

Weeds and Words

On Tuesday I was again a volunteer at Two Ponds National Wildlife Refuge in Arvada, Colorado. (There are actually three ponds.) On the second Tuesday of the warm months several volunteers work under the



View west northwest over third pond and cattail swamp, with mountains in the rear.



View of middle pond, looking northwest from a hilltop.

supervision of the only government manager of this smallest urban wildlife refuge in America. My role for many years has been weed management. I have a heavy backpack sprayer on my back (19.3 kg full, 5 kg empty) in which I have a solution of 2,4D herbicide in water. It inhibits broadleaf plants and does not harm grass. I spray plant species considered to be invasive noxious weeds, leaving native plants alone.

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/two_ponds/

On Wednesday I removed the roots, plants, and some flowers of Purple Loosestrife from a future open space park near my home

(<http://www.edholroyd.info/Prospect/>) where I am the volunteer manager.

I have been destroying such plants for the past ten years here. They keep sprouting from old seed in the ground and possibly from plant fragments that I missed in previous years. This plant is beautiful in Europe and Asia and can be in decorative locations, as shown in the photo that I took on July 2 at the Summer Palace in Beijing. Bees love its flowers for nectar from which they make honey. However, in North America it is an aggressive invasive noxious weed.

It destroys habitat in wetlands, causing a ninety percent reduction in wildlife use where it out competes native cattails. In North America it lacks natural enemies to keep the plants under control. I am also showing front and back views of a huge plant, nearly two meters tall, in a cattail swamp on the



property that I manage. An article at <http://www.issg.org/database/species/ecology.asp?si=93> shows why we are concerned about this species. I removed this beautiful plant by digging up its roots and discarding it in the trash.

American Folk Dances - cultural demonstrations

Last year in Zhenjiang our cultural sharing had the American folk dances on Friday afternoon at the end of the first week of classes. That gave a week of time for preparation and practice. I volunteered to teach the “Virginia Reel”, following the directions on pages 14 and 15 of the Teaching Resource Handbook I, North American Culture. It was fortunate that there were three men in my classroom, and I made a fourth. So we did the demonstration with four women and four men in two facing lines. I created a Powerpoint page with the call words from page 15 in black letters and my additional explanations in red letters. The next photo shows our

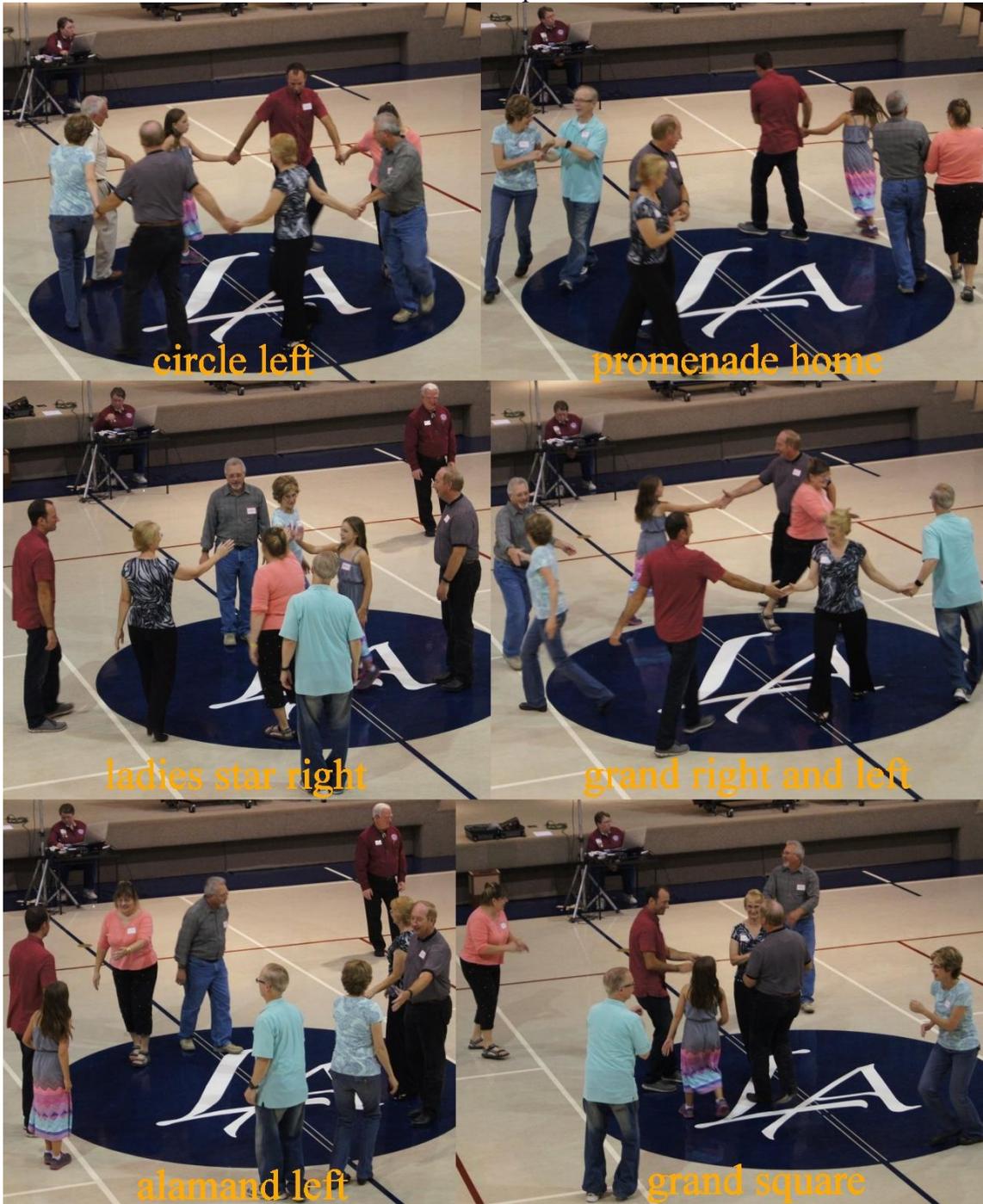


demonstration with me at the end of the line calling out the commands. In Anshan this year we did the American dances demonstration the first Monday afternoon. That made it impossible to train a team to demonstrate the traditional Virginia Reel. This Thursday evening at a special square dancing practice at a local school building the caller included most of the Virginia Reel, leaving out the complicated but beautiful “Reel” part where a couple swings back and forth down the line. So I have put together edited photos showing parts of the dance using two lines of eight men and women. They go forward, bow, and return. Then they go forward (1) and turn with right elbows (2) and return. Next the same with left elbows (3 not illustrated). Then turn with both hands (4).



In (5) is the “do-si-do”, walking around each other without turning. The head couple (closest to caller) goes to the other end (“sashay”, in any style that night, 6) and return. (7) is the omitted “reel” with a sashay return to the head of the line. In (8) the head couple splits to the sides followed by the others, forms an arch at the far end, with the other couples ducking under (9) and forming lines again with a new couple at the head of the lines. The sequence then repeats many times until the end of the music. The caller gives the commands at the right times.

The sound track for the Virginia Reel is likely available from various Internet sources. A 4.5 minute version was in the Dances folder that we made available in some of the classes in Anshan. I have edited out for separate attachment a 0.6 minute start of the music as a sample.



Most of Thursday evening was devoted to teaching of some square dance calls and patterns, as in these photos. For beginners there are a few dozen to learn. Advanced calls could number about a hundred. For official dances the women wear beautiful dresses that fan out during turns. Men wear quality clothes, possibly of American Western style. Examples can be found on the Internet.

The square dance caller controls the patterns with his voice commands. He is in the darkest red shirt in the left images. His wife, also in darkest red, is at a table operating the music and sound system. The caller will usually use a popular song of appropriate rhythm and substitute some

of the lyrics with square dance commands. So it is important for the dancers to be alert and recognize the special words and their meanings for particular square dance patterns. Perhaps such called dances could provide a fun audio - visual - kinesthetic teaching style for word recognition.

Technology for the Classroom

While I was in Anshan it occurred to me that there is a technology that could be of benefit to teachers who have a soft gentle voice. It could be helpful to have such a voice amplified by the classroom's speakers as the teacher walks around the classroom, getting close to all of the students, or for getting the attention of a noisy class. The device should leave the hands free and not be a nuisance. This dance caller had such a system.



corded
microphone



mobile
microphone



For the Virginia Reel the caller used a microphone with a cord to the sound system. For the square dance instructions and calls he left the corded microphone on his wife's table (as shown) and walked among the dancers with a portable system. He had a portable microphone along his left cheek and in front of his mouth. It was supported by rigid wires in the back of the head that hooked over both ears. A thin wire ran down his back to his waist and belt where there was a small radio transmitter. The equipment on the wife's table captured the radio signal and sent the sound to the speakers. The speakers were far enough away from the caller so that there was no annoying feedback noise.

There are a variety of styles available. It is likely that many are made in China. Some have the cheek microphone system only about 2 millimeters wide, making the system hard to see. Such nearly invisible systems are useful for theatrical performances. My next photos show a system offered by www.countryman.com.



My family friend, Bob Coffin, owner of <http://joycomultimedia.com/>, says that this quality system is expensive. Maybe similar systems are built in China at less cost. Perhaps some school systems could invest in such audio technology to benefit some of their teachers and their students.

Dr. Ed Holroyd
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