

FAR-West - A History

By Russ Paris – April 2013 (updated June 2017)

Prior to the founding of Folk Alliance Region - West, the states that are now part of FAR-West (California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Arizona, Idaho, Hawaii, and Alaska) were part of the Southwest region of Folk Alliance. SWERFA always meets in Texas, so the annual meetings were very far away geographically from the Pacific Coast states. It made a great deal of sense to split off the far western states into a separate region.

FAR-West was founded by a group of people who primarily lived in the greater Los Angeles area. We met on a monthly basis for about a year to address the issues, set some basic goals, write and approve bylaws, and do all the ground work to get FAR-West up and running.

The “idea” of FAR-West sprang into Bruce Kaplan’s head at the January 19, 2002 Living Tradition concert, when Bruce and Claudia Russell opened for Harvey Reid. Phyllis Barney, who was then executive director of Folk Alliance discussed the idea in an email to Bruce & Claudia, Howard & Roz Larman, Elaine Weissman and Steve Dulson, where she thanked Bruce for suggesting a meeting about this and mentioned that she and Elaine had also been discussing the idea.

The earliest actual meeting minutes in the FAR-West archives are from a Founding Committee meeting on May 18, 2002. 19 people attended that first meeting. Between May of 2002 and April of 2003, there were at least nine Founding Committee meetings, most of which were held at the California Traditional Music Society (CTMS) headquarters in Encino, CA. The July 27, 2002 meeting was held at the Warner Center Marriott Hotel, where we ended up hosting our first annual conference. We actually have some photos from that meeting in the FAR-West archives.

From going through the minutes of those meetings, the people who attended the Founding Committee meetings most regularly were:

Clark & Elaine Weissman (CTMS and FAI)

Bruce Kaplan & Claudia Russell (musicians)

Howard & Roz Larman (FolkScene)

Russ & Julie Paris (Russ & Julie’s House Concerts)

Steve & Michele Dulson (The Living Tradition)

Steve & Leda Shapiro (FolkWorks)

Nick Smith (Caltech Folk Music Society)

Mary Katherine Aldin (Alive & Picking)

There were also a couple of others including Amy Weyland (Santa Monica Folk Song Club) and Chris Warber (CTMS) who attended many of the early meetings. Phyllis Barney, executive director of FAI also attended at least a meeting or two, including the first one. Cathy Radcliffe drove up from San Diego at least a couple of times. Others who attended at least one meeting included Renee Bodie, Cree Clover, Caroline Aiken, Wendy Waldman, Mandi Martin, Connie Allen and Kathy Qualey.

Clark Weissman and Russ Paris wrote the original bylaws, based on the bylaws of Folk Alliance International, which was then called the North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance. (Clark & Elaine Weissman were the founders of both Folk Alliance International and the California Traditional Music Society.)

Because we needed officers approved before we could qualify for 501(c)(3) status, we elected a temporary Board: Bruce Kaplan was the "President" of the Founding Committee and ran our meetings. Steve Dulson was VP, Clark Weissman was Treasurer, and Amy Weyland was Secretary. Steve Dulson came up with the FAR-West acronym. FAR-West stands for "Folk Alliance Region - West," which is why the "FAR" is in all caps. Cathy Radcliffe designed our original logo.

After a good year of work, FAR-West had its official start with a meeting (and showcase concert) on April 5, 2003 at The Coffee Gallery Backstage in Altadena, CA. This was the date that our bylaws were ratified and our first official Board of Directors was elected. This was followed up by an Informational Meeting (and showcase concert) at The Freight & Salvage in Berkeley, CA on October 4, 2003.

The April 5, 2003 meeting at the Coffee Gallery Backstage was attended by about 35 people, though I've been unable to track down the minutes from the meeting to get an exact figure. This meeting did add a number of new faces to the mix including Bob Stane, Paul Tumolo, Bruce Hayden, Susan Mumma, Eric Lowen, Susie Glaze, Kelly McCune, Kim Acuna, Doug Tucker, Juliet Wyers, and Susanne Millsaps. At this meeting Bruce Kaplan was elected President, Steve Dulson was elected Vice President, and Connie Allen became Treasurer, taking over from Clark Weissman. Juliet Wyers was our first secretary. According to Steve, it was at the February 2004 FAI conference that Bruce and Steve switched jobs, Steve Dulson becoming president -- a job he would hold for seven years.

After the April 5, 2003 meeting at the Coffee Gallery Backstage, there was a concert with performances by: Caren Armstrong, Border Radio, Chuck McCabe, Christina Ortega, Claudia Russell, Rick Shea & Brantly Kearns, Ian Whitcomb and Joyce Woodson.

One of the initial concerns of the founders was that we wanted FAR-West to be truly a REGIONAL chapter of Folk Alliance... and we wanted to be sure that it wasn't viewed as strictly a Los Angeles based organization. (This after our experience with SWERFA being centered in Kerrville, TX.) Thus, we looked for Board Members outside the Southern California region and found them in quality people like Susan Mumma in Alaska and Susanne Millsaps in Utah (among others). We also decided that our regional conference should move around the whole region, so that everyone would be included.

There was a timing issue in getting FAR-West up and running, because we wanted to take advantage of the fact that the Folk Alliance annual conference was in San Diego in February 2004. Initial hopes to host a conference prior to the San Diego event were cancelled because we felt that we couldn't organize fast enough and that we would be in competition with Folk Alliance. So the decision was made to use the San Diego Folk Alliance conference as a springboard to the first FAR-West conference.

After a couple of false starts and date changes, the first FAR-West conference was held October 29-31, 2004 at the Warner Center Marriott in Woodland Hills, CA -- in the Los Angeles area. The location was picked because the majority of the core group of people who started FAR-West were in the Southern California area, so it was easier for us to do our first conference in L.A. After the first conference, it was determined that we should further "consolidate and grow our base" by having the second conference in the same location. Our second conference was held October 28-30, 2005 again in Woodland Hills.

After the second conference, there was considerable debate among the FAR-West Board of Directors about where to have the third conference. Only 125-150 people attended our first conference. Less than 200 people attended our second conference. Some people suggested that we were not yet ready to start moving around the region yet -- that we were still too new at this and that we were not yet ready to reach out more directly to other parts of our region. It was also felt that we had barely tapped L.A.'s large music scene. Other's felt that it was important that FAR-West start moving around the region as soon as possible so that we didn't develop a reputation of being strictly a Los Angeles based organization.

A rough plan was agreed to by the Board that we would move the conferences around the region starting with our 2006 conference, but that we would try to get back to the Southern California area about once every third or fourth year. The intended rotation was (1) Southern California, (2) Northern California, (3) Pacific Northwest (WA or OR), and (4) other, maybe half the time.

In addition to our annual conferences, we have also had smaller one-day events in various locations - particularly in areas where we hoped to host a future conference -- as an effort to increase the visibility of FAR-West.

Our third annual conference was held November 17-19, 2006 at the Sacramento Marriott Rancho Cordova in Sacramento, CA. And our fourth annual conference was held November 2-4, 2007 at the Hilton Vancouver Washington near Portland, Oregon. Attendance at those conferences was roughly 400 in 2006 and 450 in 2007. Both were great successes.

The 2008 FAR-West conference was held at the Phoenix Marriott Mesa Hotel & Convention Center in Mesa, AZ. 311 people attended. The 2009 conference was at the Hyatt Regency Irvine in Irvine, CA - attendance: 406. The 2010 conference was at the Santa Clara Convention Center and Hyatt Regency in Santa Clara, CA - attendance: 339. The 2011 conference was at the Hilton Eugene & Conference Center and the John G. Shedd Institute for the Arts in Eugene, OR - attendance: 319.

The 2012 conference was at again at the Hyatt in Irvine, CA. Attendance in 2012 was 294. We have had steadily declining attendance since at least 2010, possibly earlier and probably due mostly to the economy. (The Irvine location was picked because it is about halfway between Los Angeles and San Diego, and hopefully draws people from both cities.)

Prior to the 2012 conference, it was decided that FAR-West could save money by negotiating 2-year contracts with our hosting hotels. In addition, we could further develop a base of volunteers and attendees by staying in one area for a second year. Therefore the 2012 and 2013 conferences were both at the Hyatt in Irvine, CA while the 2014 and 2015 conferences were at the Oakland Marriott City Center in Oakland, CA. The 2016 and 2017 conferences will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Bellevue, WA.

One other thing that was very important to the Founding Committee was that FAR-West be as all-inclusive, supportive, and accepting as possible. We agreed that the term "folk" should be as broad and diverse as possible.

The President's position has been by Steve Dulson, then Steve Brogden and now Mark Kaufman. The Treasurer's position moved from Connie Allen to Susan Mumma to Julie Paris and now to Ronnie Weinberger. Steve Dulson was the conference coordinator for the First Annual FAR-West Conference and handled that position four different times (2004, 2005, 2006 & 2009). Others who have handled this important role have included Mary Katherine Aldin (2005), Renee Bodie (2007 & 2008), Bev

Barnett (2010), Chico Schwall & Dick Weissman (2011), Steve Brogden (2012), Julie Paris (2012 & 2013) Jeanette Lundgren (2014, 2015, 2016 & 2017), John Croizat (2014 & 2015) & Janet Dukes (2017).

When our board member Susanne Millsaps passed away in October 2006, the Board created the Susanne Millsaps Memorial Coffee House room, which has been a fixture of our conferences ever since. This is an in-the-round showcase that has given our conference attendees a great networking and showcase opportunity.

After founding committee member Howard Larman passed away April 21, 2007, an anonymous sponsor started the Howard Larman Scholarship Fund to help financially challenged artists attend the FAR-West conferences. Since that time, several dozen musicians have been helped to attend a conference thanks to this fund. We have had a couple of benefit concert fundraisers for this scholarship fund over the years. On the passing of his wife, Roz, the fund was renamed the Roz & Howard Larman Scholarship Fund.

The “Best of the West” award was created shortly after our first conference when the Board decided to honor people who have made a significant contribution to the folk arts in the western states. Russ Paris was the one who framed and proposed the idea. The first annual “Best of the West” award was presented at the second annual FAR-West conference and has become a highlight of our conferences. While this year will be our 14th conference, it will also be our tenth “Best of the Best” awards ceremony.

FAR-West looks forward to our second decade of serving the folk and acoustic music community on the west coast.

FAR-West is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation incorporated in the state of California.

The following pages have three (3) appendix lists

- 1. An alphabetical listing of all the people who have served on the FAR-West Board of Directors along with the years in which they served.**
- 2. A chronological listing of all of the FAR-West Annual Conference Coordinators and the locations of each conference.**
- 3. A chronological listing of all of the FAR-West “Best of the West” Award winners.**

Alphabetical list of past and present FAR-West Board of Directors members along with the years in which they served.

Pres = President; VP = Vice President; Treas = Treasurer; Sec = Secretary

Kim Acuna '04,

Connie Allen '03 Treas, '04 Treas

Carey Appel '15, '16, '17

Bev Barnett '07, '08, '09 VP, '10

Tom Begich '08

Bob Bennett '05

Renee Bodie '05, '06 VP, '07 VP, '08 VP

Cindy Bottomley '11, '12 Sec, '13 Sec

Steve Brogden '09, '10 VP, '11 Pres, '12 Pres, '13 Pres, '14 Pres, '15, '16, '17

Rhonda Cadle '11

Lisa Cowden '08, '09, '10

Steve Dulson '03 VP, '04 Pres, '05 Pres, '06 Pres, '07 Pres, '08 Pres, '09 Pres, '10 Pres, '11 VP, '12 VP, '13 VP, '14

Janet Dukes '13, '14 Sec, '15 Sec, '16 Sec, '17 Sec

Susie Glaze '10, '11, '12

Bruce Hayden '04, '05, '06, '07, '08, '09, '10, '11, '12, '13

Bruce Kaplan '03 Pres, '04 VP, '05 VP, '06, '07

Mark Kaufman '12, '13, '14 VP, '15 Pres, '16 Pres, '17 Pres

Peter Krantz '13, '14, '15, '16, '17

Pamela Lindell '13

Eric Lowen '04, '05, '06, '07, '08

Jeanette Lundgren '10, '11, '12, '13, '14, '15 VP, '16 VP, '17 VP

Steven McClintock '09, '10

Carolyn Mill '15

Susanne Millsaps '04, '05, '06

Susan Mumma '05 Treas, '06 Treas, '07 Treas, '08, '09

Rick Nagle '09

Julie Paris '08 Treas, '09 Treas, '10 Treas, '11 Treas, '12 Treas, '13 Treas, '14 Treas

Russ Paris '05 Sec, '06 Sec, '07 Sec

Marni Rachmiel '09, '10, '11, '12, '13, '14, '15, '16, '17

Cathy Radcliffe '04

Nick Smith '04, '05, '06, '07, '08 Sec, '09 Sec, '10 Sec

James Lee Stanley '15

Joel Tepp '14, '15, '16, '17

Doug Tucker '04

Paul Tumolo '04, '05

Wendy Waldman '06, '07, '08

Wes Weddell '15

Ronnie Weinberger '15 Treas, '16 Treas, '17 Treas

Juliet Wyers '03 Sec, '04 Sec

John Roy Zat '13, '14, '15

FAR-West Conference Coordinators and Locations:

2004 - Steve Dulson (Woodland Hills, CA)
2005 - Steve Dulson & Mary Katherine Aldin (Woodland Hills, CA)
2006 - Steve Dulson (Sacramento, CA)
2007 - Renee Bodie (Portland, OR / Vancouver, WA)
2008 - Renee Bodie (Phoenix, AZ)
2009 - Steve Dulson (Irvine, CA)
2010 - Bev Barnett (Santa Clara, CA)
2011 - Chico Schwall & Dick Weissman (Eugene, OR)
2012 - Julie Paris & Steve Brogden (Irvine, CA)
2013 - Julie Paris (Irvine, CA)
2014 – Jeanette Lundgren & John Croizat (Oakland, CA)
2015 – Jeanette Lundgren & John Croizat (Oakland, CA)
2016 – Jeanette Lundgren & Mark Kaufman (Bellevue, WA)
2017 – Jeanette Lundgren & Janet Dukes (Bellevue, WA)

FAR-West “Best of the West” Award Winners:

2005

Lowen & Navarro
Howard & Roz Larman - Folkscene

2006

U. Utah Phillips
Steve Baker - Freight & Salvage

2007

Rosalie Sorrels
Clark & Elaine Weissman – California Traditional Music Society
and Folk Alliance International Founders

2008

The Kingston Trio
Mike McCormick - Whistling Swan Productions

2009

Joe Craven
Bob Stane - Ice House / Coffee Gallery Backstage
Faith Petric (Lifetime Achievement Award)

2010

John McEuen
Cloud Moss - Kate Wolf Memorial Festival

2011

Laurie Lewis
Phil and Vivian Williams

2012

Barry McGuire
Chris Strachwitz - Arhoolie Records

2013

Chris Hillman
Ed Pearl - The Ash Grove Foundation

2014

Barbara Dane

Cassandra Flipper - Bread & Roses

2015

Cris Williamson

Russ & Julie Paris

Penny Nichols (Lifetime Achievement Award)

2016

Danny O'Keefe

Peter McCracken & the Centrum Foundation

Seattle Folklore Society (Organizational Achievement Award)

2017

Alice Stuart

Peter Langston & Janet Peterson (Puget Sound Guitar Workshop)

Sisters Folk Festival (Organizational Achievement Award)