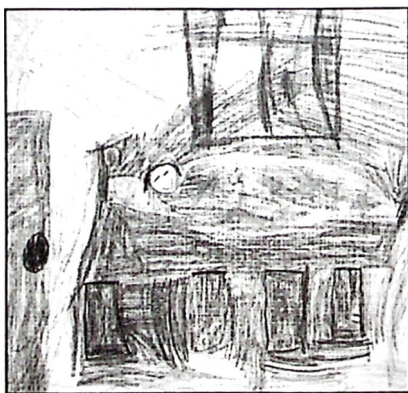
harmonies and the instrumental backing is spare and simple—primarily guitar or piano with occasional flourishes from violin.

**Heather Hardy's** fiddle on *Go to Sleep* was particularly arresting for me.

The CD contains twenty-two selections, by twenty-two principal performers with enough variety that I stayed awake through the whole thing.

I recommend this CD; you'll enjoy the variety of vocalists, instruments, and styles, as well as the occasional humor and local Tucson feel. If you purchase your CD directly from the organization, all proceeds go to **New Beginnings for Women and Children**, a non-profit, non-sectarian organization, founded in Tucson to help homeless women and children become economically self-sufficient. What could be better for your next CD?

To purchase a copy locally, or for more information, call 520-325-8800 or go to: [www.lullabiesfornewbeginnings.com](http://www.lullabiesfornewbeginnings.com).





Live & Local - Continued from page 2

*The Red Haired Boy, St. Anne's Reel, and Star of the County Down.*

Some musicians who attend the Jam are professional performers while many other talented and enthusiastic participants view music as a favorite avocation.

During the February third-Tuesday Jam, the core of a new contra band that was formed called the **Jumping Chollas**. They played at the February 25 dance as their first professional gig together.

The Rincon Jam is a great place to bring your instrument and your interest and start to learn some of the tunes that make traditional music in Tucson so much fun.

It's also a great place to get a bite to eat. The Market has been a Tucson landmark since 1926. There's a lovely market and grill combined with some of the best deli selections in town. Even if you aren't a musician, you are welcome to come to the Jam and enjoy fabulous food and some foot-tapping tunes.



Rincon Market  
2513 E 6th St  
Tucson, AZ 85716 - 4403  
(520) 327-6653

## ENEWS - WHAT IS IT AND HOW TO USE IT

by Lorien Tersey

**H**ow do you get the latest, up-to-the-minute, traditional music and dance community news? Subscribe to the TFTM Enews mailing list.

Three or four times a month, usually a few days before a dance, I send out dance reminder and an announcement of upcoming events. It is a free service to members and non-members alike. We never share our email list.

You can subscribe to our list by sending a note to [website@tftm.org](mailto:website@tftm.org) or you can sign up at any TFTM event.

Do you already receive the TFTM Enews? If so, you know how handy it is to get notices and reminders about dance and music events, but did you know that you can also contribute news to it? I try to send the enews out a few days before TFTM dances and I like to include other things when I do. If you know of an event that might be of interest to fans of traditional music and dance, I would be happy to include it. All submissions should be short and include basic information on where, when, what and how much. Events listed do not have to be put on by TFTM or its members. However, TFTM events will take priority if there

are many competing events, and some notices may not be used depending on space and the appropriateness of content to the traditional music community.

Please do not send graphics, html or use special fonts—stick to plain text and, again, keep it short and simple so that I don't need to edit it. Send contributions to me at [contadance@tftm.org](mailto:contadance@tftm.org)

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### ABOUT THE COVER PHOTO

**T**FTM dances attract dancers from all over the world.

The cover photo features Laura from Las Cruces, New Mexico and Ugo Merlone from Torino, Italy.

Ugo, a mathematics professor at the University of Turin, was in Tucson for about a month as a University of Arizona visiting scholar.

"I have been going to English and American Dances Festivals for years," Ugo said.

New dances and nice patterns attract him to contra dancing. He doesn't enjoy dancing with "people swinging too fast." Ugo left Tucson on February 26 to return to Italy.



## CHARLIE POOLE

by Bruce Hamilton

In the early part of the 20th century, recording companies found that there was quite a market for folk music from the rural south. **Uncle Dave Macon and Gid Tanner** traveled to New York City to record and their music became very popular throughout the country. One of the most successful southern recording artists was **Charlie Poole**, from Randolph County, NC.

Charlie was born in 1892, and made his first recordings in 1925 for Columbia Records. Over the next five years, he recorded almost 100 tracks with other southern musicians including **Posey Rorer, Lonny Austin, and Odell Smith** (fiddles), **Roy Harvey and Bob Hoke** (guitar), and **Lucy Terry** (piano).

In contrast to Gid Tanner, Charlie's music emphasized his singing and he is considered to be one of the forerunners of modern country music.

It's interesting to contrast the topics of his songs with those of today. His repertoire included many songs about mother and family, as well as tin pan alley songs like *Moving Day*, *If the River Was Whiskey* (*Hesitation Blues*), and *Look Before You Leap* (*The Bald Headed End of the Broom*).

Although the musicianship is a bit ragged by modern standards, many of

the songs have nice lyrics and melodies that have aged well.

Two new reissues of Charlie Poole recordings have recently been published. *Charlie Poole with the North Carolina Ramblers and the Highlanders* is a 4-CD set released by JSP Records of England, while Columbia offers *You Ain't Talking to Me - Charlie Poole and the Roots of Country Music*. While the Columbia set includes a number of cuts by contemporary musicians, the JSP collection consists solely of re-issues of the original cuts.

Some of these cuts are pretty raw. I have several LP reissues of some of this material and I remember playing them over and over trying to learn the lyrics through the pops

and hisses of the early recording technology. Years later I heard Mike Seeger say that he'd done the same thing, and finally concluded that even if Charlie were standing right next to you, you probably still couldn't understand all of the words he was singing because his diction was influenced by his choice of liquid refreshments.

Charlie lived a hard, restless life, traveling throughout the south and east playing music and working in the southern mills when music wouldn't pay the bills. As with so many musicians, he had a long term relationship with the bottle that likely contributed to his death in 1931 at age 39 of a heart attack.



## ABC Notation

X:49

T:Wild Horse

M:C

L:1/8

S:Charlie Poole, JSP 7734

N:Alternate titles: Stony Point

N:Transcribed by Bruce Thomson

K:G

|z6((3DEF)|:"G"G2ged2ed|B2gedB AF|G2ged2ed|BAGB "D"AGED|  
 "G"G2ged2ed|B2gedB AF|G2ge  
 dBA d[[1"D"BAFD"G"G2(3DEF)|:[2"D"BAFD"G"G4||  
 |:"Em"e3ee3g|fgaf gfed|e3ee3g|fgaf "G"g4:|  
 |:"G"gfga bgeg|"D"fefg afd|f|"G"gfga bgeg|"D"fgaf "G"g4:|

Wild Horse

## JOIN TUCSON FRIENDS OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC!

Membership benefits include: Discounts on many events, including all TFTM events, plus a subscription to this newsletter and free classified listings in the newsletter.

Send this form and your check to TFTM, PO Box 40654, Tucson, AZ 85717-0654

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New

Family \$18

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Yes, include me in the TFTM contact email listing

I am interested in helping with:  Newsletter  Sound

Dance Camp  Contra Dances  Special Events



Holy Cow! Don't  
let your TFTM  
membership lapse!

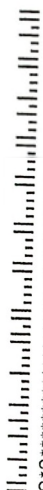
Check your  
mailing label on  
the back of the  
newsletter for  
your membership  
expiration date.

Oh, the heart-  
break of lapsed  
membership.

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ALECK AND VIVIAN MACKINNON

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