



# Bay Area Country Dancer

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[www.bacds.org](http://www.bacds.org)

## American Week 2019 and Beyond: It Takes a Village to create a Camp

By David Buesch and Jen Bamesberger

BACDS American Week 2019 (or AmWeek) has come and gone, and has left us with lots of experiences and memories. There was an incredible staff including Wake Up Robin (Audrey Knuth, Andrew VanNorstrand, Amy Englesberg, Max Newman), The Figments (Anna Patton, Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, Owen Morrison), Susan Petrick, and Luke Donforth. They all did what they do so well, playing for and calling dances throughout the day and night, and playing for nightly mini-concerts. This year, all dances were called using gender-neutral role names of Larks and Ravens to encourage everyone to dance with everyone. The staff led small group sessions on music and/or dancing where campers were able to focus in on and experiment with aspects of the music or dance. Many of these sessions were unique opportunities and special moments. Each day there was Waltzing Before Breakfast organized by Elizabeth Todd, a wonderful variety of camper-led pop-up short sessions (under the title of Potpourri), crafts led by Bowen Lee, gentle yoga led by Cheryl McKinney, and after 10 pm acoustic music for dancing or jams, singing, and game playing.



There were many opportunities for campers to try out different things or hone their craft, and from which they took away their own experiences and helped create music and dances that can be shared with the general contra dance community. Susan led a Callers' Workshop, Amy and Audrey led the Camper Band, and these came together for the camper-led Wednesday night dance which is always wonderful and creative. Luke led a choreography session that created two dances, both of which were called during camp and/or the AmWeek Friday Night Gala that was open to the public. During the auction (which helps with scholarships), one camper commissioned a dance by Luke, and another commissioned a tune by the merged efforts of members of Wake Up Robin and The Figments.

As the 38th BACDS American Week Dance and Music Camp, this week followed a long tradition of wonderful and often unique experiences. However, there were only 56 campers, and while most felt a strong camaraderie within the small group, enrollment was far below the number to make the camp financially viable. It was a significant drop in attendance, and the lowest in a slightly decreasing trend since 2014. Numerous campers who have attended AmWeek quite regularly had other commitments or places that they chose to be this year, but it seems likely that was not the only contributing factor to such a large decrease. True, many dance weekends and camps across the country are struggling (or at least are challenged) and not filling. We tried offering partial-week attendance, a sliding scale fee, and gender-neutral calling, but these changes did not result in sufficient attendance.



Because the current camp model cannot be expected to avoid another year of financial losses, the BACDS Board has decided to put AmWeek on hiatus for the time being, and we are not currently programming for 2020. This does not mean AmWeek is over; however, it needs an infusion of enthusiasm and energy to consider how it might be revitalized, or what sort of event might be created to take its place. We need reconsideration, redefinition, and reimagination for all the who, what, when, and where aspects of the camp. If you are keen to share insights and ideas, we invite you to join a conversation this fall to envision what might come next. You don't need to commit to organizing the next incarnation--though you could! If you know that the lack of AmWeek will leave a ragged hole in your summer, funnel some energy into revitalizing our lovely camp.

Share your ideas through this **BACDS American Week 2020 and Beyond survey** ([bacds.org/amweeksurvey](http://bacds.org/amweeksurvey)), where you can also indicate your timing preferences for a phone or in-person conversation. Or, contact us directly at [amweek-manager@bacds.org](mailto:amweek-manager@bacds.org). It is true, it takes a village to create a camp, and the future is ours to make.

## In Memoriam: Susie Langdon-Kass

By Victoria Williams

It was with sadness that the English Country Dance community learned of the death of Susie Langdon Kass. Many, and I mean many, of us in the ECD community had met Susie first in our lives as Scottish Country dancers. Susie brought the same energy and enthusiasm to her more-lately-found ECD world by tirelessly promoting the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday Advanced English Country Dance. She was always the one to provide healthy snacks to counteract the preponderance of sugary treats at the evening break. I'm pretty sure she started the practice of washing the plastic forks and spoons so they could be re-used and wouldn't end up in the landfill. I know Susie taught a number of dancers how to lace their dance shoes so they wouldn't loosen or come undone, something she had been showing Scottish Country dancers for decades.

We miss you, Susie Kass, and we thank you for making our world a better place.

## Susi Ostlund

Less than two weeks before the Dancer went to print, our community was saddened at the news of the passing of Susi Ostlund after a long illness. Her courage, her sunshine smile and her delightful sense of humor will be sorely missed.

A tribute to Susi will be included in the Winter edition of the Dancer.

## Thank you, all Volunteers!

BACDS wishes to express thanks to all volunteers who help keep our many events running smoothly. We couldn't exist without you!

If you know of any volunteers whom you believe deserve special recognition, let us know and we will note them in future editions of the newsletter.

## Upcoming Events

|                          |   |                |
|--------------------------|---|----------------|
| Fri, Oct 18 – Sun Oct 20 | <b>Fall Frolick at Monte Toyon camp</b> | <i>Various</i> |
| Sat, October 26          | <b>Halloween Ball in Palo Alto</b>      | <i>TBA</i>     |
| December (date TBD)      | <b>No-Snow Ball</b>                     | <i>TBA</i>     |

See [bacds.org](http://bacds.org) for more information. For events sponsored by our neighbors, see [nbcdds.org](http://nbcdds.org) (NBCDS), [sactocds.org](http://sactocds.org) (SCDS), [sffmc.org](http://sffmc.org) (SFFMC), [santacruzdance.org](http://santacruzdance.org) (TDSC), [montereycontradance.org](http://montereycontradance.org) (MCDC), [cccds.org](http://cccds.org) (CCCD), [facebook.com/NorthOaklandSquareDance](https://facebook.com/NorthOaklandSquareDance) (NOSD), [lfd.org/sf](http://lfd.org/sf) (QCD)