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## Items to Note:

The Alumni Connections Newsletter team is excited to introduce our new format! Each issue you can expect consistent articles and interviews. Not only does this give you something to look forward to each issue, but we hope it gives you the opportunity to provide content. Keep reading to find out how you can support and strengthen our newsletter!

If you haven't been directly involved in Highland Dance recently, you might not have realized that FUSTA is now ScotDance USA. FUSTA was the first community system and resource center in the United States. Although it was time for a brand refresh, ScotDance USA is still your go-to for all things Highland Dance in the USA.

## NEWSLETTER INTRODUCTION

- **Update from ScotDance USA:** What's going on with competitions and events throughout the US.
- **Question of the Newsletter:** We love to hear about your favorite memories from your days as a Highland Dancer. Feel free to answer in an email, or tag us on Social Media!
- **Scottish Arts-** Many of you are involved in *other* Scottish Arts outside of Highland Dance. We look forward to featuring alumni who have become involved in other activities like piping, drumming, fiddle, Scottish Country Dancing...
- **A Fling in the Past** aims to showcase our community in the 'real world.' We believe Highland Dancing has shaped all of us in some way, and love hearing about the role Highland Dancing has played in your lives. Our goal is to feature FUSTA Scholarship winners from the past, but we would love to feature any alumni. Read our article on page 3 to get an idea of what we're hoping to show.
- **Featured Association:** Even though you've hung up your ghillies doesn't mean you can't be a part of and give back to the Scottish Community. We will highlight different dance associations around the US, in the hope that you might feel compelled to reach out and join in.

# ScotDance USA UPDATES

After twelve months of not having face-to-face dance competitions, we are finally getting close to opening up the country for competitions once again. During those months of quarantining the Competition Forward Task Force worked on guidelines and recommendations to run competitions safely under COVID protocols, once case numbers started to decrease.

During 2020, the Competition Forward Task Force was created to look into what SDUSA would need to do to keep dancers and attendees safe and healthy if a competition were held when the number of COVID cases dropped. With the help of several SDUSA members who work in health care, the Task Force created guidelines that Organizers need to follow when holding a competition when the country opened up for competitions again. They continue to work in 2021 to update the SDUSA guidelines and help the SDUSA Board in opening up for competitions this June.

ScotDance USA also formed a Task Force to look into the possibility of having virtual competitions. We did send a proposal and video to the RSOBHD, but the decision was made by the RSOBHD that conditions could not be made fair and equitable for all dancers.

After holding several pilot competitions in March which the RSOBHD and SDUSA BOD felt necessary to hold before we scheduled face-to-face competitions, our request to open was approved. As of April 15<sup>th</sup> the United States started registering competitions and dancers. As of June 1, 2021, competitions will start again in the United States. It seems like forever since we have been to a face-to-face competition with our dance friends.

SDUSA now has a new Competition Organizers website with on-line competition registration. All the forms and information for planning and running a competition during COVID can be found there. SDUSA Recommendations for Competitions during COVID should be followed by each Organizer to keep all attendees and dancers healthy and safe.

In addition, SDUSA has been granted a Pre-Premier extension for 2021 by the RSOBHD because of the interruption to dancing caused by the pandemic.

It is going to be an exciting year, and we wish all Organizers the best of luck with their upcoming competitions.

Anne Donlan  
SDUSA Vice President

## Spotlight Question

During your dancing years, what annual Highland games do you remember attending the most? What years (or 'how many years') did you attend these games, and what is your most vivid memory from them?

email us at [alumni@scotdanceusa.com](mailto:alumni@scotdanceusa.com) or tag us at [facebook.com/AlumniConnectionsSDUSA](https://www.facebook.com/AlumniConnectionsSDUSA)

# SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING

What could be more easy, fun, and natural than a Scottish Highland Dancer getting involved with Scottish Country Dance? And yet, so many do not.



The Reel of the 51st Division. All Male performance.

This is unfortunate, because it is great fun, very social, and is excellent exercise for the body and the brain! The movements are extremely easy for Highland Dancers to execute, and learning the patterns and steps are a great way to stay sharp mentally. It also keeps you involved in Scottish culture after retiring from Highland Dancing and introduces you to a whole new great group of people and events.

Scottish Country Dancing (SCD) is the ballroom, or social dancing of Scotland.

Queen Elizabeth II is known to have enjoyed SCD over the years and has been a Royal patron of the RSCDS (Royal Scottish Country Dance Society). The RSCDS is Scottish Country Dancing's version of our RSOBHD.

The dances are done in groups with a partner. The movements and steps are like some of our Highland movements, such as Pas de Bas and Skip Change of Step. These movements are toned down for adults and social dancing. Dances are done to Strathspey, Reel, Jig, and Hornpipe tunes and tempos.

The best way to describe it is that it is a combination of Highland Dancing and American Square Dancing. In fact, Square Dancing evolved out of Scottish Country Dancing.

Just as with Highland Dancing, there is a lot of history involved in SCD. Many of the dances date back to the 1700's. And, just as in Highland, the dances tell a story.

One of the most famous of the dances is the "Reel of the 51st Highlanders". It was choreographed by Scottish POW's during WWII to keep the spirits of their fellow prisoners up. Whenever possible, it is performed with all male dancers in keeping with its origins.



Kay Shofner Hamilton performing with The Orange County, California Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.

Scottish Country Dancing is greatly beneficial to your physical, and mental health. It keeps you active and sharp and is perfect for adults of any age. There are dancers and teachers in their 80's and 90's! It is like a Fountain of Youth!

So, all retired Highland Dancers should take up Scottish Country Dance!

Our very own ScotDance USA President, Fred DeMarse, is a Scottish Country Dancer and teacher. Alumni Committee members Kathy Eisel and Kay Hamilton also do Scottish Country Dancing.

How many other of our Alumni are also Scottish Country Dancers? We would love to hear from you!



Scottish Country Dance Weekend and Ball - Catalina Island. Kathy Eisel and Fred DeMarse.

# A FLING IN THE PAST

Have you ever wondered how much easier it would be to jump over a sword if you were dancing on the Moon or Mars instead of Earth? This is something that Dr. Amelia Greig thinks about frequently when she is in the middle of a hard practice session.

Amelia works as an aerospace researcher developing technologies that will one day enable off-world human settlements. Recently, she was awarded the coveted title of NASA NIAC Fellow to investigate a new way of extracting water and other vital resources from lunar soil. Check it out!

<https://www.utep.edu/newsfeed/campus/utep-faculty-member-receives-coveted-nasa-award-to-expand-lunar-exploration.html>

Amelia can't remember if she was already dancing when she developed her intense interest in all things space, but throughout her life the two have always run side-by-side. One of her favorite things about highland is that there are so many unique and diverse interests, all united in the common love of dance.

Anyone with an interest in science and technology, especially any younger dancer who may be considering a career in science, technology, or engineering, is encouraged to reach out to Amelia ([adgreig@utep.edu](mailto:adgreig@utep.edu)). She would love to chat!

## Q & A WITH AMELIA

*Who was your dance teacher/where did you dance?*

I have moved a lot, so I had a lot of teachers over the years. I started with Lorraine Becker in Tasmania (Australia), then was with Joy Reiher in Canberra (Australia), then with Leonie Burgess in Adelaide (Australia), and now with Bill Weaver while living in Indiana, California, and finally Texas.

*How long did you dance?*

I started when I was 5, so about 28 years now. I guess I still haven't technically retired, but its been a few years since I last competed. Hopefully I still have a few more in me. I still dance at home whenever I can!

*Give us a glimpse into your professional life!*

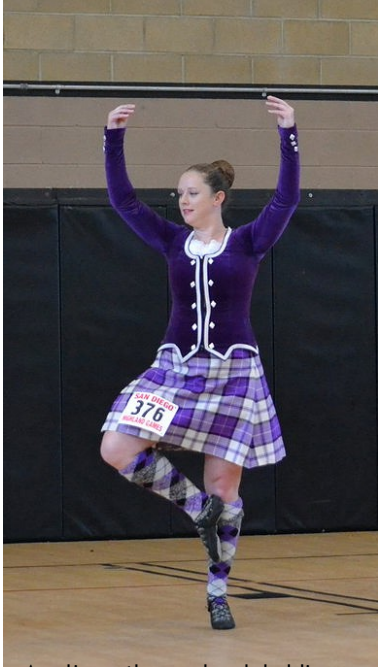
I am a professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering at The University of Texas at El Paso. I teach undergraduate and graduate classes in topics like aerospace propulsion and space systems design, I work with my students to build rockets and satellites (we have one in space right now!) so they learn how before entering the workforce, and I do research into new advanced technologies that will help humans continue to explore space. Not a bad job really!

*Give us a glimpse of your personal life!*



Amelia on a week day, holding a satellite model

## Q & A WITH AMELIA CONTINUED...



Amelia on the weekend, holding a lovely third aerial position

My personal life is very quiet. My family all still live in Australia so I don't get to see them much. I have a pet snake called Larry who keeps me company. I (normally) travel a lot for work so it's not really fair to keep a dog or a cat. But a snake can be happily left alone for three weeks so they make great pets for those of us who are never (normally) at home. Don't worry, he is harmless!

*How do you think Highland Dance plays a role in your professional/personal life?*

Highland Dance has played a huge role in my professional life. It gave me the discipline I needed to complete advanced technical degrees and manage high-stakes research and development projects. At the same time, it gives me the release I need when I don't want to be thinking about technical problems and I have met so many interesting people from all other backgrounds so I'm not just stuck talking to other engineers and scientists all the time. It is such a great part of my life.

## FEATURED ASSOCIATION



The Portland Highland Dancing Association was founded in 1958 by Helen Paterson and Sally McGilvray, along with local dance parents, to create in our area a greater interest in Scottish traditions and Highland dance. Portland Highland Dancing Associations' purpose is to foster and preserve the art of Scottish Highland Dance.



The first PHDA dancers, 1953. From left to right: Nancy Strom, Geraldine Calhoun, Mary McGilvra, Kathleen McGilvray, Bonnie Blyth, Francis Skagen and teacher Helen Paterson

PHDA hosts dance competitions and workshops in the Portland area. Dancers range in ages and dance levels. To find out how you can join or volunteer, check them out at [www.portlandhighlanddance.com](http://www.portlandhighlanddance.com).

# TARTAN DAY

April



Sir Billy Connolly leads New York's Tartan Day Parade



Dancers participating in the New York Tartan Day Parade, 2019

# ST PATRICK'S DAY

March 17th



Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, 1981  
Pictured: Sandra Weyman, Robin Kerr, Caren Davis, Josette Hall, and Heather Kerr.



Dancers performing for Alost Brewery in 2018

## CONTACT US

Please reach out if you have any feedback, questions, content, or if you would like more information on volunteering opportunities: [alumni@scotdanceusa.com](mailto:alumni@scotdanceusa.com)

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