

This aint no sprout dance

Joint Forces improvises free-style movement

"I guess you might call it 'new-age folk dancing'."

Karen Nelson, a member of the Joint Forces dance collective in Eugene, throws her arms in the air when trying to "nail down" a definition of the style of dance she and the rest of the group teach and perform. Contact Improvisation is the formal name for their dance form. What those two words might mean is understandably ambiguous.

Contact Improvisation is a... well, here / go trying to nail down a definition. How about this: Contact Improvisation is sort of a new brand of modern dance. Started only nine years ago, it has grown into something of a "latest craze," not only in the Eugene area but across the United States and Europe as well.

As its name implies, Contact Improvisation is a free-style affair; the dancers

rely entirely on their senses and intuitions to guide them through their movements. Nothing is set or choreographed, and the dancers focus on an element of contact — contact with those one is dancing with as well as contact with oneself.

Joint Forces is currently a four-member collective, having had six members in earlier days. Alito Alessi, Heidi Timm, Andrew Harwood and Karen Nelson became Joint Forces on a winter's eve last February, when the notion of combining their Contact skills and ideas struck home.

Timm and Harwood had just come into town to prepare for a workshop they were to teach on campus in the summer; then they met Alessi and Nelson, and the four of them took a walk to Skinner's Butte. Things happened on that lofty

peak, and Joint Forces was born. Such a dramatic event was the genesis of the group's name, as well.

The history of Contact is much like the history of Joint Forces: Steve Paxton and Nancy Stark Smith started Contact when they "just got together and started throwing bodies around," Nelson says, adding, "I started doing it about four years ago."

A gymnast during her high school years, Nelson drifted away from the body movement scene altogether in college. "They didn't have a gymnastics program where I went to college, and I never got involved with modern dance because it just wasn't my way of doing things. It was hard to follow somebody else's rigid thing." She met some people who introduced her to the free-form movement of Contact Improvisation, and

she found what she was looking for.

Alito Alessi has been dancing, teaching and healing in Eugene for nine years. In year's past, he belonged to the Eugene Dance Collective, and also studied Tai Chi. "A friend and I started doing Contact about five years ago, before either one of us knew anything about 'Contact' itself," he says. For Alessi, as with Nelson, the motivation was the same — a dissatisfaction with the limits that structured modern dance imposed on his free-flowing desires.

In high school Alessi was a long-dis-

tance runner; and this, along with his martial arts and modern dance background helps define his interpretation of Contact. "All these things have sort of evolved into Contact for me," he says. "But it's different things for different people, depending on a person's background and what they want to get out of it."

So, what does Joint Forces look like when they're *Contact Improvising*? One observer thinks they resemble the continuous motion of light-sensitive brine shrimp at the Exploratorium. "These

dancers are as dependably sensitive to momentum as the shrimp to light." (This is hardly definitive — especially if, like myself, you've never seen brine shrimp before. But we can use our imaginations.) Group member Harwood feels the group "weaves and displays a tapestry of movement."

And if? What does it all look like to my unfamiliar eye? In a word, watching the Joint Forces do its thing is mesmerizing. The dancers sort of roll around with each other — not always on the floor, but while they're on their feet, in the air and sometimes apart.

Like swimming through space, they move as if gravity is nonexistent. One of the keys to Contact is to work with gravity and other natural forces. Alessi says that most other forms of dance constantly battle against gravity. But Contact is not

some kind of spaced-out sprout-dance. "This is a lot of pedestrian stuff — real natural movement, real *people* movement," Alessi says.

And this "pedestrian stuff" can have its roots all the way back in childhood. "A lot of our personal and physical development has been hampered by the way we've been brought up," Alessi says. "Children who are made to walk too soon don't develop a proper crawling ability, which in turn affects motor development. In Contact you go through crawling and rolling and other phases of movement — it has all sorts of beneficial side effects, like improving your sight and hearing. A lot of people have never really *moved* in their entire lives; they take our classes because it feels good to their bodies. It loosens you up."

Joint Forces performs as well as

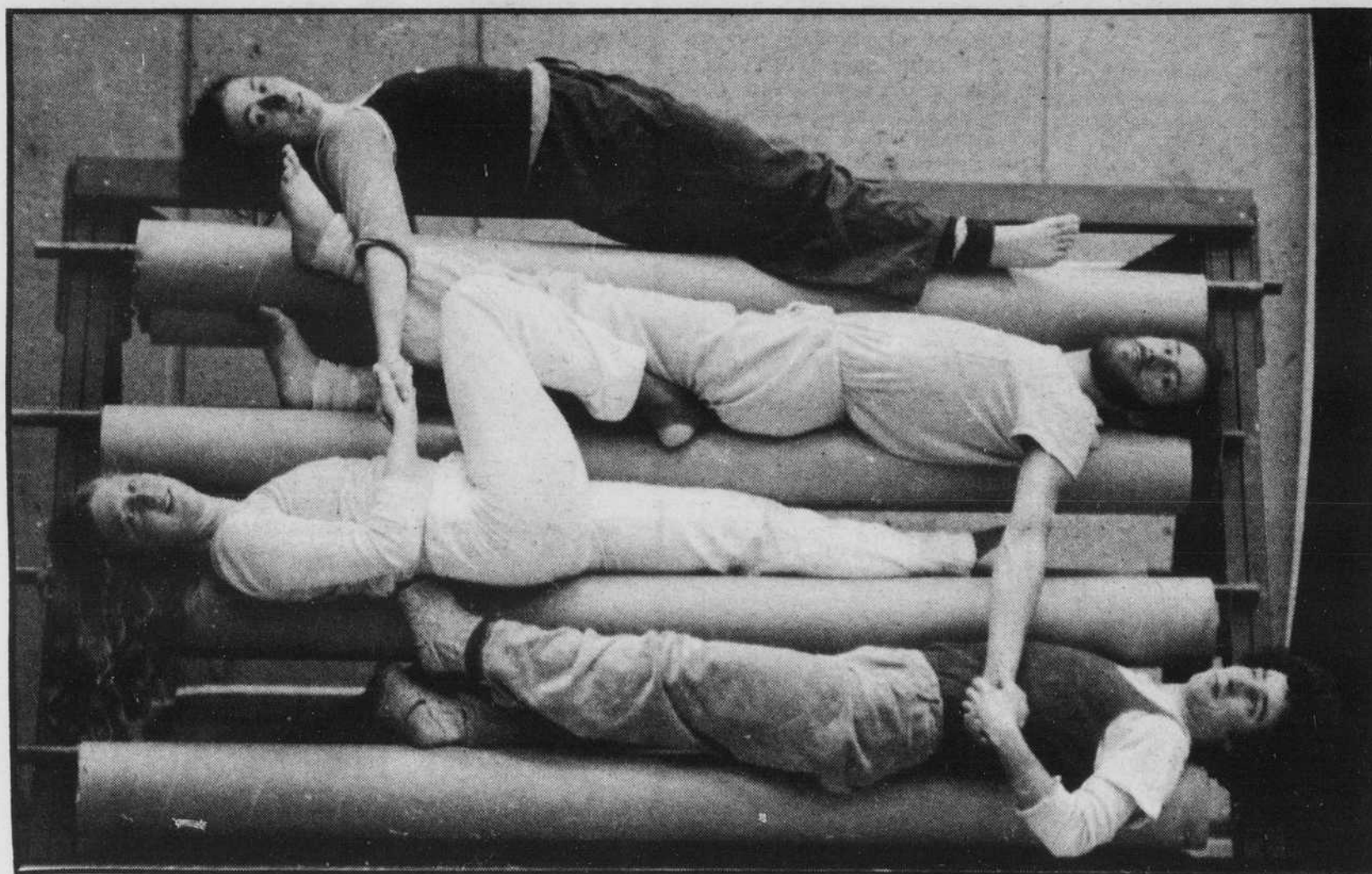
teaches. The group danced at the recent People's Inauguration in front of the biggest crowd they've ever had, and the group feels it gets "real good" support from the Eugene area.

Joint Forces is in residence at Dance Works, 1231 Olive St., through this June. They will be teaching another intensive workshop on campus the last two weeks in June.

An improvisational performance is scheduled this Sunday at 7:30 p.m. at the Community Center for Performing Arts (WOW Hall). Tickets are \$3.00 in advance, \$3.50 the day of the show. Joint Forces will be teaching a two-day workshop the following weekend, Feb. 21 and 22, \$25 for both days.

By Kirk Knighton

Photos provided by Joint Forces



HEWLETT PACKARD

The HP-33C

Programmable Scientific with statistical functions and continuous memory

Only \$90.00

The HP-33C is a keystroke programmable calculator with fundamental programming capability as well as a complete set of preprogrammed scientific functions. Plus Continuous Memory, so you can key data and programs in once, and retain them even when the calculator is turned off.



UO BOOKSTORE

13th & Kincaid
Mon-Fri 8:15-5:30
Sat 10:00-2:00

In The Calculator Dept, where we stock the largest selection of calculators in Eugene

Textbooks 686-3520 • General Books 686-3510 • Supplies 686-4331

HEWLETT PACKARD

SUBWAY

Famous Foot-Long Sandwiches

LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY Annual



1¢

SALE!

BUY 2...GET ANOTHER FOR 1¢

Buy Any Two Snak, Foot-Long, or Double Meat Sandwiches At Usual Price, Get A Third Of Comparable Value For A Penny.

11:00 A.M. - Midnight

1304 Hillyard
484-6955
Thursday Only



WE BUY USED RECORDS

Bring in your Jazz, Rock, Classical, and Blues

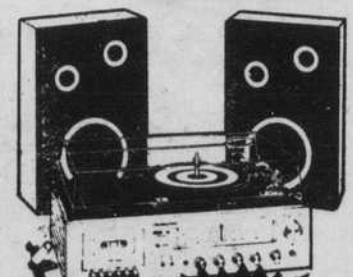
We Pay Top Prices

HOUSE OF RECORDS

258 E. 13th

Between Pearl and High Streets

CUT IT OUT...AND SAVE!



SAVE \$40

WITH THIS COUPON!

SOUNDESIGN AM/FM/FM-Stereo Receiver / Cassette Player / Recorder

Records cassettes directly from receiver, BSR turntable external tape player, live. Loudness control.

Reg. \$239 WITH COUPON \$199

GOODYEAR SERVICE STORES CHARGE IT

• Goodyear Car Card • Installment Pay Plan • MasterCard • Diners Club • Visa • American Express • Carte Blanche

Coupon Good Thru Sat. Nov. 15, 1980

164 W. 7th & Charnelton Downtown Eugene
Open Mon.-Fri. 8-5:30 Sat. 8-5 343-2501

NEW! NEW! NEW!

INTRODUCTORY OFFER

Barbecue PORK RIBS \$5.95

Right now, The Branding Iron is introducing their Brand New Hickory-Smoked Barbecue Pork Ribs. They're served with a complete dinner that includes home-made soup or tossed green salad, rice pilaf, french fries or baked potato and bread for only \$5.95.

But what's even more amazing than that, is that these Texas-Style Pork Ribs are so big, lean, meaty, and delicious, they even fooled "El Paso Billy", and we all know about him; he thinks we rustled the recipe from Texas. But we didn't.

Ask for Oregon's own Texas-style Pork Ribs for only \$5.95 tonight at The Branding Iron.

BRANDING IRON

579 East Broadway, Eugene Phone 344-3201
(Visa, Master Charge, American Express)