



## CHIEF OF CHATTER

**Claudia Littlefair**



Welcome to the first edition of "Alberta Chatter"! This issue features a thank you letter from an injured dancer, ways our dance community can connect with each other; some information about The Holiday Ranch (located by Red Deer); and a new feature called 'Chatter Close-ups'. I look forward to your comments, contributions and suggestions for future issues.

## GRATEFUL DANCER SURVIVES FALL

On August 27, after enjoying a 3-month east coast holiday, Al and Carol Moody were visiting with relatives in Winnipeg, Manitoba. They were leaving for the Leduc Convention in the morning. Al went into the house to use the washroom. By mistake, he opened the door to the basement, stepped in, tumbled down a flight of stairs, and slammed his forehead onto a cement wall at the bottom. He was found about ten minutes later and rushed to the hospital. X-rays and MRI's revealed that he had fractured his neck on the C1 and C2 vertebrae just below the skull. He was badly bruised with no other broken bones. Al was told that had he hit the wall head on, he likely would be paralyzed from the neck down or expired. He remained in the Winnipeg Hospital for a week, until he was healthy enough to be released. They stayed in their motor home for three weeks until he was able to travel. Fortunately, there is no paralysis, and he is expected to make a full recovery.



### Message From Al Moody

There exists in Square and Round Dancing a feature unknown in many other activities. It is not what you would expect. The camaraderie and sincere friendships are what set Square and Round Dancing apart from all other activities. It's not just about the dancing!

When sickness or accident occurs, there is always great support within one's Club, and depending upon the stature of the person, that support and concern spreads into the dance community. I was badly injured in a recent fall which could have had much more serious consequences. Apparently, the news of my accident was made known at a dance festival I was expected to attend. As a result, I have received emails, get well cards and phone calls from many people that I know - and it was also the response from those I hardly know, that really touched me. It is a very humbling experience to know that many people really cared about me.

Consider any of the funerals of former or present dancers you may have attended. Often the families are surprised by the large numbers of Square and Round Dancers who offer support and condolences. They are not accustomed to this genuine outpouring of friendship and camaraderie.

What a strong bond there is amongst Square and Round Dancers! We do not tell the world about these small but important aspects of our activity. They are what makes you like Square and Round Dancing as

much as you do. This dance community has a lot to offer to everyone. It's just not about the dancing! I would like to sincerely thank everyone who sent get well wishes, whether in thought, prayer, spoken or written form. It was all very comforting. Life is very fragile. Thank you.

- Al Moody, and his private nurse and wonderful wife, Carol



## THE 'ALBERTA ADVANTAGE'

What an advantage - we can see what our dance community is doing across the Province through three independent sources:

- **'ALBERTA CHATTER' NEWSLETTER** - Published every two months. To get on this email list send your address to Claudia at [horizon2@shawbiz.ca](mailto:horizon2@shawbiz.ca). **Option:** Anyone wishing to have a hard copy mailed to them, can pre-pay \$10 for six issues. This will cover postage, printing and paper costs. If you want both email and hard copy, that works, too. Mail \$10 cash or cheque payable to:  
Claudia Littlefair  
322 Maple Tree Way, Strathmore, AB, T1P-1H9.
- **PHOTOS** - James & Grace Chen, Calgary, take numerous photos at all the dances they attend, then send them out via group email. To get on their list, email them at [jchen\\_jr@yahoo.com.tw](mailto:jchen_jr@yahoo.com.tw).
- **DANCE VIDEOS** - Wally Wychoopen, Edmonton, spends hours taking videos at dance events, then condenses them, adds commentary, and posts them on YouTube. To get on his email list, contact him at [wallywychoopen3@gmail.com](mailto:wallywychoopen3@gmail.com).

*Read more about these people who spend hours on their craft - at no pay, and on their own initiative.*

## 'ALBERTA CHATTER' NEWSLETTER - by Claudia Littlefair

### About Us

I'm one of four siblings born and raised in Edmonton. Both my parents immigrated from Germany and met in Edmonton, and German is my first language. Dave is one of nine siblings and was born in Manchester, England. He came over with his family when he was 7 years old. We married in 1980, and Dave came complete with a ready-made family - a son (11) and daughter (8). In 1982 we added another daughter and in 1984 our youngest son was born.

We are both employed full-time. Dave works for a large food import company based in Toronto. He's sometimes referred to as the Cheese Guru, because he sells cheeses from all over the world. I work at RE/MAX Real Estate in Strathmore as office administrator.

## Our Square Dance Story

The first time we saw a Square Dance demo we knew we wanted to join! It was around 1980 at West Edmonton Mall. The dancers were wearing the National Convention outfits - white skirts embroidered with the Alberta wild rose. Unfortunately our lives were too busy at the time and we had to put dancing on the back burner. In 1994 we moved from Devon to our current home in Strathmore. One of the first things we did was sign up for lessons. We didn't want to miss out again.

Our youngest son graduated high school in 2002, and that's when our dance schedule blossomed from one night a week to several nights a week, summer dances, weekends and conventions. In 2003 Dave started the learning process to become a caller, and in 2008 became Strathmore's club caller. The next year I started cueing rounds.

## "Convention Chatter" Newsletter

In 2012 we were on the High River Alberta Convention committee, and I volunteered to do a newsletter. Just prior to that, a retired square dancer had given me years worth of past monthly 'American Square Dance Magazines'. I read these over the next three months and was amazed to find out that many of the items were still relevant today, such as our history, promotion, retention of dancers, and even our dress code debate. It seemed the perfect fit to include some of these topics in the newsletter, and so "Convention Chatter" was born.

## Something NEW - "Alberta Chatter"!

Fast forward to 2014 - and three years of "Convention Chatter" later. I still have lots of articles and ideas to share, but . . . what if the newsletter were expanded to include all Alberta events? Readership could expand to include all dancers and leaders. In addition to news about convention, the newsletter could be a medium for sharing ideas on promotion, retention, our history, special events and more! And it could be published, via email, on a regular basis. After much thought and consideration, I've made the decision to go independent and change the newsletter from "Convention Chatter" to "Alberta Chatter".

## PHOTOS

### - by Grace & James Chen with help from daughter, Athena About Us

James & Grace were born and raised in Taiwan, a scenic subtropical island (similar to the size of Vancouver Island) with a population of 23 million people. They met through an International Folk Dance Club in 1978, and married in 1982. They have two children, Athena and Stan, and two grandchildren, Damion and Nolan.

James obtained his electrical engineering degree from the Chung-Li University and was the principal engineer for a consulting company. Grace was most passionate about raising their children and fortunately she was able to stay home for several years before she started a career as a librarian in a public elementary school. Music and dance were

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always a great part of the lives of the Chen family members: going to operas/musicals, participating in choirs, and taking music and dance lessons are all activities that are near and dear to them.

## Immigrating to Canada

The journey to their second homeland started in 1999 when James and Grace took the family for a vacation to western Canada. The trip was so wonderful that Athena affirmed her desire to attend university in Canada. Prompted by a sense of adventure and the passion to provide the best support/care for their children, James and Grace applied for immigrant status to Canada. The immigration approval process took two years, during which James led several projects domestic and abroad and had plenty of opportunity to practice his English. His company offered him early retirement just when the immigration was approved. Athena also got admitted to the University of Calgary around that time. Everything - the timing, the practice using English, and the retirement settlement - seemed to happen as if "God led the way for us to be here".

## Our Square Dance Story

The Chen family landed in Calgary in 2001, and James and Grace worked nights at a variety of jobs. The first time Grace encountered square dancing was when a group of square dancers came to perform at Cochrane's Bethany Care Centre where Grace worked in 2006. Grace loved it! She knew that one day when their work schedules allowed it, and her English improved, they would join. In the meantime, she researched online to learn about square dancing.

In 2008, while both were working nights for the Calgary School Board as janitors, James and Grace decided to advance their new careers by challenging the 'Fifth Class Engineer's Certificate of Competency' exam - passing this exam could lead to future promotions and day time employment. Studying a trade in English was hard - especially for Grace - so they joined a study group. They met every Saturday, and soon James was leading the group. Their hard work paid off: eleven out of the 12 people in the study group passed the test! That kind of success rate was never heard of before or since.

Finally, in 2009, James and Grace joined a Calgary Square Dance club. Five years later, they are Advanced-2 Square Dancers and Phase III+ Round Dancers. They are quick to tell you that their years of International Folk Dancing helped them to learn.

## Photos, Photos and Photos . . .

Soon after joining, James and Grace snapped pictures and emailed them out to those people in the photos. The photos were well received and appreciated, so they kept taking more and more of them. It didn't take long for their email list to grow, because they went to as many dances as possible. It gave James a chance, too, to continue using some of the skills he picked up when he was part of a photo club in Taiwan.

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Today James and Grace are considered by many to be exceptional ambassadors for our great activity. They continue to willingly give up dance time in order to take photos - whether asked to or on their own initiative, and spend considerable time downloading and emailing out their results. They say that it gives them a chance to repay others the kindness and encouragement that was extended to them when they immigrated to Calgary.

### DANCE VIDEOS - by Wally Wychopen

#### My Square Dance Story

I started square dancing in Elk Point in 1955 while a friend of mine & I were walking down the wooden sidewalk in town minding our own business. Some square dancing adults needed some extra bodies. They grabbed us & threw us into a square, and before we knew it, we were hooked. I received my Square Dancing Diploma from Johnny Maxwell on February 25, 1956.

Adults took us on out of town dance visits, and it was at a square dance in St Paul that I won the first thing in my life: a pair of socks as a door prize.

My biggest problem in square dancing as a teen was being a partner for adult ladies who were making eyes at the men & not paying attention.

#### About Me

I have a Registered Psych Nurse Diploma (North Battleford), BSc Degree in Civil Engineering, (Oklahoma), and a Bachelor of Education (Saskatoon). But the most valuable education was in Square Dancing. It gave me confidence, self esteem, and something to do in later years in life. My main career was being a high school teacher at the North Battleford Comprehensive High School where I was on a committee for developing a curriculum for Mechanical Technology.

Tragically, in 1987 our son was killed in a car accident. It was a very hard time and Square Dancing helped to pull me through it.

#### Dance Videos

I wanted to learn higher levels of dancing, and since local lessons were not available I purchased the complete set of Gold Star Video Round Dances, and later the set of Roundalab tapes through to Phase 6.

To gain floor time, I video taped dances for my own use and practiced both square & round dancing at home. For that, I didn't need a partner, and my first A2 dance was at the Holiday Ranch with a lady from Montana who said I did as well as 70% of the floor. That was pretty good as I had never been to an A2 level weekend.

Watching my video tapes made me want to go to more places, and so with my holidays while teaching & retirement I kept a record of going to



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376 Square and 131 Round Dance clubs in North America. My notes show a list of 436 different Callers & 313 Cuers. I stopped counting on March 7, 2001 - 13 years ago. Some of my story is on YouTube under "Nostalgia Square Dancing".

As I look back on my recordings, many are no longer with us, and those who still are, enjoy seeing square dancing the way it used to be, and I get many thanks for that. Many say that while they no longer square & round dance, they are happy at home watching the videos & remembering the good old days, that bring back fond memories.

Since April 2011, I have about 200,000 "life time views" on YouTube which include views of videos I've deleted. Since I don't allow advertising, I get nothing for doing this. It's just a hobby.

It helps us (me included) brighten many days by simply watching one of those old videos. Those who were worried about privacy worry no more. They are proud of their achievements and of the friends they made over the years.

I have also taken about 20,000 pictures of all kinds of organizations, weddings, reunions, children group & individual photos, along with many high school grad group photos which can still be seen on the walls of NBCHS (North Battleford).

### Kids Answers in School

#### History Answers

Ancient Egypt was inhabited by mummies and they all wrote in hydraulics. They lived in the Sarah Dessert and traveled by Camelot. The climate of the Sarah is such that the inhabitants have to live elsewhere.

The Greeks were a highly sculptured people, and without them we wouldn't have history. The Greeks also had myths. A myth is a female moth.

Socrates was a famous Greek teacher who went around giving people advice. They killed him. Socrates died from an overdose of wedlock. After his death, his career suffered a dramatic decline.

It was an age of great inventions and discoveries. Gutenberg invented removable type and the Bible. Another important invention was the circulation of blood. Sir Walter Raleigh is a historical figure because he invented cigarettes and started smoking. And Sir Francis Drake circumcised the world with a 100 foot clipper.

Joan of Arc was burnt to a steak and was canonized by Bernard Shaw for reasons I don't really understand. The English and French still have problems.

## THE HOLIDAY RANCH

By Bev Hanson

Come dance in the fresh country air! The Hub at Holiday Ranch, west of Innisfail, offers weekend dance camps from May through August. The summer of 2015 will be the 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dance camps at Holiday Ranch.



Jim and Marie Hopkins bought the ranch in 1960. In 1967 they bought Moose Mountain Hall at Jimmy Weatherspoon's estate sale, moved it 20 miles to Holiday Ranch, and renamed it "The Hub". In the summer of 1972 Jim and Marie offered the first dance camp workshop, which became the annual summer highlight for people of all ages. This soon became the Hub of Square and Round Dancing in Central Alberta, and expanded to include clogging.

Dancers, guest callers, and round dance instructors from Canada, the U.S., and abroad have enjoyed fun times at Holiday Ranch.

Jim called square dances, and together Jim and Marie taught round dancing, from 1950 until Jim's untimely death in a car accident in October, 1979.



A1 Weekend, July 2014: Jerry Jestin and Joe Kromer, Germany Marie Jensen, Owner 1<sup>st</sup> on LHS; Bev Hanson, Daughter 4<sup>th</sup> on LHS

The ranch is picturesque for camping, with spruce trees and meadows, complete with sparkling Crooked Creek. Holiday Ranch is the perfect setting for a square and round dance vacation or clogging weekend. The hall has a hardwood floor and a Western atmosphere. We welcome you to the Hub and wish you happy dancing! For more information on registering for dance camp weekends phone Ida Murray at 403-347-8098.

*Editor's Note: The first time we attended a summer weekend (2005) at the Holiday Ranch we were overwhelmed by the beautiful setting, the history of the hall, and the incredible experience of dancing together with people from all over.*

## CHATTER CLOSE-UPS

*Our Dance Community is an interesting mix of people, each with a story to tell. Look for this regular feature in upcoming issues.*

**Theresa Roy, Airdrie**

The year 2002 was a big year for me – I made a major decision in my life. I quit my job, sold my house and left my friends and family in Miramichi, NB, to move clear across Canada to Airdrie, Alberta to look after my grandchildren while their parents worked.



It was OK until I broke my ankle and started feeling very homesick. They tried to make me feel at home, but nothing helped. I didn't want to go anywhere except to church and home. I knew my daughter was starting to worry about me and so was my son-in-law.

Then one Friday night, Lon came home from work and said there was a Square Dance Introduction Class at the United Church Centre. My answer was "I can't square dance, I don't have a partner and I also don't know anyone there." His answer was, "They will teach you and you don't need a partner, they accept singles." He also said he would take me if I wanted to go. I said, "No, if I went I'd go by myself." BEST DECISION I ever made! When I walked in that hall I knew I was at home. The people were so warm and welcoming – I haven't looked back since! My daughter and Lon knew when I came home that night that I was staying for I was all excited and already talking about the next dance.

I thank my son-in-law, Lon, and the people at square dancing for convincing me not to return to New Brunswick (which I was considering). I still enjoy square dancing today. It keeps me healthy!

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