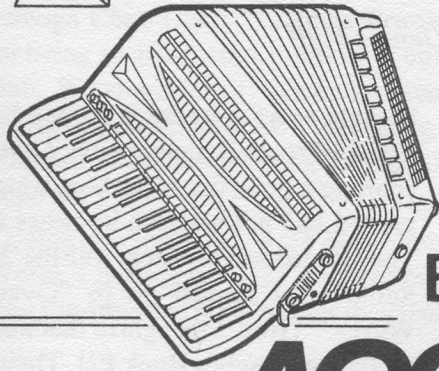


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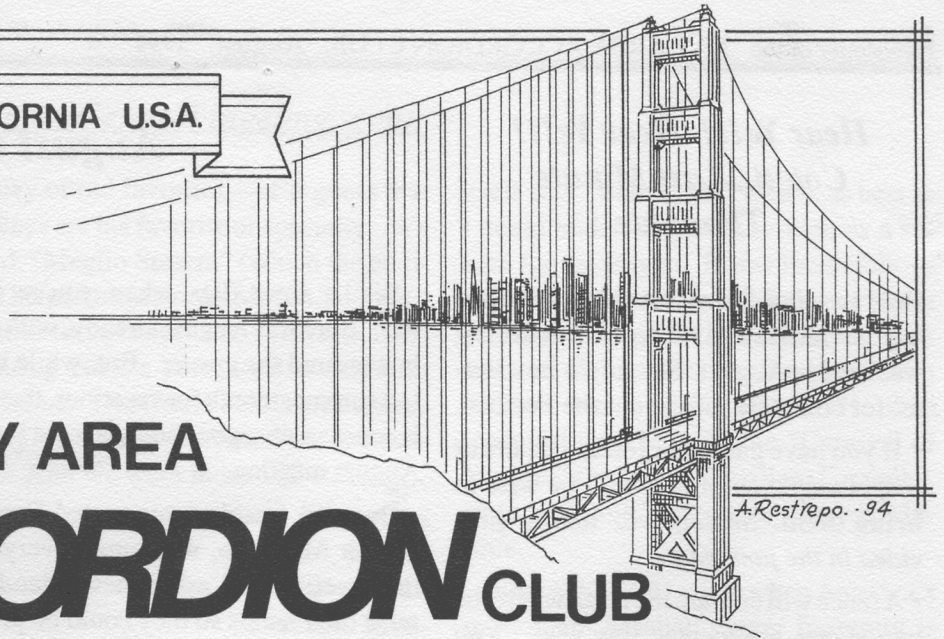
SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA U.S.A.



BAY AREA

# ACCORDION CLUB

August '94



A. Restrepo . 94

## VIATCHESLAV SEMYONOV — IN CONCERT

by Mary-Alice Eldon

When Marian Kelly asked me to write a description of the July 24th concert featuring Viatcheslav Semyonov (OK, we know...how about just "Slava"??), I asked her what she wanted to emphasize. She said "I want everyone who missed it to regret their decision not to attend".

I never had an easier assignment. Semyonov (Sem yun' off) is truly Moscow's premier accordion virtuoso. He plays not only with his hands; his whole body is a beautiful instrument. From his expressive face to his perfectly rhythmic feet, he engages the audience in his extraordinary music and personal style.

Slava plays a bayan, which says "Pigini" on the grille. He told us that it is made in Italy, but has Rus-

sian reeds which, he said, make the sound more "noble" (meaning deeper, stronger). The bass is convertible stradella to freebass, and, in either configuration, has

*cont. on p. 6.*



Viatcheslav & Natasha Semyonov

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**August 27, 28th.** 10:00 - 6:30+ each day. Cotati Accordion Festival, 40 miles N of San Francisco, town center. Admission \$2 if you are accompanied by an accordion. Otherwise, admission is \$5/day, \$8/both days. This year's headliners are Dick Contino, Peter Soave, and Lou Fanucchi.

**September 7th, Wednesday.** BAAC Board Meeting, 7:30 PM. Frank Montoro's, 1448 Tarrytown, San Mateo. Guests welcome. 574-4757.

**September 12th, Monday.** BAAC General Meeting, 7:00 PM. Donworth Hall, 22nd & Eucalyptus, S.F. Please note: date changed to second Monday because of Labor Day holiday.

**September 23, 24, 25.** Eddie's Polka Weekend. Polka in the Catskills. Friar Tuck Inn, Route 32N, Catskill, NY 12414. For info, call (717) 489-1437.

**October 3rd, Monday.** BAAC General Meeting. Special guest artist, Bonnie Birch, from Northwest Accordion Society.

**October 23rd, Sunday.** Testimonial dinner for Gordon Piatanesi. Spanish Cultural Center on Alemany Blvd., S.F.

## **Hear Ye!!! Hear Ye!!! Cotati...Last Minute Thoughts**

Here are a few last minute ideas concerning the Cotati Festival, to be held the last weekend in August. See July's newsletter for complete info about the Festival.

- If you have garden or folding chairs or a lightweight stool, it would be wise to **bring them**. *Seating will not be provided in the jam tent.*
- A fence will contain the plaza where the two stages are located this year. You must pay an admission fee to get through the fence. Cost is \$2 if you are accompanied by an accordion. Otherwise, the fee is \$5/day or \$8 for two days. You will be given a bracelet to wear so that you may go back out and return as desired.
- The Club will have an informational table outside the jam tent and will monitor activity inside the tent. We will *not allow business transactions such as sale of tapes within the tent*. Anyone wishing to sell tapes may do so by contacting someone at the table outside. BAAC will handle a few tape sales and retain a \$2.00 commission per tape. Additionally, we will ask that you *limit your playing time while in the tent to about 30 minutes* to allow others a chance to play, too.
- In addition to the talent on the two stages (solo and group), there will be music just down Old Redwood Highway near the location of last year's third stage. The site will be a coffeehouse/bookstore called the Inn at the Beginning. The Inn is outside the fence, but with your bracelet, you may go there and return whenever you like.
- The same INN will be the site of a big jam session Saturday evening. Everyone is invited to come with their accordions, and rumor has it that a few well known accordion personages plan to attend.
- Festivities start earlier this year...10 AM. Arrive early for best parking.
- Should you still have questions, call the Festival Committee at 707-664-1302.

## **August General Meeting**

by *Dennis Huff*

Well.....time flies when you're havin' fun! Here it is August already, with Cotati just around the corner. But, while it's the last summer month for vacations, that didn't hamper another good attendance at BAAC's August meeting.

Our still freshly inaugurated President, **Frank Montoro**, welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked new attendees to raise their hands so they could be properly welcomed. Now there's a good idea! Announcements included; **1.** The Marin Theater Company is looking for an accordionist (do you have to be able to play while in a hot tub?) **2.** Cotati Accordion Festival 27th & 28th Aug. **3.** A recent New Yorker magazine had an excellent pictorial story on some historical figures in the accordion world. (I had happened to see it and found it quite interesting.) **4.** Folks are still gravitating to Lyons after the meeting, although the count is a little lower since the change in meeting location. Stop on by if you can. **5.** The next meeting is the 12th of September, not the 5th!! (Labor Day Weekend) **6.** The Semyonov concert at the Russian Center was poorly attended, and we need to determine why so that we can better plan successful concerts in the future. **Frank** asked everyone to fill out a short (anonymous if desired) questionnaire discussing why they personally could not attend. I'm sure we'll be discussing this more in the future. **7. Reno Pucci** and **Jim Firpo** recently did BAAC proud while entertaining at the San Mateo Italian Festival. **Attaboys Reno and Jim!!** **8. Algis Ratnikas** gave the Treasurer's report and noted that \$5931 stood between us and insolvency.

Enough business, on to the entertainment! Our MC, **Domenic Saso** and his cohorts on the Programming Committee, had planned another great line up, which, by the way, included himself — finally!

**Jim Firpo**, freshly honed from the Italian Festival, and **Leon Broussal**

brought us an unbeatable French-Italian (Italian-French?) combination. **Leon** was sporting a great old accordion, which he proved had not yet seen its better days. They started appropriately with the "River Seine" and moved on to "Over the Waves." (Hey, I recognize that number — Palmer-Hughes Book #2! Their version was admittedly a bit more advanced.) Other numbers included "Neapolitan Nights" and "Marianne." They were a delightful duo to listen to, and they looked like they enjoyed it as much as the audience. A great example of international co-operation!

I was pleased to discover that one of my personal favorites, **Norma Parsons**, was on next. She's obviously a skilled player, but she's also a well-educated musician and a natural performer. Her first selection was Henry Mancini's beautiful "Charade." She often provides some interesting background on the pieces she plays — and obviously likes — and she did so for her next number, an oldie, "It All Depends on You." Continuing with the French-Italian theme struck by Jim and Leon earlier, **Norma** finished with "Under Paris Skies" and "Sicilian Tarantella." I don't know whether she plays sitting down; she has always stood when I've seen her perform, and she does it with noticeable poise and ease. South Bay BAAC members are proud to have this graceful Lady represent us!

Next **Frank Montoro**, who had disciplined the faulty connection in his MIDI set-up since the picnic, played a few numbers. **Frank** likes to resurrect old numbers — and a good job he does of it, too. He showed the versatility of the MIDI with "Blues in the Night," then "I'd Like Someone to Love." The options for accompaniment are literally endless. He finished with a Train Medley, which I particularly liked, including "Take the A Train," "Tuxedo Junction" and "Chat-

*August General Meeting, cont.*

tanooga Choo Choo.” Thanks **Frank** for being such an active member of our club. We appreciate it! (Does a person also need to be resurrected if they recognized all of the songs Frank played? I hope not.)

Being new to the Bay Area Accordion World, I have never seen many of our long time masters play. Maybe they feel

medley of old favorites — I’ll guess that medleys are his favorite or specialty. We heard “Meglio Stasera” (which the audience helped translate as Maybe Tonight,) “It Had to be You,” and “Love is All,” featuring **Nick’s** considerable skills on the drums. The Grand Finale was a sing-a-long version of “When You’re Smiling.” And we were indeed all smiling.

It must be the water! We’ve had three Moscow trained accordionists play for the Club now, and all of them play at a level which most of us can’t even imagine exists. Fortunately, we have the opportunity to be reminded every now and then. And we were all reminded **M o n d a y .**

itself was, “Sonata #2,” which, as best as I could understand, was written as a sonata for the Bayan. It was incredible — the bellows shake especially would have pleased Veikko, who seems to have drunk some of the same water. It was standing ovation time — **BIG TIME!** He then loosened up a bit with the “Carnival of Venice,” the “Jolly Caballero,” a polka, and, at **Frank’s** request, “French Muzette.”

What a show! At a time when America’s millionaire baseball player fraternity is about to strike because they feel underpaid, we see a player of **Stas’** singular ability and training working as a domestic. It makes one ponder.



*Stas Venglevski*

that they’ve been playing so long that everyone has heard all their songs??? Well, I finally got to hear our MC (**Domenic Saso**) play, and I was not surprised to see and hear that he was as accomplished and natural behind an accordion as he was introducing the program in front of one — or several. He was professionally accompanied by percussionist and BAAC member, **Nick Campagna**. Our **Dynamic Duo** started with a medley of “On the Street Where You Live,” “Mame,” and “Hello Dolly.” **Domenic** didn’t really need his homemade “APPLAUSE” sign, but he further entertained us by pulling it out on several occasions. Next was another

**Stanislav (Stas) Venglevski’s** music defies adequate description.....you just had to be there. July’s Newsletter had a brief background on **Stas**, who comes from Moldova, situated between Russia and Romania, and who is now a member of the Milwaukee Accordion Club.

His first number was a Scarlatti Sonata, followed by “Zolotarey Sonata.” Typical of his Bayan predecessors at the club, his hands literally flew over BOTH ENTIRE keyboards, and his use of the bass keyboard was a strong and obvious component of each piece. I still haven’t played that many notes in my entire accordion career, and he was just warming up!! The next number, almost an entire concert in

The Club extends its deepest sympathy to member **Ed Zaro**, whose wife recently passed away.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Frank Montoro

Although it's a great treat to have a guest musician like bayanist Stas Venglevski perform for us (and wasn't he great??), please remember that we rely on our own members to provide most of the entertainment at our monthly meetings. We are experiencing some difficulty in getting members to volunteer to play for several months, so we are asking that you come forth.

Why the reluctance, I wonder. There isn't a more appreciative audience than our BAAC members and their guests. Every performer is greeted with warm applause to show appreciation. It doesn't matter what style of music is played or what the level of competency demonstrated. The important thing is that we are hearing accordion music. It's fun to perform and fun to listen to the instrument.

We encourage a variety of styles: jazz, classical, ethnic music are all welcomed, so please call Ed Massolo (415-589-8409) or Frank Panacci (415-731-1039) and get yourself on a program.

On other subjects: be sure to mark your calendar for Sunday, October 23rd, our testimonial dinner for Gordon Piatanesi. The dinner will be held at the Patio Espanol, 2850 Alemany Blvd., S.F. There will be a no-host cocktail hour at 5 PM with dinner scheduled for 6. The cost of the dinner will be approximately \$20 including tax and tip. More about this in our next newsletter.

The Palo Alto Elks Club has raised its fee for the use of their picnic grounds. Your Executive Board is considering a new location, so we could use your help. If you know of a similar facility located on the upper Peninsula, please let us know.

The fourth annual Cotati Accordion Festival promises to be even bigger and better thanks to the contributions of BAAC's many talented musicians. These members are scheduled to perform during the two-day affair (Aug 27th and 28th): Ed Massolo, Frank Panacci, Stas Wisniach, Ron Borelli, Dave Baioni, Steve Balich, Peter Di Bono, Joe Smiell, and the San Francisco Accordion Ensemble. I would say we're well represented, wouldn't you? Let's hear it for them!

## August Board Meeting

### Synopsis

- Due to BAAC's \$1800 deficit last year, the Board is considering raising door fees to \$2. More later on this subject. Membership will be polled at Sept. meeting.
- The Frankie Yankovic Special, originally due to air on PBS this year, has been delayed a bit and is now scheduled for '95. We'll keep you posted. You may recall that BAAC donated \$100 to this production last year.
- After some discussion, the Board concluded that the Semyonov concert's slim attendance was due both to its scheduling date (summer is a poor time) and to inadequate publicity.
- BAAC will sponsor a concert in the Spring and will try to obtain a well-known performer.
- Plans for the new BAAC intermediate ensemble are coming together. Currently we are in search of a place to practice.
- Josephine Hornbrook, our fine Secretary, will head and carry out the work of a new committee, Sunshine. She will send cards to members or wives who are ill or who pass away. Call her if you know of someone deserving of such a card.. 415-591-3009.
- The Oakland city schools have requested that we provide some accordionists who are willing to entertain young people in a school setting.
- The Palo Alto Elks Club is increasing the fee for use of their grounds from \$1000 to \$1500. The Board agrees that we should therefore look for a different site. Call Frank (574-4757) with specific, well thought-out suggestions.
- The Board voted to give a \$150 stipend to Stas Venglevski, who awed everyone at the August meeting. Members wishing to contribute toward this sum may do so at the Sept. meeting.
- The September 7th Board meeting will be held at the home of Frank Montoro.

### NOTICE!!

The Editor for the September BAAC Newsletter will be Dennis Huff. Copy or ads for September only should be mailed to:

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## ACCORDION CAMP REFLECTIONS

by Dennis Huff

Several years ago I decided to learn to play an instrument, and I had no trouble picking the accordion. I can recall, shortly thereafter, the admittedly childish enthusiasm I felt when I discovered that there was an Accordion Camp! Hooray! This year I was lucky enough to attend.

No single word comes to mind to describe it—the closest would be “unique.” Ignoring the accordion aspects for a minute, the camp itself was worth the trip. It sits isolated in the middle of an old growth forest and is noticeably void of telephones, televisions, newspapers, and other distractions. The lodges are rustic but quite comfortable and border a small manicured meadow in the center of the facility. In a nearby area was a very large, extremely clean, heated (!) swimming pool. Bikes were available, hiking paths abounded, and the many waterfalls for which the local area is noted had a peaceful, restorative effect if you ventured out to see them.

I had heard that the food was good, but I attributed that to camp lore. WRONG! They even baked their own bread and pastries—I think that pretty well tells the story on the vittles. And it all must be supported by the great taxpayers of Oregon, because you couldn't vacation anywhere for the cost charged.

Next, you had to notice the atmosphere. No one, and I mean no one, had a bad attitude. When did you last go somewhere and experience that? Everyone had the strong common denominator of love for the accordion and the desire to improve their abilities. You were imme-

diately on a first name basis with fellow campers, and it was obvious from listening to the “veterans” that the friendships forged there extended to visits, cards, and letters throughout the year. (I'm already looking forward to seeing those who plan to attend Cotati.)

The center of the whole event, of course, is the Maestro Galla-Rini. He's forgotten more about music than we collectively know. (Actually, he hasn't forgotten much—his acumen was incredible.) And for 4 1/2 days he lectures, conducts, socializes,



*l to r back: Denny Huff, Gwen Lister, Frances Edmonston, Frank Schlotter, Jean Malley. front: Anne Metais, Val Kieser, Galla-Rini, Bob Smith.*

and shares “war stories” about the world of music. Did you know he did much of the theme music for “High Noon?” In the scene at the train station where the villain “plays” the harmonica, the Maestro was in the background providing the music with his trusty accordion. Or about the time Mel Blanc (What's Up, Doc?) was conducting an orchestra in Portland and... You get the idea. While he always carried a strong presence, his humility, wit, playfulness, and keen sense of human nature made him an equally comfortable com-

panion for virtuoso and beginner alike. And a companion who had a contribution to make for every level of player.

The fourth principle piece of the camp equation was listening to the other players. And listen we did. from 6 AM until midnight, from some distant corner of our little world, one could hear an accordion. And during most of that period, there were multiple offerings. For the entire week we played, practiced, shared music, joined sessions with others, or just sat back and enjoyed (and learned). It

really can't be fair to all the excellent players there to mention only a few, but with apologies in advance, I will try. **John Simkus** (Pres. of the Chicago Accordion Club and an accomplished jazz accordionist) was one of the premier players. Another was **Gordon Kohl**, a San Diego player who has a wide range of musical turf, but who seemed to specialize in old world ethnic music. (He's currently studying Cajun music, and when he's ready to debut this style I want to be there.) Gordon gave several informal lectures which were full of useful hints and information. Either

would be an excellent guest performer for BAAC, as would many other players at the camp. Everyone, regardless of playing level, but particularly the more experienced players, was quick to contribute and help fellow accordionists. And you'll all be proud to know that **Bob Smith** acquitted himself very admirably as the attending Bay Area “expert.” He was forced to shorten his offering somewhat due to the length of the last evening's program, but did his usual excellent job with “Dark Eyes” plus one additional selection. As an added treat, **Joe Petosa** was able to be there the last full day to attend our “celebrated” concert.

cont. on p. 6



*Semyonov Concert, cont. from p. 1*

an astounding tonal range, as beautifully demonstrated in his first piece (see below), when his acoustic bayan sounded very much like an organ.

Don't ask me exactly what was on the program (which was not written out for the audience). I know that he first put us all into a trance with a glorious arrangement of J.S. Bach's "Chaconne" and subsequently played Scarlatti sonatas, then his own composition "Children's Suite II", (he told the audience that he had to write a second Children's Suite be-

total musical mastery of his bayan and his obvious personal involvement in each piece cast a magic spell on his audience.

The entire afternoon was enjoyable, but we almost missed it. Lots of family reunions this summer, but we managed to steal away for this very special event. The Russian Center is charming. My husband was enthralled with the lady ticket taker who expressed amazement when he asked for the senior discount. The food smelled enticing, but we had arrived one minute before the program started. You can't turn

The final part of the program featured Slava with his wife, Natasha, playing a duet with bayan and domra (which resembles a mandolin). We watched with unbelieving eyes as her fingers flew over the neck of her instrument. The Semyonovs were a duet not only of instruments, but of perfection of humor and body language which was a musical and visual delight. They completely captivated the audience, which did its best to keep them long after they had completed their regular program. After many encores, it was over, and the audience left marveling at what we had witnessed.



*Viatcheslav & Natasha Semyonov. front: Robert Sattler*

cause the first was so difficult that no one could play it), pieces by Kusiakov, contemporary Ukrainian folk variations, his own "Don Rhapsody", and many marvelous others. Somehow, it matters little what exactly you hear when you sit at the feet of a master. You just know that you are extremely fortunate to be in this place at this time to hear what you are hearing. Some of us who attended felt a little concern that we wouldn't enjoy Slava's musical choices because they might be too heavily classical and/or too modernistic for our personal tastes. We needn't have worried. The combination of his

left from Geary to Divisadero.

The program began with our own San Francisco Accordion Ensemble directed by Joe Smiell. They performed some Handel and a March Russe which warmed the audience smartly. Also featured was Atlanta-based Robert Sattler, the 1976 accordion champion who made the transition from piano accordion to bayan look easy. Robert enjoys the classical repertoire which has been written for the bayan in Russia and Europe and demonstrated this with several gorgeous pieces, two of which were written by our visiting guru, Prof. Semyonov.

**NEW MEMBERS**

**We haven't published a list of new members for a while...let's try to catch up here:**

**Grant Groberg, Palo Alto  
Marjorie Konrad, Santa Rosa  
John Wesley Hollowell,  
Memphis, TN.**

**Gene Lovello, San Francisco  
Kathleen McNaught, Modesto  
Mark Ramian, San Mateo  
Robert Sattler, Atlanta, GA  
Stephen Shen, Mill Valley  
Marlene Sholtz, Playa del Rey  
Irmgard Wynn, Salinas**

**A warm welcome to all of you!!  
Please come to a meeting or event  
and introduce yourselves!**

***Accordion Camp, from p. 5.***

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## CHINESE CASSETTE

BY DENNY HUFF

It's easy to imagine an Italian playing the accordion. (Particularly at BAAC!) Most Italian music seems ideally composed to play on the accordion, and the animated, enthusiastic Italian personality easily "fits" the accordion. Central European and Alpine music also comes quickly to mind when one considers the accordion.

About the last ethnic group with which I would have previously associated the accordion is Chinese. But that changed once I listened to Zhang Guoping. He sent a cassette to the Club, and it "knocked my socks off." My lasting impression is that it was very crisp and spirited. His "musicianship" was first class. The tape contained abundant German and Russian music, much of which Zhang had arranged. Some of the other numbers included Beautiful Dreamer, Turkish March, Carmen-Fantasia, Sabre Dance, and Gankino Horo.

Zhang Guoping was born into a musical family and learned the accordion as a child from his father, who is an educator and noted accordionist in China. He was admitted to the China Broadcasting Arts Troupe in 1975, has done national level recitals in China since 1983, and appeared in Klingenthal Germany at the International Accordion Competition in 1987. Other international performances have followed in Poland, Canada, Switzerland and France.

Some researchers\* relate the accordion back to an ancient (and honorable!) ancestor called the Cheng which existed in China about 4500 years ago. So perhaps it is not that unusual to see the accordion doing well in China, and once again our eyes are opened to the scope and appeal of our favorite instrument. And to the many common denominators which cross ethnic boundaries. It really can be a small world!

\* 1994 Who's Who in the World of Accordions, Norman Seaton, pg 72. (Call Lou Soper for a copy.)

## BRAVO, BRAVISSIMO BAAC

by Mary-Alice Eldon

Thanks to all of you who wrote or telephoned a note of approval to the proposal in the July BAAC newsletter that we group together to sharpen our musical skills under disciplined leadership. Your splendid response confirmed that many of us desire to play better, more often, and in public, and just need a format in which to operate.

Thanks to President Frank Montoro and the Board who approved and went forward with the suggestions. Thanks also to Joe Smiell who offered to direct us. Soon we will have a published membership list of fellow accordionists. I discovered that Redwood City is a hotbed of accordion activity. Carpools may form easily to drive to rehearsals.

So now is the time to stand up and start counting in tempo. Scale the heights. Get at least a middle C for effort. This is the perfect tonic for our Club. Key into action. Move allegro, presto. Bellow ebollizione. Your blacks and whites will shine avec coloris. No more closet solos lagrimoso or lamentoso. Fugue furioso. The bell tolls. Ask not for whom; it tolls for thee to participate.

- C that you join
- D mand excellence
- E mote enthusiasm
- F = forte. Pianissimo is very soft. Learn the difference.
- G it will be more fun if you join.
- A-one playing is where we aim.
- B a part of it.
- C you there.

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The *Bay Area Accordion Club Newsletter* is published monthly .

Editor ..... Marian Kelly  
Editorial Assistant ..... Denny Huff  
Contributing Writers .Mary-Alice Eldon, Denny Huff  
Photography ..... Bob Berta  
Distribution ..... Glenn McClelland

Send all newsletter-related communications to:

Dennis Huff  
20605 Oak Creek Lane  
Saratoga, CA 95070

Deadline for each issue is the *second* Monday of the month.


**discovery printing!** (415) 967-3777 Sunnyvale, CA



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