



Happy Spring!



Happy Spring!

Official Instrument of San Francisco
1912 ♪ *The World's First Accordion Club* ♪ 2008

April 20, 2008 MUSIC:



Ellen Karel from Marin
The San Francisco Accordion Chamber Ensemble (ACE)
The Marotta Family Ensemble from Monterey

President's Message

During my early years playing professional gigs, I recall knowing only four or five other accordionists, and these were mostly through the telephone. We would call each other up when we had double dates to arrange for another musician to take the job so we wouldn't lose our contacts. It was not until 1990 when we formed the San Francisco Bay Area Accordion Club that I met scores of other professional musicians as well as just people who played for fun.

Our club, a reprise of the original SF Accordion Club from the early 1900's, grew in numbers; then the idea caught on and other clubs were formed around the Bay Area. My world view of the accordion took another jump when I started to learn about clubs from around our country through the exchange of newsletters. Wow, I was surprised to learn that many cities had sustained memberships in the hundreds from one end of our coun-

try to another. Here is a sample of just some of those with whom we exchange happenings in our clubs: Accordion International Music Society (Santa Barbara, CA); Chicago Accordion Club; Accordion Club of the Redwoods (Petaluma, CA); Golden State Accordion Club (Fairfield, CA); Accordion Lovers Society International (San Diego, CA); Silicon Valley Accordion Society (San Jose, CA); the Accordionaires (Hollywood, CA); Kimberley International Old-Time Accordion Competition (Kimberley, B.C.); Northwest Accordion Society (Washington and Oregon); Salt Lake Area Accordion Club; Arizona Accordion Club; Rose City Accordion Club (Woodburn, OR).

And these are only some of the accordion clubs that we know of through the exchange of newsletters. Folks, we are not alone! The accordion is very much a part of the musical heritage of our country—and yes, the world. I am proud to be a part of it. *Frank Montoro*

Directions to Oyster Point Yacht Club, 911 Marina Blvd., South San Francisco

From 101 traveling either north or south, take Oyster Point exit. Turn right on Marina Blvd. (be careful not to turn right on Gull Drive, just before Marina Blvd.!). Continue past gate house to sign "Oyster Point Yacht Club." There is plenty of parking and ramp access.

Our Website www.sfaccordionclub.com is now up and running!
Our thanks to Lynn Ewing's son Todd who is our Webmaster!

Beautiful Music and Some Surprises for a Spring Afternoon

Val's Colombo accordion was available for anyone wishing to use it for warm-up music, and **Steve Cannata** and **Bob Smith** each stepped up to the plate.

Pres. **Frank Montoro** announced that we have a few copies of *The Great Morgani* book that Frank Lima wrote about his interesting life and how he got to be "The Great Morgani." The book is available for \$15, and our club gets to keep \$5 from each one sold. Frank also announced that he made a mistake: **Vince Cirelli** is NOT retiring, which is great news. He also announced that today is **Taffy Steffen's** birthday—Taffy is the "distaff player" in the Accordion Magic 5. He also announced that The Internationals will be coming to the Italian American Social Club in September, and then he presented our very personable MC for the day, **Judy Dale**.

We had the very special pleasure of presenting "The Accordion Magic 5" from the Northern California Accordion Society. These wonderful players are **Dave Chelini**, **Jim Shoemaker**, **Taffy Steffen**, **Roger Cromwell** and **Vince Cukar**. Their first piece was the Scandinavian *Caller's Waltz* as very nicely arranged by Vince Cukar; followed by a Peter Martin arrangement of *Sway*, and then another Peter Martin arrangement: *Musette Café*; a Pietro Deiro arrangement of *Tico-Tico*, played as one rarely hears it, at a pace that one could follow and comprehend. Ah, then came the familiar *Pink Panther* theme (Peter Sellers and Henry Mancini). The group got hold of a lovely **Carl Fortina** arrangement, through **Harry Gay**, of an Ellington medley that included *Sophisticated Lady* and *Don't Get Around Much Anymore*.

This group has been playing together for about eight months, and is becoming more and more of a delight to hear, as they improve their musical sophistication. I hope we hear more and more of them.

Next we heard solos from some of the individuals in the group. **Vince Cukar** played a mellow jazz version of *It's the Talk of the Town*, then **Roger**

Cromwell played a beautiful Art Van Damme Arrangement of *Blue Moon* (you really need a long reach for some of those chords!) and a Peter Martin arrangement of *Summertime*. **Jim Shoemaker** played a Bulgarian song, *Sadie Donka* in 25/8 time—WOW! Jim made a point of recalling fondly a halftime show at Stanford that **Joe Smiell** put on many years ago! Last but certainly not least, we heard **Dave Chelini** play *In The Mood* with some very interesting variations.



The Accordion Magic 5

We thank **The Accordion Magic 5** and their individual members for a riveting show!

After the break, and Tutti's incredible feast, the drawings were held. I didn't get all the winners, but the winner of the \$130 cash prize was **Roy Fava**.

Then we had a very interesting and unusual presentation from **Kimric Smythe** of the **Smythe Accordion Center** in

Oakland, featuring a video of the manufacture of a Weltmeister accordion, taken in Klingenthal, Germany (on the Czech border). **Kimric** was there as a

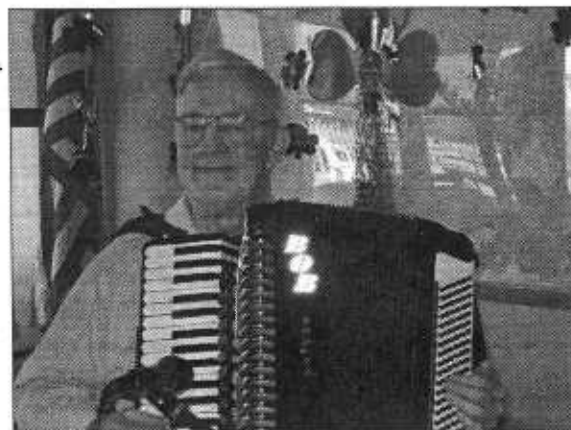
special guest, and had to travel many miles through the woods on a narrow gauge railroad to get to the site.

Every now and then we are treated to a song or two

from **Bob Smith**, and sometimes a little lesson. We got both today! First the little lesson on why Bob's righthand accordion



Kimric Smythe



Bob Smith

strap is offset to the right by a couple of inches: This placement sets the right-hand (piano) keyboard directly under the player's chin, where it is supposed to be, but very few accordionists have it that way. Some do manage to keep the keyboard under their chin, but it is not easy! (Bob moved the strap on my Pignini a couple of inches, and it does help—but the consequence is that it is more difficult to pick up the accordion by the straps that way. Still I'm glad I had it done. *Val*)

Bob says he is on an opera aria kick, so his two gorgeous pieces were *O Mio Babbino Caro* (Puccini) and the Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Pietro Mascagni). Beautiful job, Bob!

Reno Di Bono is always a total delight, and he surely lived up to his reputation today! First Reno thanked **Joe Smiell** for the last four years of learning by being a member of the ACE Ensemble (and I know he speaks for all of us in ACE!).



Reno Di Bono

Since retiring from 40 years of teaching in 2002, Reno has made it his purpose to master the accordion. He joined the ACE Ensemble, and also became a collector of the old arrangements of Deiro, Molinari, Frosini, Magnante et al. He would like to master as many of those classic accordion arrangements as possible. What a challenge!

Reno's opening piece was *Comedians' Gallop*; then he played an Italian polka, *Giulietta Polka*; *Anita Polka*; *Motorcycle Polka*, followed by one of my favorite French pieces, *Reine de Musette*. Reno has a beautiful voice and it is always a treat to hear him sing. He played and sang for us the perennial favorite, *Torno a Surriento*. Wow, just beautiful, Reno!

After a jazz improvisation, Reno played Pietro Frosini's arrangement of *Carnival of Venice*, according to stages in his dad's musical life, beginning with March 30, 1937 (I was "in the oven" at that time!), from a moldy old copy of his dad's when his dad studied with Angelo Cagnazzo, up to the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Each part of the piece has a stamped date by teacher Angelo Cagnazzo to show that it was completed. The first one (March 30, 1937) included some fast triplets. Then came a 4/20/37 version that was very fast; then came 5/20/37, *allegro con*

volto (I was *still* "in the oven"). But I was out of the oven a couple of months by 11/17/37, at which time the version was in "listesso tempo." Then came the 3/20/38 version (Hitler occupies Austria) and it seems to be in double time! When you read the history of the late 1930's you can see how dangerous the world became as dad Tony practiced his *Carnival of Venice*!

Well, Reno continued with a lively *Tico-Tico* and, by request from someone in the audience, *O Marie* with vocal, for dad Tony (who is 90 years old!). Another of your truly great performances, Reno!

President Frank Montoro thanked all the performers and announced that we will have **Ellen Karel**, **The ACE Ensemble**, and **The Marotta Family** in April. *Val*



Steve Cannata



Judy Dale and Jim Shoemaker



"Afterglow" with Dolores Impinna, Buddy Harpham, Nancy & Dave Chelini

Is My Accordion In Tune? By Bob Smith

Relative to other instruments, accordions tend to stay in tune for a long time. But eventually the effects of age, moisture, and excessive playing will change the pitch of the reeds. There are a few methods for you to tell when your accordion is no longer in tune, at least for the treble side. The easiest and quickest method is to play octaves on a single set of reeds and listen for "beats." I will try to explain what that means.

On the treble side most accordions have from 2 to 4 sets of reeds. Usually there are switches that allow one or more reed sets to be open or active when a key is pressed. On a four-reed accordion, the single reed sets are usually named Bassoon, Clarinet, Flute, and Piccolo. The Bassoon is the lowest pitched set of reeds and the Piccolo is the highest. The Clarinet and Flute reeds are pitched between the Bassoon and Clarinet, and are generally tuned to be fairly close together in pitch. There can be some confusion because some accordion makers do not use the standard notations for the switches. In addition, many accordions do not offer a switch for the Flute reeds alone. We will discuss that later.

Sometimes the switches are identified by short-hand diagrams such as those shown below:



Bassoon Clarinet Flute Piccolo

If your accordion has not been tuned for a long time, you will generally find that the highest pitched reeds (Piccolo or Clarinet) appear the most out of tune. Choose the switch for the highest reed set to begin. Play the highest note (usually an A) and the note one octave lower. Note that there are separate reeds for the pull and push bellows direction. Pull the bellows open with a steady pressure and listen for a pulsation of the sound. That is the "beating" phenomenon which results when the two notes are not exactly in a ratio of two to one. Ideally there will be no beating at all, but usually the effects of pressure, temperature or humidity will cause slight differences between the reeds which will result in the beating sound. Repeat the test by pushing the bellows closed and listening for the beats. Now play octaves for each note on the keyboard for the chosen reed block. You should be able to identify the worst notes just by careful listening. The number of beats in a second is an indication of how far the accordion is out of tune. How many beats in a second is acceptable? That is a matter of personal preference or opinion. I would suggest that fewer than one per second is fairly good and that ten per second is fairly bad.

After you have tested the Piccolo reeds, switch to the Clarinet reed and repeat the same test on the octaves. If you have the ability to switch to the Flute reeds, repeat the test on that switch. If not, see the next paragraph. Finally, switch to the Bassoon reeds and repeat the test again.

The Flute reeds usually demand a separate approach, for two different reasons. The first reason is that often the accordion makers do not offer a separate switch for the flute reeds. The other is that the Flute reeds are often deliberately tuned to be somewhat different from the Clarinet reeds, giving what is referred to as "wet" tuning. The method for testing the Flute reeds is to use the "Violin" switch. The Violin switch opens both the Clarinet reeds and the Flute reeds at the same time. The test is now to play single notes and listen for the beats. If you have, or want a "dry" tuning, there should either be no beats or the beats should be very slow. If you have a "wet" tuning, the amount of beating should gradually increase as the basic pitch increases.

Testing the bass keyboard is more difficult than testing the treble keyboard. If your accordion has a standard set of seven or more switches, you can do a limited amount of testing without taking the accordion apart. Begin with the switch on the bass that gives the highest pitch. The set of reeds you have selected is called "Soprano." That should be a single reed per note. Next choose the Clarinet switch on the treble side. Now play the C bass button and then play the related C on the treble side. The notes should have the same pitch. Play the bass and treble notes at the same time and again listen for beats. Then proceed to play each note in the chromatic scale. Listen for beats in both the push and pull direction. Next choose the bass switch that enables the two highest reeds, the Soprano and Alto reed sets. It is not necessary to involve the treble keyboard for testing the alto reeds. Just slowly play each note in the chromatic scale on the bass and listen for the beats. Next choose the Bass switch called Tenor-Piano. That switch allows you to test the Tenor reeds against the Alto reeds. The lowest set of reeds is called the Bass. If you have a Bass-Alto switch then that should enable the Bass and Alto reeds, and often the Tenor reeds. That allows you to test the Bass reeds against the others. The final set of bass reeds is called the Contralto. Select the Bass-Piano switch. That should enable the three lowest pitched sets of

(Continued on Page 6)



Maestro Galla-Rini

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2008**

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Let us send you more details and a registration form. **Contact Marian Kelly at 650 854-1896 or Kelly.marian@gmail.com**

Presented by: The San Francisco Accordion Chamber Ensemble Association, a nonprofit corporation



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*Presents
A concert of classical, semiclassical
and ethnic music*

*Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Redwood City
2124 Brewster Ave. (at Lowell), Redwood City
2:30 p.m. Sunday, April 27, 2008*

Suggested Donation \$10

*Ensemble Members: Aldo Argenti, Jr., Peter Di Bono, Reno Di Bono,
Mary-Alice Eldon, Lynn Ewing, Sharon Walters Greyhosky,
Ron Harris, Marian Kelly, Valerie Kieser, Debbie Knapp, Nora Mazzara,
Anne Métais, Frank Montoro, Robert Smith (on bass).
Music Director: Joe Smiell. Librarian: Chris Arild*



Word Has It . . .

. . . That Vince Cirelli was spotted up & about and playing the accordion (see photo)!!



. . . That, again this year, Tom Cordoni is organizing the annual Accordion Celebration in Petaluma, June 28-29, and our own SF Accordion band will be performing on Saturday the 28th. More info to follow.

. . . That there is still another music camp! This one is Gypsy Jazz, June 10-15 on the campus of Smith College in Northampton, MA. There are some accordions and several other instruments. For info, visit www.djangoinjune.com.

(Continued on page 8)

Very Sad News

Joe Smiell and the San Francisco Accordion Chamber Ensemble, and his many, many friends lost a world class percussionist and friend, Kevin McCarthy, on St. Patrick's Day. We miss him terribly and send our sincerest condolences to his wife Karen.

needs: the Bass, Tenor, and Contralto. You can repeat the scale and listen for beats. If your accordion passes all of the above tests, it is in good relative tune. It should sound very good when you are playing by yourself. If you are going to play with other instruments, especially in a band or orchestra, you may wish to know if your accordion is tuned to the same pitch as the other instruments. The standard is that the A above middle C should be 440 cycles per second. Unfortunately many accordions are tuned to a reference of 441 or 442 cycles per second. If you wish to be precise, I would recommend using a computer program called G-Tune. It can be down-loaded from the web site address: www.jhc-software.com. The program is "shareware," which means that it can be used for 30 days without charge. If you use it beyond 30 days, you should pay for the program (\$35). RLS



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When Do Our Fellow Accordion Clubs in the Bay Area (and slightly beyond) Meet?

Accordion Club of the Redwoods (ACR) regularly meets on the third Monday of the month, Hermann & Sons Hall, 860 Western Avenue, Petaluma. Contact: Kris Nelson krisnelson@aol.com or (707) 795-4860.

Silicon Valley Accordion Society (SVAS) meets on the first Sunday of the month, 1:30 p.m. at Harry's Hofbrau, 390 Saratoga Avenue between Kelly Blvd. and Stevens Creek Blvd. Contact: Bill Topogna (408) 984-5290.

Golden State Accordion Club (GSAC) has three chapters: The Vacaville club meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30, at Creekside Bar & Grill, 555 Main street, Vacaville. The Humboldt Club meets on the third Tuesday, 7:00 p.m., Humboldt Swiss Club, 5403 Tompkins Hill Road, Loleta, CA 95551. The Sacramento group meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at the Dante Club, 2330 Fair Oaks Blvd., Sacramento. Contact for all the GSAC Chapters: Carole Enneking (707) 864-2359.

Good Time Accordion Club (GTAC) meets on the second Wednesday of the month 7:00 p.m. in the Music Auditorium, Escalon High School, Escalon (just east of the Community Center). Contact: (209) 545-3603.

Northern California Accordion Society (NCAS) meets 6:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month at Lutheran Church Hall, 6365 Douglas Blvd, off Highway 80 in Granite Bay, CA. Contact: Vince Cukar (916) 791-3041.

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"Where is my friend playing?" Contact:

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- * Richard Denier in Carmel rdenier@sbcglobal.net * Peter Di Bono San Francisco peterdsf@gmail.com
- * Reno Di Bono South Bay ourhike@aol.com * William De Michelis South Bay wdd777@comcast.net
- * Joe Domitrowich South Bay www.capricious-accordion.com or www.alpinersusa.com * Don Nurisso nurisso@mindspring.com
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Coming up . . .

The Leavenworth International Accordion Celebration and Competition, June 18-22, 2008, Leavenworth, WA. This event is great fun!

Visit www.accordioncelebration.com

Or phone (509) 548-5807; FAX (509) 548-1014

Val will have the info at the Welcome Table at the April 20 meeting

Skyler Fell's Accordion Apocalypse "Accordion Night"

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Dave Dally

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Ellen Karel from the North Bay

Mike Marotta Sr. and Jr.

With Dave Dally on Violin, and

The San Francisco

Accordion Chamber Ensemble

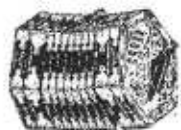
SAVE THE DATE !!!

SFAC Picnic

Sunday, July 20

(the same day as our
regular meeting)

Watch for details in up-
coming newsletters



Practicing with the 5 Time Rule
By Greg Fishman, Northwestern University
 Excerpted from *Jazz Improv Magazine* and
 submitted by *Sev García*

OBJECTIVE: *To play 5 consecutive repetitions of a specific beat, bar, phrase, section or an entire song with ZERO mistakes. Once you make a mistake you must go back to START and begin the first repetition again. Don't get frustrated—STAY COOL—just slow down more.*

The **5 Time Rule** is essential for bringing consistency into your playing, and it will give you the psychological edge necessary to keep external distractions or internal stress from causing mistakes in your playing.

It is *a mental game that you play against yourself*. It raises your level of concentration and gives you improved control over your instrument. It builds the mental discipline necessary to concentrate on the development of your solos and the interaction with your fellow musicians.

With each subsequent repetition you have a little bit more energy invested and a little bit more to "lose" emotionally, i.e. "I don't want to mess up NOW!" Your mind is playing tricks on you. You need to work through this so that your concentration cannot be broken.

The **5 Time Rule** is invaluable training, and the sense of accomplishment is really satisfying. It also makes for easier memorization and reduces the odds of failure.

(Sev's comments) Mozart's dad required him to play *10* errorless repetitions. Mozart quickly realized that "slow motion" repetitions ensured accuracy. Thus you hear the slogan "SLOW is FAST" . . . Start slow in order to be able to play fast. Play only as fast as your mind is cognitively aware of what you are doing.

Another slogan: Do not practice just until you play it right; practice until *you cannot play it wrong!* This is called **INTERNALIZATION**.

Each practice is an adventure.

Word Has It (continued from page 5)

. . . That Val was fortunate to have **Mario and Marbella Pedone** as houseguests for 4 days (see photos). Besides Mario's stellar performance at SVAS, Marbella fell in love with Val's horses—and also revealed herself as a pro dancer!



Marbella and "Chico"; Marbella as dancer



A totally delightful couple, Marbella and Mario

. . . That **Telmo Echeverría** is back from two months in Ecuador, and he surely was missed! Telmo also was a big help to Val and to the Pedones this past week.

. . . That the **SF Accordion Band** and the **SF Accordion Chamber Ensemble** both are hard at work on their respective upcoming programs for spring and summer.



Angels Explained by Children

"I only know the names of two angels: Hark and Harold." *Gregory, age 5*

"Everybody's got it all wrong.

Angels don't wear halos anymore. I forget why, but scientists are working on it." *Olive, age 9*

"Angels work for God and watch over kids when God has to go do something else." *Mitchell, age 7*



"You can't possibly hear the last movement of Beethoven's Seventh and go slow." *Oscar Levant,*

explaining his way out of a speeding ticket

"Berlioz says nothing in his music, but he says it magnificently."

James Gibbons Huneker

"There are still so many beautiful things to be said in C major."

Sergei Prokofiev

"I never use a score when conducting my orchestra. Does a lion tamer enter a cage with a book on how to tame a lion?"

Dimitri Mitropolous

"God tells me how the music should sound, but you stand in the way."

Arturo Toscanini to a trumpet player

"Already too loud!" *Bruno Walter at his first rehearsal with an American orchestra, on seeing the players reaching for their instruments.*

BAY AREA ACCORDION TEACHERS

Gene Bartolomei (Stockton area) (209) 886-5532

Bart Beninco (Petaluma) (707) 769-8744

Irving Cardoza (San Jose) (408) 264-9755

Peter Di bono (SF) (415) 753-1502

Lynn Ewing (San Carlos) (650) 365-1700

Sharon Walters Greyhosky (SF)
(415) 621-8284

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Bob Smith (Livermore) (925) 294-9659

Richard Yaus (San Bruno) (650) 872-2518

Mike Zampiceni (Sunnyvale) (408) 734-1565

Norma Zonay-Parsons (San Jose) (408) 246-3073

SF Accordion Band Practice

Wed., April 9 and 23, 7 p.m. at Val Kieser's Home in Oakland

CALL AHEAD!! Please join us!

Info: call Frank Schlotter (510) 339-1163
or Val (510) 531-4836 vtkacc@ifn.net

Our Sincere Thanks

To those who generously donate to the Club.

Each year we start a new cumulative list of donors. If you donate and your name doesn't show up in this column, please call Val (510) 531-4836 or vtkacc@ifn.net and let me know. We want to be sure you are recognized! Thanks! So far this year your Editor

has learned of donations from

Ray Abinanti, Leo Aquino, Thelma Bartoli (mem. Lou Soper), Lawrence Caserza, Peter Di Bono, Lynn Ewing, John Gullmes, Don Haga (mem. Lou Soper), Sue & Mike Hirigoyen, Val Kieser (mem. Lou Soper), Bruce Kirschner, Carley Koliha, Gwyn Lister, Herb Meier, James Montfredini, Frank Montoro, Sundi O'Mara, Vincent Rinaldi, Amil Samayoa (mem. Lou Soper), Michael Sanossian, Paul Thiel, Louis Traverso, Lore Warren (mem. Kevin McCarthy); Scott Williamson, Lee & Walt Woodall, Richard Yaus, Mark Zhagel (3)

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SFAC MEMBERSHIP
 \$30 per year, individual or family
 Mail check to S.F.A.C.
 C/O Valerie Kieser
 3437 Crane Way
 Oakland, CA 94602
 Admission to Meetings: \$5 for members
 \$10 for each guest

SFAC Officers
 President: *Frank Montoro*
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 Vice President: *Valerie Kieser* (510) 531-4836
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SFAC Newsletter Ad Policy
 Members may place one small ad for one month free of charge in a given year; after that the charge is \$6.00 per issue. A business-card-size ad costs \$6 per issue or \$60 per year for members; a quarter-page ad costs \$15.00 for members; a half-page ad costs \$25 for members. A full-page ad costs \$50.00 for members. Discount available for ongoing ads. Ads placed by non-members will cost twice the above-quoted prices. A flyer advertising an event may be included in one issue for \$25 for members, \$30 for non-members.



NEXT MEETING:
2:00 p.m. SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 2008
(Directions on page 1)



**Newsletter of the
 San Francisco Accordion Club**
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