



This newsletter provides promotion and marketing ideas, shines a light on people in our dance community, provides history and general information about our much loved activity, and highlights provincial and national events. If you wish to contribute an article, or see an event, topic, person, or club featured, contact the editor.



TEN FACTS ABOUT CONVENTION 2022

- by Claudia Littlefair, Promotions, Convention Committee

All indications point to an Alberta Dance Convention on the Labour Day Weekend in Lacombe, Alberta. First one since 2019! If you've never been, make this the one to go to. As you can see by the Program-At-A-Glance (page 2 and 3), we have strived hard to have something for everyone.

FACT ONE: Safety first!

In accordance with the Alberta Health guidelines, masks are encouraged but not mandatory. Bottles of hand sanitizer will be available in every hall, and we encourage the use of hand sanitizer before and after every tip or break.

FACT TWO: Friday's Trail-In Dance, September 2nd, is NOT part of Convention!

The Convention officially starts on Saturday, 9am, September 3rd with the Opening Ceremonies, followed by the Showcase of Rounds. This showcase features all the round dances that will be taught over the weekend and is beautiful to watch.

The Trail-in Dance is the responsibility of the area that is hosting the Convention – in this case, Calgary & District. Cost is \$10/person payable at the door. The one-hour Pre-Rounds (7-8pm) will be cued by a variety of volunteer cuers who are attending the Convention. The Mainstream Square Dance (8-10pm) will feature hired callers Tom Dakers, Calgary and Steve Edlund, Surrey, BC.

FACT THREE: The Provincial AGM is always held at the Convention.

It's in the bylaws! By holding the Alberta Federation AGM at Convention, more dancers and leaders are able to attend. It's a chance for everyone to meet the volunteers who have taken on the broader duties of our activity on your behalf, and to hear what is happening on a provincial level. The Alberta Federation provides the seed money for all provincial conventions, including this one. **This year's AGM is Saturday, from 1:20-2:20 pm.**

FACT FOUR: There's a BIG Difference between 'Teach', 'Workshop' and 'Intro' in the program.

- **'Teach'** is a term used in Round Dance to indicate a session where a piece of music and the corresponding cued steps will be taught. A 'Teach' assumes that the dancer is already proficient at the specified phase. Eg. 'Phase 3 Teach' assumes that the participant is proficient at the Phase 3 level.
- **'Workshop'** in Square Dancing is where a call or move is highlighted or featured, often to reinforce difficult moves, or to dance the move from non-traditional positions. The dancer is expected to already dance at the specified program. Eg. A 'Plus Workshop' requires the dancer to be proficient at the Plus level.
- **'Intro'** is a session for dancers who are completely new to the move or to the dance medium. For example, if you are a square dancer who has never round danced, you can participate in an 'Intro' round dance session. At this convention we have intro sessions for beginning, plus and advanced square dancing, waltz, two-step, bolero, clogging, and line dancing!

FACT FIVE: Two items you won't want to forget!

1. Something special to wear at the fancy 'Black & White Conductor's Ball', Saturday night.
2. Extra shoes! With all that dancing, one way to give your feet a break is to wear a different pair of shoes or runners.

Note: Generally, dancers are casually dressed during the day, and dressier for the evening dances. Your choice.

FACT SIX: Sunday's Church Service is not your 'normal' church service.

One of our long-time square dancers, David Gilchrist, is also a minister. He skillfully weaves our activity into his message. Regardless of denomination or belief, you'll find meaning in his custom-designed service. An important Memorial Service

INDEX

Ten Convention 2022 Facts	1
PRE-Convention Program	2
Convention Program-At-A-Glance	3
Lighter Side of Darkness	4
Making Connections	4
Kelly's Korner: Life To The Full ...	5
5 Ways to Build Fun, Fitness	6
Thoughts from ASD Magazine	7
They Are in the Door, Now What? ..	7
7 Qualities of a Healthy Club	9
A Callers Brain at Work	10

in memory of Alberta dancers who have passed, is held following the Church Service.

Note: The collection taken in the Church Service is donated to a local charity specified by the Convention Committee.

FACT SEVEN: Starlite Square & Round Dance Fashions will be there.

Beverly and Charlie Moore will bring the remaining inventory from *Starlight* to Convention. All items are new and deeply discounted. For ladies there are blouses, skirts, dance shoes and jewellery. For men there are belt buckles and ties. Business hours: Saturday only from 10am to 5pm. Cash preferred (cannot accept credit or debit cards). No GST and all sales are final.

Personal message from Beverly & Charles: "Please drop by to say hello. We have been pleased to serve the square and round dance community since 1995 and we appreciate your patronage. Our business is closing but we hope to see you across the square."

FACT EIGHT: Silent Auction money goes towards Convention expenses.

Members of the committee have organized a Silent Auction, and as always, donated items are welcome. The Silent Auction area will be in the Mainstream hall, and items can be brought to the registration desk Friday evening or Saturday morning.

FACT NINE: It's never too late to register!

You can even register for Convention on the day of. If you can only attend one or a few sessions, you pay a reduced rate.

- Full Weekend: \$75/Adult or \$65/Youth
- Per Day Rate: \$40/Day/Adult or \$30/Day/Youth
- Per Session Rate/Evening Dances: \$10/Person

FACT TEN: Not really about Convention BUT it sort of is ...

We are excited to be holding **TWO pre-Convention activities** at the Kozy Korner hall, Lacombe, in conjunction with SRDIAA (our provincial instructors group). All costs are covered by SRDIAA and convention host, Calgary & District.

1. **Free Callers Seminar** on 'Planning', presented by Joe Uebelacker, Thursday, September 1, 10am-4pm and Friday, September 2, 10am-Noon. (Dancers are welcome too, so callers have live people to practice with.)
2. **Free Dance Thursday night** by seminar participants. Pre-Rounds 7pm; Mainstream 7:30-9:30pm.

ALBERTA PRE-CONVENTION PROGRAM-AT-A-GLANCE

TIME	MAINSTREAM HALL	PLUS HALL	FLEX HALL - A	FLEX HALL - B	ROUNDS @ KOZY KORNER
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1 (Pre-Convention Activities)					
10:00am to 4:00 pm					FREE Caller's Seminar
7:00-9:30 pm					FREE Dance Pre-Rounds 7:30pm Mainstream 7:30-9:30pm
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2 (Pre-Convention Activities)					
10:00 - Noon					FREE Caller's Seminar- cont'd
7:00 - 8:00pm	TRAIL IN DANCE \$10/Person One Hour Pre-ROUNDS 2-Hour MAINSTREAM DANCE				
8:00-10:00pm					

ALBERTA CONVENTION 2022 PROGRAM-AT-A-GLANCE

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3					
9:00-10:00 am	Opening Ceremonies Show Case of ROUNDS				
10:10am-Noon	MAINSTREAM Dance with ROUNDS	PLUS Dance with ROUNDS	ADVANCED Dance		ROUND Dancing Teach: 2-STEP (Ph. 2+2+1)
Noon-1:20 pm	LUNCH BREAK				
1:20 - 2:20 pm	ALBERTA FEDERATION Annual General Meeting		Free INTRO SQUARE DANCE for General Public		
2:30-5:00 pm	Intro to HEXAGON Dance Intro to PLUS Workshop GR.SQUARE SOCIAL SQUARE DANCE	Workshop DIAMONDS Workshop LOAD THE BOAT Workshop COORDINATE Intro to ADVANCED	MAINSTREAM Singers (2:30 - 4:30 pm)	ADVANCED Dance Intro: LINE DANCING ADVANCED Dance	Intro: TWO-STEP Teach: JIVE (Ph. 4+1) Teach: CHA CHA (Ph. 4)
5:00-7:30 pm	SUPPER BREAK				
Saturday Evening THEME DANCE in ALL HALLS: "BLACK & WHITE CONDUCTOR'S BALL"					
7:30-10:00 pm	MAINSTREAM Dance with ROUNDS	PLUS Dance with ROUNDS	ADVANCED Dance (7:30 - 9:00 pm)		ROUND Dance
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4					
9:00 -10:20 am	CHURCH & MEMORIAL SERVICE				
10:30am-Noon	MAINSTREAM Dance with ROUNDS	PLUS Dance with ROUNDS	ADVANCED Dance		Intro to WALTZ
Noon - 1:00 pm	LUNCH BREAK				
1:00-2:00 pm	Free INTRO SQUARE DANCE for General Public				
2:00-4:30 pm	RECTANGLE Dance Workshop SCOOT BACK Workshop SPIN THE TOP Workshop RECYCLE SOCIAL SQUARE DANCE	Workshop CROSS FIRE Workshop ANYTHING & ROLL Workshop PING PONG CIR.	MAINSTREAM SINGERS (2:30 - 4:00 pm)	Intro to CLOGGING ADVANCED Dance	Teach: RUMBA (3+2+2) Intro to BOLERO Teach: WALTZ (Ph. 2 + 2)
4:30 - 7:00 pm	SUPPER BREAK				
Sunday Evening					
7:00-8:15 pm	MAINSTREAM Dance with ROUNDS	PLUS Dance with ROUNDS	ADVANCED Dance		ROUND Dance (7:00 - 9:20 pm)
8:30-9:30 pm	FINAL DANCE PARTY				
9:30-9:45 pm	CLOSING CEREMONIES				
10:00 PM	APPRECIATION LUNCH and AFTER PARTY				
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5					
10:00-11:30am	Trail-Out MAINSTREAM Dance				

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF DARKNESS - by Dee Jackins



Dee is an avid square and round dancer and enjoys writing. She shares the lighter side of some of her experiences, challenges and near disasters as a sight impaired person. See issue #2015-6 for her complete story under "Chatter Close-up".

When I made the decision to sell my home and move into a 55 plus complex, my timing was a bit off. My home sold within a few weeks of listing. It was a good ten weeks before my new home would be ready. So I stored all my belongings and lived out of suitcases for a couple of months, taking the time to visit family and friends.

When the papers were signed and all things were in order, an envelope was handed to me which included an excellent diagram of the floor plan for this unit. In the meantime, I requested some help from the C.N.I.B. to use a tube of Hi Mark to trace all lines that showed the walls and doorways- every little detail was displayed. What a tremendous help. I had the floor plan all figured out long before I moved in. It was an excellent decision and it made settling in so much easier.

After a few months of moving into this area, the C.N.I.B. sent someone out to help me in mobility and orientation training so I could maneuver around this property . It took a few sessions but it was manageable after some practice. After circling the complex a few times with the guide, she would describe everything around us as we passed them, along with the numbers on the homes. It gave me a really good picture in my mind and I had no mishaps as I circled the complex on my own.

The next project included getting a good road map of the whole area and again with a tube of Hi Mark to highlight all the roads leading to the complex. With little Braille stickers to identify the street names and intersections, it simplified matters tremendously to picture this in my mind's eye.

It got to the point where I could recognize where I was when in any vehicle going south on the Deerfoot Trail, like the sounds that the tires make when it's crossing the two bridges just before it veers to the right to get on to the boulevard. I recognize the curves, speed bumps and turns. When we get to the Park the GPS usually says to go to the right but before they have to turn, I tell the drivers to go to the left, it's a shorter route and they'll be on the right side of the street. Most drivers are very appreciative for the information as they turn to the left.

Surely after all the planning and training, I should qualify to inform drivers, friend or foe, where to go and how to get there. If ... it's taken in the right way. It's strange to give directions but kind of neat when the chance comes along.

See you at the Convention in Lacombe!

- Dee

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Source: Email from Dave Drinan, Dancer, Lafayette, Indiana

Square Dancing is like commission sales. Clubs must be willing to sell the product to the community.

A good sales-person shrinks the world down until they find something in common with the person that wants to make a purchase. Once a common denominator has been found the salesman and the customer focus on that. Generally, this is a third person. If they both have had positive experiences with this third person, he or she becomes the focus of conversation and they each share experiences they have had with this individual.

The salesman never talks about price before this connection is made. When they get to the price most objections can be overcome more easily when an element of trust has been established.

What most dancers do not understand is that the club has to be able to connect with the prospective dancer in more than one way other than square dancing. This second connection will be the element that retains dancers and makes people look forward to coming to a dance because they know the other person will be there.

For example, I met a caller from Kankakee, Illinois. When I asked him what he did for a living I learned that he knew an uncle of mine that worked in the same factory. After that whenever he was calling in down State Illinois they would e-mail me and his wife would be my partner. This was 30 plus years ago when I was single.



IDEA: The first introductory night I want the experienced dancers to pair off with the prospective new dancers and for 30 minutes find out as much about the prospective dancers as possible. They talk to each other and at the end of the conversation the experienced dancer stands up and introduces the prospective new dancer to everyone present.

This shines a light on the new dancer and as the experienced dancers explain some information about the prospective new dancers there may be other people present that have the same common interests or know someone that they know. **Ultimately, this would introduce connectivity to the club in order to retain dancers.**

KELLY'S KORNER - by Kelly Thompson

Kelly started square dancing in 2016 after being coerced by his sister. He admits that he would have never walked into the club on his own. He has since found a whole new way of looking at life, a community of new friends and personal confidence that didn't exist before.

LIFE TO THE FULL

We hear from time to time that square dancing is good for the person both in a physical and mental health sense. It is true that square dancing is a good workout for the mind and body but do we perhaps know why that is?



Years ago someone said the he came so that he could have "life to the full". He also said to do unto others, walk the extra mile and to love your neighbour. It would seem to me that for the most part he was talking about working together in a strong community spirit. It actually could seem to be backwards in that doing your part as part of a community is good for the individual as much as it is for the entire community. And that is where "life to the full" runs parallel to square dancing.

Square dancing cannot exist without the individual and what the individual puts into the program. However, the program is designed for the betterment of the individual. Walk the extra mile, do unto others, love your neighbour and for about two hours, enjoy life to the full.

Two thousand years ago when these things were said, I think we all know life wasn't easy for those he was speaking to. Overall it seems to me things haven't changed all that much. It would seem to me that if we could square dance all day every day, we would perpetually be within a community that works. I think it has a lot to do with knowing which caller to listen to, and of course a willingness to learn the moves.

I have no idea what it is all about but there is an adjustment made with the controls of an aircraft to adjust the "attitude" I assume the attitude adjustment makes the plane fly better and in many ways our attitudes make our life fly better. **It may take a while but through square dancing we make those adjustments and if we take a little bit of that home with us, life does seem easier.**

It is my understanding that square dancing started about five hundred years ago. We have to wonder why it took some fifteen hundred years for a few people to figure out what this guy was talking about, and why the best activity known to man seems to have been kept under a bushel.

Square dancing sounds and looks complicated but like learning to balance on a bicycle eventually everything falls into place. Certainly, it does take practice; that is done through becoming involved and of course putting in the effort. Square dancing becomes a part of your nature and if this guy figures it is good for you, it surely must be.

If we say we don't need square dancing the truth is not within us and of course neither are the snacks nor the potlucks. Life to the full means being fed in all the right ways.

Editor's Note: Human interest news articles can be submitted to local papers at no cost. And don't think you have to write them from scratch. Here's an example which could easily be adapted to your club's situation, just in time for a Fall start-up. Draw attention to your ad with a photo showing happy people dancing.

FIVE WAYS TO BUILD FUN, FITNESS AND FRIENDSHIP INTO YOUR FALL ROUTINE

Source: Kelowna Capital News, September 4, 2017

Step and spin to your new favourite activity with free Westsyde Squares dance intro Sept. 13.

Fun, fitness and friendship – does a new activity get any better than that?

Celebrating 60 years as a club, the Westsyde Squares host a free introductory square dance session September 13 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Westbank United Church Hall. *"We teach new dancers every September. Come try it for free, then we hope we'll see you back Sept. 20 when the 12-week fall session starts,"* says club president Lynda Bjalek. A second session builds on the basics from January to April. *"After that, they'll be able to dance anywhere!"*

- 1. GET FIT WHILE HAVING FUN** - The science is simple: If we want to move well, we have to move. Sedentary living can lead to a whole host of health problems, from chronic disease to difficulty with daily tasks like walking or climbing stairs. Despite this, Statistics Canada reports that just over 2 in 10 adults meet the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommending 150 minutes of accumulated weekly activity. Square dancing gets you off the couch and enjoying a low-impact cardio activity that engages the entire body, notes Lynda, who at one event counted 40,000 steps danced!
- 2. FRIENDSHIP** – Isolation can be one of the biggest challenges for adults of all ages. Whether through an "empty nest," moving to a new community, loss of a spouse, or retirement, life changes can make meeting new friends and building community connections challenging. The Westsyde Squares have a solution for that, welcoming both singles and couples, notes member Mary Potter.
- 3. FUN FOR ALL AGES** – Square dancing attracts enthusiasts of all ages, from competitive teens to seniors staying active with friends. And forget a playlist full of Red River Valley – today's dance music includes Broadway favourites, modern pop songs and more, plus energetic calling by 26-year-old musician Dustin McGifford. *"I've been dancing for 30 years. When I worked it was my stress release and now it's just a way to have fun,"* Lynda says.
- 4. NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED** – Mary danced as a teen and enjoyed returning to the social activity, but dance experience is not required. *"It's very accessible. You don't have to know how to dance to do this, you just need to be able to move to the music. There's also individualization with it too – and you don't need to wear a crinoline and a flared skirt if you don't want to."*
- 5. TRAVEL** – If travel appeals, there's lots of opportunity. *"We travel together to other club dances, we camp and have outdoor events in the summer,"* says Lynda, noting the group has welcomed callers and dancers from Japan, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Australia and beyond. Of course, if you prefer to do-si-do closer to home, that's great too!



(Photo from Intro Dance, 2022 in Strathmore.)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The cost for new dancers is \$120 for 12 sessions between September 20 and December 13. All you need is comfortable clothing and non-marking shoes. Learn more at westsyde.squaredance.bc.ca.

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUOTES FROM 'AMERICAN SQUARE DANCE MAGAZINE'

- by Claudia Littlefair, Editor, Alberta Chatter Newsletter

I have a subscription to the monthly online American Square Dance Magazine, US \$14/year. The editor is Buddy Weaver, caller, recording artist and accredited CALLERLAB instructor from California. He started calling in 1977 and is currently the copyright holder of the largest square dance music library in the world. He has contributed a lot to the square dance activity. The magazine is chock full of great articles and a wealth of information written by our activity's top leaders on meaningful topics for dancers and leaders who want this activity to continue.

The magazine is protected by copyright, so as much as I'd like to share the articles, I can't. I do, however, want to share a few quotes from some of the writers. If you're interested in subscribing to this magazine, click:

<https://www.americansquaredance.com/login/>

American Square Dance Magazine, July 2022:

- **Buddy Weaver, Editor on how new dancers are treated:**

"It has been said that there is probably no other activity in the world where members work so hard to 'sell' the program to a new dancer and then turn right around and work so hard to discourage him."

- **Ray Owens, Square Dance Tech, on club/event websites:**

"A website is a 365/24/7 brochure. It may literally be the first impression a visitor has of your club or event. A club/event website needs to be filled with recent pictures and videos of smiling people, having the time of their lives. The color scheme needs to be bright, bold and inviting. You want the website to give the visitor all the information they need to make a "buying decision" to visit your club/event. The website needs to contain all of the information a first-time visitor would likely ask: "When/Where/Who" ... and maybe "How Much?"

American Square Dance Magazine, June 2022:

- **Ray Owens, Square Dance Tech, on e-Commerce:**

"Let's look at the statistics on the use of e-Commerce, buying something online, for the age bracket 45-54: 76.8% of that age demographic has purchased something online. Even for those 65 and over, 48.9% of them have purchased something online."

"... the dancers we're trying to recruit – those 45 years and up – live on their phones and live online. We have to embrace that lifestyle. **Why isn't square dancing doing that?**"

THEY ARE IN THE DOOR, NOW WHAT?

- by Roy Gotta, Keynote Speaker, Northern New Jersey Square Dance Association, April 2018

You've done all your marketing. You've done your best to get dancers in the door, and you have a group of eager dancers ready to join our activity. **What are you doing to keep them?** What are you doing to make them want to continue being a part of your club?



During her Chairman's speech at this year's CALLERLAB convention, Patty Greene said **"It's what happens when we get them in the door that we don't do such a good job with."** She was focused on the caller's responsibility to be open, welcoming, encouraging, respectful, and friendly. We as dancers and club leaders need to focus on those same attributes and qualities that embody our motto, "friendship set to music."

We have become so focused on the dance, the successful execution of the figures, and the quality of the callers, that we have forgotten one of the main reasons square dancing became so popular when it did. **That reason is the sociability, the fun and friendship that made the activity so inviting.** Sure, the music, the choreography, and the exercise with your

partner are major factors, but you need the full package to remain a viable club. **The clubs that are retaining their members, and growing, are those that have realized that the appeal of square dancing is more than just the dance.**

How do we fix this? It really isn't that hard.

Personal contact: Do you know their names? Do you know what they do or did for a living? Do you know if they have any children or grandchildren? Do you know where they live? Have a conversation with these people. Engage them. Now don't go badgering them with all these questions all at once, but say hello to them at each dance, talk to them for a little while, get to know them, **BE FRIENDLY**. Think back to when you started. Did this make a difference?

Treatment at the Dance: Did you invite them to square up with you? It doesn't have to be every tip, or even every dance or class, but at least every once in a while. If a number of the established club members are doing this, it creates a welcoming atmosphere that will make them want to come back. At the very least it will not make them not want to come back.

Newer dancers are going to make mistakes. These are indirectly pointed out to them when they are corrected while dancing. **This is negative reinforcement. Be sure to comment on all the things they did correct, how well they are doing.** Say something like *"You should have seen us when we started."* Always say something positive. At the end of the evening, they may not know exactly why, but they will have had a good time and will want to come back.

When you go square dancing, is it just to go to a club to execute some figures, hopefully listen to some good songs, and hope the other dancers don't mess up the squares? Or perhaps do you go to socialize with some friends who you probably met through square dancing and still share your fondness of the square dance activity?



A couple months ago I was at a Hunterdon Flutterwheels dance. This is a club that is growing and thriving. I was impressed with something I saw. There was a dancer who is no longer able to drive or dance. I believe his wife is in a nursing home and he is in an assisted living facility. One of the club members picked him up and brought him to the dance, so he could socialize with friends and enjoy the sights and sounds of the square dance. The disabled dancer just missed being around his square dance friends. I was impressed by this action and thought to myself, *"This is why this club is so successful."*

Have you lost dancers because they no longer like to drive at night? How about offering to give them a ride to and from the dance? We want our dancers to feel good when they leave a dance. **Good calling and good dancing goes a long way towards achieving this, but other aspects of the dance will also affect this.** For instance, have you ever had members of the club complain about this or that during the dance? Whether or not they are part of the discussion, this will affect other dancers. Maybe not directly, but negative vibes pile up, just as easily as positive ones. **If you feel the need to complain, try to do it one on one, and quietly. On the other hand, if you feel really good about something, let lots of people know.**

Does your club have any non-dancing activities? A lot of clubs have a summer picnic. Sometimes, you already have people interested in taking lessons in the fall. Why not invite them to the picnic? How about inviting some of your non-dancing friends to the picnic? You are exposing them to the square dance "community". It gets them into the conversation. Does your club do any other social activities, like a bowling outing, or going to a ballgame, or a movie night. If so, have you included your students?


Finally, after the dance, some of us sometimes go out to get a bite to eat. Sometimes some of us get together before the dance. Is it always with the same people, or have you invited the newest members of your club? All I am really trying to say here, is that it's easy for us to fall into familiar patterns. We go to the dance, we talk to the same people, and we go home.

We need to make a concerted effort to engage our newest members, to make them feel welcome, to make them want to come back. Not just because they like the dancing, but because they like the atmosphere, the sense of community, and most of all, the people.

SEVEN QUALITIES OF A HEALTHY GROUP

Apply these standards to your club and see how it measures up!

Adapted by Tom Gray from an article by Leith Anderson in Leadership Magazine (winter, 1999, p.37)

1. **A HEALTHY GROUP HAS A SENSE OF FUN AND ENTHUSIASM.** You walk in the room and you can feel it. People are happy to be there. People are there to dance, the floor fills quickly, the caller doesn't have to plead to fill a square. Things are happening. There is an ambiance of warmth and excitement.
 2. **A HEALTHY GROUP IS OTHERS-CENTERED.** A healthy group is immediately interested in new people, what they need, how their needs can be met through the club. It is sensitive to peoples' feelings. Are singles, especially ladies, welcome and given opportunities to dance? Are visitors welcomed, even if unexpected? Since my wife doesn't dance, I often visit as a single. Some clubs have greeters to welcome everyone; others leave the visitor to wander in and fend for himself. The worst club ignored me completely (but did let me dance!). The best club introduced me to an angel who took me around, pointed out the bathrooms and coffee table, introduced me to other single dancers as well as club exec, and danced the first set with me. Now *that* sure made me feel welcome!
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3. **A HEALTHY GROUP IS UNDERSTANDABLE.** Healthy clubs tend to speak in terms everyone can understand, rather than repeat jargon that constantly reminds outsiders they are not 'in'. Since square dancing uses a highly technical language, this requires both sensitivity and effort. Although a large part of this falls to the caller/teacher, there is much that can be done. A written list of common terms, handouts of the steps taught that night, angels who say 'face me' rather than 'quarter right' will all help newcomers learn the language and feel part of the group.
 4. **A HEALTHY GROUP ACCEPTS PEOPLE WHO LOOK LIKE ME.** I quote directly from Anderson: "*Our level of comfort can be high or low, depending on how quickly we find someone else who looks like us. In a room full of women, a man thinks 'I'm in the wrong place!'... In a gathering where everyone is young and casually dressed, the older person in a business suit feels out of place...*" Draw your own conclusions.
 5. **A HEALTHY GROUP HANDLES PROBLEMS WITH GRACE.** What happens when the sound system squeals or drops into embarrassing silence? When the club is behind budget or attendance is dropping, is there a denunciation for lack of support, or a challenge towards increasing attendance and building membership? What makes a healthy club is not the absence of problems. It's how the problems are handled.
 6. **A HEALTHY GROUP IS ACCESSIBLE.** We're not talking wheelchair ramps. Is there clear and easy access to getting questions answered, meeting new people, joining in, becoming part of the group? Do you allow new dancers to visit other clubs, join banner raids, attend club dances? Or do you make it -hard- to join by insisting on graduating from lengthy lessons to qualify for membership? By having entry-point lessons only once a year? By insisting that people have to have a certain level of expertise to join or participate in club activities? All these things discourage people from joining. When I missed a night at square dancing during my first year, I came back and felt lost. How do you accommodate people who miss a night or two? Are they phoned and invited to catch-up classes, given tutorials during breaks, or simply told to come back next year when lessons start again?
 7. **A HEALTHY GROUP HAS A SENSE OF EXPECTANCY**
Listen to hallway conversations over a few weeks and decide if the primary verb tense is past, present, or future; if the tone is positive or negative. I'm sure there'll always be some who grouch, but if you're also hearing "*That was fun!*" or "*I'm sure looking forward to the dance next week*" you're on track. A healthy group has both present fun and reminiscences of past enjoyment. Most healthy groups are hopeful groups. They are full of plans as well as happy memories. They **expect** future fun. They **expect** to grow, and they have plans in place to produce and handle that growth.

A CALLER'S BRAIN AT WORK

“You Have Never Thought About This” -by Ed Foote

Q: What job requires more decisions to be made in a shorter period of time than any other job in the world?

A: Square Dance Caller.

When people first hear this, they think it is a joke. But then they realize it is not a joke - it is true. **A caller must make 8 to 10 decisions every 2 to 3 seconds. These include but are not limited to:**

1. Knowing how long it will take the dancers to do a call, so as to know when to give the next call.
2. Knowing what formation the named call will give.
3. Knowing if this call will flow smoothly after the preceding call.
4. Knowing what the next call should be from a variety of options.
5. Knowing if that next call will flow smoothly from the preceding call.
6. Deciding the correct timing for this particular call, based on whether the floor is weak, average, or strong.
7. Knowing if the next call is “on the list” for the advertised program for the dance.
8. Giving the calls on the beat with the music.
9. Knowing who the partners and corners are in multiple squares.
10. Knowing how to resolve to a Left Allemande and remembering which resolves have been used before so as to avoid repetition.
11. Knowing where “Home” is if the caller wishes to use an “At Home” resolve.



Remember, all of the above is not happening two or three times a tip. This is all happening every 2 to 3 seconds in every tip. Having read the above, you are now trying to think of other jobs that require multiple decisions this fast. Let me help you. What about a fighter pilot in a dogfight with another plane? Yes, we concede that a large number of decisions are made here in a short period of time. But a dogfight is over fairly quickly. It may last a minute or two, but that's it. A caller is doing this rapid-fire thinking tip after tip for the entire dance. What about a surgeon in a complicated operation? The decisions are crucial, but they tend to be mapped out ahead of time, with a pause between each decision for implementation. In an emergency, there may be one minute of numerous decisions, but then there is a wait to see what happens.

I have presented this idea to many people, and so far no one has identified a job requiring the number of decisions a caller has to make in such a short period of time. If you can identify such a job, let me know. Note: I am not saying that square dance calling is the most important job in the world. On the contrary, I can name hundreds of jobs that are more important for the advancement of humanity than that of square dance calling. All I am discussing here is the number of decisions in a short space of time.

A final thought. A number of years ago a psychologist was treating a caller for mental stress and drug addiction (no, it wasn't me). He told the caller that the human brain is not designed to make the number of decisions in such a short period of time that a caller is required to make. **Remember this the next time your caller misses the corner.**

About The Author - Ed Foote: Ed Foote is well-known throughout the country to dancers at Mainstream thru Challenge. He has called for 53 years and currently calls throughout the U.S. from coast to coast. In his career, he has called in all 50 states,



throughout Canada, and has made 18 calling trips to Europe calling in 10 countries. He has also made two calling trips to Australia and one to New Zealand. A member of CALLERLAB's Board of Governors. He is an Accredited CALLERLAB Caller Coach, and has conducted clinics and schools in 38 states, Canada, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. In 2008 he received the CALLERLAB Milestone Award for significant contribution to the field of square dancing. Ed is a well-known square dance author. He has written and edited several instructional books on square dancing, has had hundreds of articles published in the U.S. and other countries, and for 11 years wrote a monthly note service for callers. He has written a monthly column for American Square Dance magazine for 31 years, and has written a bi-monthly column for The Northeast Square Dancer Magazine (serves New England) for 27 years.