

2011 SENATE AGRICULTURE

SB 2194

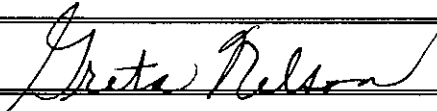
# 2011 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Senate Agriculture Committee**  
Roosevelt Park Room, State Capitol

SB 2194  
January 21, 2011  
13228

Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature



## Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

Relating to the office of official state hymn (Timer began 30:59)

## Minutes:

Attachment #1, #2, #3

**Senator Flakoll:** Meeting called to order on this Friday, January 21, 2011 SB 2194

**Connie Triplett:** Senator from Grand Forks District 18 (Attachment #1)

**Senator Flakoll:** Senator, walk us through what we are going to get this morning? What is the order?

**Connie Triplett:** A couple senators will speak in favor. CD player and Chuck Suchy are available.

**Carolyn Nelson:** Senator District 21 Fargo (Attachment #2)

**Senator Klein:** Elude to ancestors....."Blue Skirt Waltz".. I am looking for a direction as to why research why another tune wouldn't fall into this category?

**Carolyn Nelson:** Read through words.....talks about winds, trees, romance of area, midwinter nights, magic and warmth of the summer., etc a picture of North Dakota rather than a blue skirt waltz. You'll see what the words are and why we think this is the way it should go. Count to 3....not a polka.

**Senator Flakoll:** questions

**Joyce Kingsbury:** Senator from District 16 Pembina County. Here to support SB 2194. It is a great idea.... The history of the waltz as easy as 1-2-3. We grew up dancing...our entertainment in our growing up. Wonderful dance is a good foundation of dance. Encourage you to do pass on SB 2194

**Senator Flakoll:** questions

**Tom Isern:** Professor of History & University Distinguished Professor NDSU, Author, Singer, Farmer (Attachment #3)

**Senator Flakoll:** question

**Senator Flakoll:** Play recording

**Senator Flakoll:** Any other wish to testify in support of bill? Any opposition?

**Senator Flakoll:** Senator Triplett come to podium, please. We may have to ask Chuck some questions. In terms of requirements or intent, what happens if we are to adopt this in terms of copyright usage because it is a copyright piece of work. Is the situation that we would have to state, being the state has copyright, use for whatever we want? Example....printed in Blue Book till death do we part. Intent that we would be that we pay someone every time it was printed....or available to school children ....have you thought about this situation or is that a question for others?

**Connie Triplett:** Question for others....Chuck Suchy invited to podium to answer.

**Senator Flakoll:** Any requirement....any intent to make this a requirement in schools K -12?

**Connie Triplett:** No intention of doing that. Truly as a celebratory recognition of the glories of North Dakota and beauty of our state and cultural heritage that it recognizes.

**Senator Flakoll:** How would you respond? Why didn't have a competition to pick and have others songs submitted?

**Connie Triplett:** Anyone was free to bring one and still do competition on....bring one to displace this one if they think there is a better one. To me, this song resonates, feels like a song that should be a state song....written by ND native, written as part of our centennial celebration, speaks to our spirit. We did leave the field open as part of our research....we discovered that some other states have many state songs and variety. Labeling our as a state waltz, leave it open to bring other songs ..... we wanted it to be a positive and celebratory recognition that should speak to every North Dakotan.

**Senator Flakoll:** Very nice song

**Connie Triplett:** Song has been around for about 20 years...it has had some time to jell. We are trying to bring it up for legislation ....things (songs) can change every 2 years.

**Senator Flakoll:** This is about the words and music....not about the person who wrote the music.

**Connie Triplett:** Asked to follow just the drafting that was already in place....just acknowledging the composer of who wrote the music and words. Just tracks the existing legislation in terms of acknowledging ...the point of it is not to honor Chuck Suchy, but to honor quality of the work that has been put out.

**Senator Flakoll:** Gets a little dicey.... Any other questions?

**Chuck Suchy:** (composer of song..."Dancing Dakota") to the podium

**Senator Flakoll:** Is the intent to essentially allow the state of North Dakota we're to adopt and use as see fit without any copyright infringement that would be involved with as: printing it in the Blue Book which would be a common place? It could be something that would be provided for elementary school children without a cost to the school or political subdivisions or copyright problems.

**Chuck Suchy:** Thanks to all. Grass Roots movement and all royalties I have reaped (LOL) in last 25 years.....singing this song, I would be glad to relinquish all rights to this song.

**Senator Flakoll:** Concern for copying or written permission to use song....biggest concern

**Chuck Suchy:** Fine to facilitate the song in any way.

**Senator Flakoll;** Is our copy the same as what was played on the CD player today?

**Chuck Suchy:** Assume it was the same

**Senator Flakoll:** Someone confirmed it was the same.....just in case we need to have it re-recorded if it didn't record for us.

**Senator Flakoll** If you work in the Blue Book.....we would have to have it put in the BB  
More questions?

**Senator Flakoll:** Close hearing on SB 2194

# 2011 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Senate Agriculture Committee  
Roosevelt Park Room, State Capitol

SB 2194  
February 4, 2011  
14032

Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature

*Greta Nelson*

## Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

Relating to the official state Hymn.

## Minutes:

You may make reference to "attached testimony."

**Senator Flakoll;** Meeting called to order, February 4, 2011

**Senator Murphy** Motion for SB 2194

**Senator Heckaman;** Second

**Senator Flakoll;** Motion made and second for Do Pass SB 2194

**Senator Heckaman;** This is an opportunity to honor our state with a traditional dance that has come through the history our state. It doesn't add to anything on our appropriation add something to our history and I feel we should support this.

**Senator Luick;** My concerns with this....should this have been or should it still be a completion of some kind? Or do we accept it as a first one presented gets it?

**Senator Larsen;** Glad we didn't rush this through...many out of the loop on this. This could be a great promotional thing for kids. I don't the opportunity was given to others.

**Senator Murphy;** I have to agree that it is historical ..... I am glad it came forward and honors the state. Everyone has the right to propose whatever they want.

**Senator Flakoll;** clerk to take Do Pass roll for SB 2194

**Clerk:** Take roll for SB 2194

**Senator Flakoll;** Motion fails 3-3 (1 absent)

**Senator Flakoll;** Would ask for someone to try the other motion

**Senator Miller;** Move Do Not Pass

**Senator Larsen** Second

**Senator Flakoll;** Motion for Do Not Pass Discussion?

Senator Larsen; I think it should be in a category for competition and needs to be advertised. It is a great concept and idea....like the guy, but don't think everyone is served; there should be more knowledge/information about it.

**Senator Luick;** Next vote around, I will change my mind because I agree it should go in more depth.

**Senator Flakoll;** The motion is for Do Not Pass for SB 2194

**Senator Flakoll;** Clerk take the roll

**Clerk:** Roll 3-3-1

**Senator Flakoll;** Motion fails ..... Committee

**Senator Miller;** I move this out to committee recommendation

**Senator Heckaman;** Second

**Senator Flakoll :** discussion

**Senator Luick:** Confused

**Senator Flakoll;** If it comes out without committee recommendation, sometimes you get the lock and so then there, unlike other cases, person carries it to the floor....the carrier has an obligation to tell what the people liked, here is what the concerns were on the bill. Then there is a stoppage or then the carrier generally has an opinion on the bill (pro or con) and they would say they fulfilled my obligation to carry the bill, but the committee recommendation now I would like to offer up some of my personal thoughts. If this motion were to pass, there actually have been times where the WCR until leadership says take the bill out.

**Senator Luick** As it stands right now without a recommendation, it will still hit the Senate floor and it takes over from there?

**Senator Flakoll;** That is correct

**Senator Flakoll;** Clerk take roll for the motion to send to floor without committee recommendation.

**Clerk:** 6-0-1 absent

**Senator Flakoll;** Senator Heckaman will carry

**Senator Flakoll**; When you carry a bill to the floor, we can't use any props.

**Senator Flakoll** adjourned.

Date: 2/4/11  
 Roll Call Vote #: 3-3-1

2011 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ROLL CALL VOTES  
 BILL/RESOLUTION NO. 2194

Senate Senate Agriculture Committee

Check here for Conference Committee

Legislative Council Amendment Number \_\_\_\_\_

Action Taken Do Pass

Motion Made By Senator Murphy Seconded By Senator Heckaman

Representatives	Yes	No	Representatives	Yes	No
Senator Tim Flakoll		✓	Senator Joan Heckaman	✓	
Senator Oley Larsen		✓			
Senator Jerry Klein					
Senator Larry Luick	✓				
Senator Joe Miller		✓			
Senator Bill Murphy	✓				

Total (Yes) 3 No 3

Absent 1 Jerry Klein

Floor Assignment \_\_\_\_\_

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:



Date: 2/4/11  
 Roll Call Vote #: 3-3-1

2011 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ROLL CALL VOTES  
 BILL/RESOLUTION NO. 2194

Senate Senate Agriculture Committee

Check here for Conference Committee

Legislative Council Amendment Number \_\_\_\_\_

Action Taken Do NOT Pass

Motion Made By Senator Miller Seconded By Senator Larsen

Representatives	Yes	No	Representatives	Yes	No
Senator Tim Flakoll		✓	Senator Joan Heckaman		✓
Senator Oley Larsen	✓				
Senator Jerry Klein					
Senator Larry Luick	✓				
Senator Joe Miller	✓	un			
Senator Bill Murphy		✓			

Total (Yes) 3 No 3

Absent 1 Jerry Klein

Floor Assignment \_\_\_\_\_

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

Date: 2/4/11  
 Roll Call Vote #: 60-1

2011 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ROLL CALL VOTES  
 BILL/RESOLUTION NO. 2194

Senate Senate Agriculture Committee

Check here for Conference Committee

Legislative Council Amendment Number \_\_\_\_\_

Action Taken Send to floor without recommendation

Motion Made By Sen Miller Seconded By Sen Heckaman

Representatives	Yes	No	Representatives	Yes	No
Senator Tim Flakoll	✓		Senator Joan Heckaman	✓	
Senator Oley Larsen	✓				
Senator Jerry Klein					
Senator Larry Luick	✓				
Senator Joe Miller	✓				
Senator Bill Murphy	✓				

Total (Yes) 6 No 0

Absent 1 Jerry Klein

Floor Assignment Senator Heckaman


If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**

**SB 2194: Agriculture Committee (Sen. Flakoll, Chairman) recommends BE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION (6 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2194 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.**



2011 TESTIMONY



SB 2194

Testimony of Sen. Connie Triplett  
District 18, Grand Forks  
In Support of Senate Bill 2194  
January 21, 2011



Chairman Flakoll and Members of the Senate Agriculture Committee. I am very pleased to introduce SB 2194, which proposes to name Chuck Suchy's composition *Dancing Dakota* as North Dakota's official state waltz. First, I want to note that the sponsors of this bill are not seeking to displace any other composition. As you can see, we are suggesting that the current state song be re-labeled as the state hymn. We would also leave intact the state march and the state folk dance. We believe that more is better when celebrating the cultural heritage of our state.

Chuck Suchy composed *Dancing Dakota* in 1989, during the year that he was serving as North Dakota's official centennial troubadour. *Dancing Dakota* was written and recorded as part of an album to pay tribute to North Dakota's Centennial. More than 20 years have passed since the work was released and it still resonates, as you will hear from the testimony today.

By way of introducing this bill, I want to take a moment to speak generally about the importance of music to the heritage of our state. Before the days of radio, television, stereos, CDs, ipods, itunes, concerts in mega-arenas, and all the other devices by which individuals are able to access music on demand, music was primarily a communal event, as it had been since time immemorial. Our grandparents and great-grandparents, when settling the plains of Dakota Territory and the new state of North Dakota, gathered in each other's homes to make their own music. Live music in an intimate setting has always been a community-building experience, and Chuck Suchy is continuing that tradition.

This is a timely bill because the Smithsonian Institution is celebrating America's regional music in a special traveling exhibit this year. (See attachment.) The exhibit will visit various places in our neighboring state of Minnesota. North Dakota is not among the states where the music exhibit will be appearing, but this recognition is a way of joining the celebration of regional music.

Chuck Suchy is one of very few native North Dakota composers to achieve national and even international fame while continuing to live and work in North Dakota. Tom Isern will describe for you the musical, poetic, and cultural attributes of *Dancing Dakota* which commend it for the special treatment we are proposing. Dr. Isern is Professor of History and Distinguished Professor at NDSU, where he also serves as Director of the Center for Heritage Renewal. He will also provide the committee with a transcript of the song for the record. And, with the Chairman's consent, we will either play a CD of the song for the committee or let Chuck give you a live performance. Please join me in supporting *Dancing Dakota* as the official state waltz.

# Smithsonian music exhibit five state tour includes Minnesota

by **Armedy Armstrong**  
Associated Press

ASBURY PARK, N.J. — The Smithsonian hears America singing, playing instruments and telling its history through music.

The Washington cultural institution's New Harmonies program will feature this musical history with a traveling exhibit in five states — Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, Ohio and South Carolina. Communities in those states — including Austin, Evansville and Roseau in Minnesota — will host performances and other events in conjunction with the exhibit.

The program, which is part of the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street project, showcases some of America's richest stories, said Carol Harsh, director of Main Street.

"There's a lot of fine music in this country; you kind of take it for granted," said South Carolina's John Fowler, an Appalachian storyteller, musician and radio host. "New Harmonies is a great snapshot."

Venues in the five states include libraries, historical societies and performance spaces in small towns, rural areas and big cities, with the first performance scheduled for Asbury Park, N.J. The sites host the New Harmonies traveling exhibit while developing unique, local spinoffs and promoting already well-established programs.

"Connecting the national story with their own personal experience is pretty profound," Harsh said.

Immerse yourself in "America's soundtrack," an intricate cross-pollination of genres.

The core New Harmonies exhibit explores sacred music — "Elvis Presley sang earliest in the church," notes Harsh — as well as the secular: Cajun and Creole influenced Zydeco; Mexican American Tejano; Jewish Klezmer; and folk music (Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, Joan Baez) that sustained civil rights movements.

Try out instruments born from the innovations of poverty: a cigar box guitar; a Cajun rub board, strummed with a thimble or bottle opener.

Make a diddley bow. "The earliest ones were just two



Associated Press

▲ The Terp in Austin, Minn., was a big-band ballroom decades ago. Today, it's called El Parral and is mainly used by the local Latino community. One aspect of the New Harmonies program in Austin will explore the site's history and how its use as a musical venue has changed over the years.

nails in the side of a house, with bailing wire stretched between them," said Mississippi humanities official David Morgan.

In New Jersey, New Harmonies traveling exhibit debuts March 12 at the Asbury Park Public Library, home of a Bruce Springsteen collection. But programs are already starting.

"It's going to be like Woodstock all year," songwriter and former Styx band member Glen Burtnik proclaimed at a recent Musical Heritage Year fundraiser. In keeping with a Smithsonian focus on the future, the bluegrass and rock show at the legendary Stone Pony music club included a 16-year-old, classically trained violinist, Taylor Hope.

Asbury Park's storied past is intertwined with John Philip Sousa; Glen Miller; Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Count Basie, Billie Holiday, Lionel Hampton and Johnny Cash. During New Harmonies, teens will explore elders' favorite musical moments.

In Ohio, Bluegrass and more will be on tap at Ohio's eight host communities, starting March 14 at the Quaker Heritage Center (College and Douglas streets, Wilmington).

Ohio's heritage also hails from Vietnam, India, Croatia

and Serbia, said humanities official Jack Shortlidge.

Performers will discuss their music, its origins and their own life experiences. After World War II, people brought along bluegrass when they moved from the Appalachian regions of Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee to find work in Cincinnati, Columbus and Dayton.

Mississippi will host a New Harmonies encore; its first got rave reviews, Morgan said.

The blues, with African American roots, influenced jazz, rock and rockabilly; old-timers ran a glass bottle or pocket knife over the strings to play slide guitar. Local music also has French, Spanish, Creole and Jewish flavors.

South Carolina organizers are lining up performances, instrument-making workshops, songwriting and singing contests.

For more information, go to Smithsonian: [www.museumonmainstreet.org](http://www.museumonmainstreet.org) or [www.minnesotahumanities.org](http://www.minnesotahumanities.org).

## New Harmonies in Minnesota

Think Minnesota's mostly about polka music? Think again.

The state's New Harmonies

tour will accentuate "absent narratives" — musical, written and oral stories that haven't always gotten mainstream attention: Mexican, Somali, Dakota, Ojibwe, Laotian.

"Increasingly, there are more voices in play in the culture, the meaning of this place," said state humanities official Matthew Brandt. "They are part of the Minnesota story."

Lots of people have heard of Minneapolis' Guthrie Theater; this spotlight shines on "energized" smaller communities.

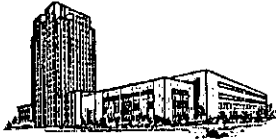
Minnesota gets rolling March 12 at the Austin Public Library. One project will relate how different cultures have used a local ballroom; a dance will bring them all together. Decades ago, the place was called the Terp and hosted big bands; now called El Parral, it's mainly patronized by the local Latino community.

Evansville, Minn., plans open mic nights and multi-language hymn singing led "by authentic Dakota, Norwegian, German, Swedish and English voices."

The state's tour winds up near the Canadian border in November and December, at the Roseau County Museum.

— Associated Press

1/8/11  
CF Herald



## NORTH DAKOTA SENATE

STATE CAPITOL  
600 EAST BOULEVARD  
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



Senator Carolyn Nelson  
District 21  
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Fargo, ND 58103-1959  
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~~Assistant Minority Leader~~

**COMMITTEES:**  
Judiciary  
Government and Veterans Affairs

Mr Chairman, members of the Agriculture Committee, I am Carolyn Nelson, Senator, district 21, Fargo and am in support of SB 2194.

I currently sit on three boards here in the state of North Dakota that all are in existence to preserve the culture of the state and the United States – the Ft Mandan foundation, advisory board to the International Music Camp and the ND Federation of Music Clubs. Culture includes many facets but obviously includes music, art, dance and history. Today we are asking you to make music and dance a part of our official history.

The waltz is one of the oldest forms of dance and was danced by our ancestors as they settled this state. Music was and still is found in many homes of the state, provided by voice, guitar, mouth harp or piano in those early days and by a variety of instruments now.

The words of this song, along with the rhythm of this dance make you think about how lucky we are to live here in North Dakota.

I encourage a Do Pass recommendation on SB 2194

#3

**Testimony on SB 2194**, A BILL . . . relating to designation of "Dancing  
Dakota," written and composed by Chuck Suchy, as the official North Dakota  
waltz

To the Standing Committee on Agriculture  
North Dakota State Senate  
21 January 2011

By Tom Isern  
Professor of History & University Distinguished Professor  
North Dakota State University  
Author, Singer, Farmer

It is appropriate to seize any opportunity, including this one, to express gratitude to our citizen legislators for their service to the people of North Dakota, and so I begin my remarks today with thanks: for your service throughout the long session, for your kind consideration of this bill, and for the opportunity for me to speak to it. I feel qualified to offer some observations that are, I think, germane to the consideration of the bill, and I can make them without taking too much of your time.

First, let me say what I am not here to do. In recent weeks I have heard or read many people say we should enact this bill as an honor to the author of "Dancing Dakota," Chuck Suchy. Certainly Chuck, the lyric voice of North Dakota, beloved of its best citizenry, deserves high honors from his native state, and at any appropriate time I will join in the chorus for their bestowal. He is, moreover, a fine fellow, whom I am proud to count as friend. Individual honor, however, is not a good reason for designation of a state waltz. For the sake of individual honor, we should present Chuck with--and you heard it here first--the Roughrider Award. So I am not here to go on about Chuck's virtues.

In my opinion today's proceedings, rather, should be about the song, "Dancing Dakota," and about its suitability for enshrinement in the iconography of our state. As an author, a scholar, a singer, and a person of the land, I feel comfortable in taking the critic's role in regard to this text of our life as North Dakotans, and in concluding, on the basis of due consideration, that "Dancing Dakota" fully



deserves the expression of official esteem embodied in SB 2194, that is, designation as the state waltz of North Dakota.

My assessment begins with the obvious proposition that this song, in which dance is the pervasive metaphor, is a waltz, and a fine one at that, and that a waltz has especial appeal as an official expression for North Dakota. Waltz time, 3/4 time in music, is particularly suitable for the landscape of a prairie state. The great folksongs of landscape expression on our Great Plains, such as "Home on the Range," and in the grassland steppes of other continents--folksongs of the Germans from Russia such as "Wie Schön Ist das Ländliche Leben" come to mind--are written in 3/4 time. We should have a state waltz to express the sense of our prairie landscape; we now have only a state march.

Moreover, a waltz has particular utility for ceremonial use. A waltz is the appropriate genre for opening or closing any official dance event, such as a gubernatorial ball. A waltz is, in a word, *stately*.

This particular waltz possesses, too, the virtue of versatility. We know the song, as Chuck has recorded it, in an arrangement and instrumentation suitable for a country dance, including a fiddle break well calculated to rouse dancers onto a rough floor in some such rustic setting as Elroy Lindaas's hayloft. The song cleans up nicely, however, and will respond well to more elaborate instrumentation, right up to full orchestra. The song is singable by citizens with modest vocal talents, is the more stirring when rendered by a talented vocalist, and can easily be arranged for a variety of vocal ensembles. It possesses a chorus that invites people to join in the singing without requiring them to remember long patches of lyrics or to exercise themselves across a great range of pitches.

From the musical qualities of the song I now move to the text, and consider the textual qualities in two aspects: the literary and the cultural. The literary question I pose is, how does "Dancing Dakota" stand up as poetic expression?

First, the language in "Dancing Dakota" is accessible without being folksy in any mawkish sense. It is plain-spoken and felicitous. The expression is direct, and yet some lines possess sufficient ambivalence ("I dance with the ones who come home again," for instance) to stir thoughtful reflection.

Second, as to poetic quality, "Dancing Dakota" is full of imagery that evokes North Dakota. What Dakotan has not been stirred by the "sunset of summer," a joy nowhere so sublime as in high latitudes, and what hunter of sharptails across our

grassy hills has not felt the "aura of autumn"? Such imagery gives the song a sense of place worthy of official adoption.

Third, the song embraces an appropriate and inclusive metaphor--dance, in which all may share--and follows through with it consistently. No mixed metaphors here.

And fourth, the rhetorical strategy of the song draws in the listener. The spoken invitation, "I am Dakota. Will you please dance with me?", is an artful mixture of seduction and challenge. Most of the text presents us with the alluring charms of Dakota, beckoning us, but ultimately we are challenged, too, by this bold seeker of our affections. We must, with Dakota, take both the sun and the rain, engage "the ones who come home again," and "dance with justice and with dignity." We are promised pleasures and rewards, but only if we prove ourselves good and worthy people. Notice, too, that the thrice-repeated chorus shifts into the imperative--"Dance." There may be ambivalence in parts of the song, but there is no indecision. We will dance.

The artful text, too, embodies cultural values that we hold dear. The text expresses reverence for the prairie landscape; unabashedly declares its love of home; and, without getting political, incorporates the touchstone values of justice and dignity. "Dancing Dakota" is a song that brings us together in a community of the imagination. To put it simply: this song works as official expression because it works for us as individual lovers of this place.

I predict, my dear senators, that the stirring chorus of this waltz will lodge in your heads. You will find yourself humming it or whistling it at odd moments. Your feet might even start to move in time with it. Dakota asks, May I please have this dance?

## **"Dancing Dakota," *Plains Folk*, by Tom Isern, as broadcast on Prairie Public Radio**

If you want to be someone in North Dakota, then you gotta have a nylon jacket with something on the back of it. Buffalo Wildlife Club, Pastime Bar & Grill, or something - or best of all on the back of your jacket, North Dakota Centennial 1989, because that shows you've been around a while, and you've taken care of your jacket, and it still fits.

1989 was the year Chuck Suchy issued the cassette, later the CD, *Dancing Dakota*, which along with other great compositions, like "The Ballad of Hazel Miner," features the title song, "Dancing Dakota," a waltz. At the time Chuck was serving as the official balladeer of the state centennial.

Does anybody else remember how things were in 1989? I mean, we got up a pretty good celebration, all things considered, but times were hard on the northern plains. The late 1980s were the worst of times in terms of out-migration of youth and of people in general. Plus there was a long-term drought, and a terrific amount of general grumpiness. To celebrate North Dakota in those times was an act of faith.

An act of faith is what the song, "Dancing Dakota," was, and still is. More to the point, it's a love song, a courtship with the land. "I am Dakota," the song says, "Will you dance with me?"

Waltzes are standard as love songs, but 3/4 time is particularly appropriate for a love song to the open plains. The time signature evokes the rolling landscape of the Great Plains like no other. Its cadence suits the rhythm of regional speech. 3/4 time doesn't have pomp, it has dignity.

North Dakota already has a state song, a march, "The North Dakota Hymn," text by the poet James Foley, musical setting by Doc Putnam of North Dakota Agricultural College. Both of them great North Dakotans, but "The North Dakota Hymn" doesn't speak to us. The Gold Star Marching Band keeps playing it at Bison games, but audience response is nil; indeed, recognition is nil.

Out of respect, we might keep the old standard by Foley and Putnam as the state song, but North Dakota needs a state waltz. A waltz is suitable for quiet contemplation, and even better for ceremonial use. It is the right sort of song for leading off a gubernatorial ball or for winding up a barn dance. (Are you listening, Elroy? I can hear you there in the loft now - "Now is the time that we must say goodbye. . . .")

Our state waltz should be: "Dancing Dakota," by Chuck Suchy. Like that old centennial jacket, it still fits, in good times and bad. It is as timeless as young love or as a faithful union.

For I have been dancing for thousands of years  
With many for partners,  
I've danced joy and tears.  
To the flags o'er me flown, I've given a chance  
I am Dakota may I please have this dance?

If you want to dance with Dakota--if you want to join the campaign to make "Dancing Dakota" our state waltz--then start out by looking up "Dancing Dakota: State Waltz of North Dakota," on Facebook. Join up, post a comment, and spread the word.

Dance Dakota far as you see  
Dance and your spirit renew  
Dance Dakota long may we be  
Dancing Dakota with you.

# Dancing Dakota

Words & music copyright Chuck Suchy

The music is calling quiet and clear  
A voice gently falling on the listening ear  
It calls from the rivers, from the wind in the trees  
It calls, I know you, Do you know me?  
For I am a dancer, I am a dance  
I am a dreamer living romance  
I am all ages, timeless I be  
I am Dakota. Will you please dance with me?

Dance, Dakota, far as you see  
Dance and your spirit renew  
Dance, Dakota, long may we be  
Dancing, Dakota, with you

I am the magic of mid-winter night  
I am the warmth of a spring morning light  
The aura of autumn in quiet repose  
A sunset of summer, a wild prairie rose  
And I have been dancing for thousands of years  
With many for partners, I've danced joy and tears  
To the flags o'er me flown I've given a chance  
I am Dakota. May I please have this dance?

I dance with the sun, I dance with the rain  
I dance with the ones who come home again  
I dance with justice and with dignity  
I am Dakota, will you please dance with me?