

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.



“NO-EXPERIENCE-NEEDED” DANCES

- by Claudia Littlefair, Editor

Creating awareness in the community that our club exists is our number one marketing priority, **because people can't join a club they've never heard about.**

Regardless of how many posters are hung, signboards displayed, ads placed in print or on-line, public demos performed, open dances held, there are many people in Strathmore and area who have never heard of us. Or if they have, they think it's in the past, unaware that we are still operating. Sadly, I think that's the norm for any club in any community.

So, we need to constantly be looking for new ways to promote, on top of also doing ALL the other stuff we've been doing to promote. It's important to remember that every time someone in the public reads the words “square dancing” we have succeeded in creating awareness. That's our job – whether they join or not is up to them.

A few years ago, for several summers we held a Barn Dance with proceeds going to a local charity. This ensured that a different group of people would be made aware of who we are. The Calgary Mountain Fiddlers came out to provide the music – another drawing card. We sold watermelon, popcorn and other treats and everyone enjoyed dancing to live music. Some basic square dance calls were taught so that guests had a chance to try out square dancing. They also met the members of our club and made connections. It was a really fun way to attract a new group of people and to create awareness for our club.

This will be our third summer where we dance in our local park, every Wednesday during June, July and August. The first hour is a designated 'Intro Hour' so anyone who wants to try square dancing is welcome. We advertise the 'Intro Hour'



through magnet board signs, posters, Coffee News, online community calendars and FaceBook posts. Most weeks we have people from the park, or who've read our ads, or who are family/friends of our members come out to try. When people hear our music and see a group dancing in the pavilion they want to find out what's going

on. It's a great way to create awareness for our club, and it's a bonus to our members who look forward to dancing outdoors.

Rich Sbardella is a caller from Connecticut whose specialties include Barn, Family and Community Dances. Each time people attend his dances, he and his wife, Lynn, have an opportunity to promote our activity. The following was posted on his FaceBook page, 'Rich Sbardella Dance Caller' on January 24, 2024:



“Friends, our Barn Dances are growing, and many folks are from local Square Dance Clubs. These events are excellent ways to introduce square dancing to family and friends, and they require no commitments. Many folks have moved from Barn Dancing to club dancing, and many continue to enjoy both the challenge of club dancing and the fast paced simplicity of a barn dance. Come join us and introduce your friends to the activity you love.



INDEX

Editor: No-Experience Needed.....	1
Ideas For The Summer	2
Exceptional Learning Resources ...	3
Stopping the '0-to-Plus' Trend	3
Why FB Likes Are Important.....	4
How Likes on Social Media Help	
Your Business	5
My First Attempt At Teaching	6
Final Issue of BTM	8
Reflections & Ruminations	9
Kelly's Korner: Single In a	
Double World	10
National Festival 2024, Calgary ...	10



You probably know, we recently started a new Barn Dance series at the Powder Mill Barn in Enfield CT. This Saturday, January 27th 2024, is our second dance, and we are hoping to see some old friends, and to make some new ones. A "Barn Dance" is a simple dance evening with easy dances, anon experience is required. WE will dance some dances in straight lines facing a partner, some in circles where we keep, or maybe change partners, some squares, and possibly a waltz.

Again, no experience is necessary to attend, and no partner is necessary. Teens and above are welcomed in this community dance, and you should be OK dancing with folks you do not know (Yet!). Admission is \$10 per person \$35 max per immediate family."

Brent Mawdsley (photo on right), caller in Surrey, BC does something similar with his 'First Friday of the Month' dances. Below is a post, dated December 23, 2023, from his FaceBook page "Square Dance with Brent: First Friday Modern Square Dance Party (Surrey/Delta)".



*"Thank you to everyone who attended our First Friday Modern Square Dance Party (Surrey/Delta) on December 1. We had another great turnout of over 100 people and enjoyed some different dance moves and Christmas music together. We also had a photo booth with props for some extra photo fun. The next [First Friday Modern Square Dance Party \(Surrey/Delta\)](#) will be held **Friday, January 5, 2024.***

*All dances will be at **Kennedy Hall - 8870 - 120 St., Surrey, BC, from 7 – 9pm** with doors open at*

6:45pm.

No previous dance experience is necessary at any of these events, and everyone is welcome, including couples, singles, and families (I suggest ages 8 and up).

I will use different music, dances, and a few different moves each time to provide variety for returning dancers.

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and best wishes for the New Year. – Brent"

So, this summer think of ways your club can create awareness in the community. Hold a free hotdog barbecue and dance, find a place to dance outdoors and put up signs saying who you are, enter a float in the local parade, organize a barn dance with a local music group. Be creative and create awareness that your club is alive and doing fine!

IDEAS FOR THE SUMMER

Source: Oregon Federation of Square & Round Dance Clubs Newsletter Excerpt from President's Corner, Karyn Buchheit

A Challenge. A Challenge. A Challenge. Please ask your newer dancers these questions:

1. Why did you start square/round dancing?
2. Why did you stay with it?
3. What would you recommend that our club/council/state do to attract and keep dancers?

Take these answers, think about, discuss and maybe make some changes. As we are heading into a slower/down season for many of our clubs, now is the time to discuss and maybe set in place changes to be ready for a new season of lessons/dances in the fall.

What are some fun things that your club can do over the summer? Now is the time to start planning. Afternoon BBQ/potluck and social? An extra long mystery trip? A visitation that is a bit of a longer drive? Dance in a parade? Have a booth at a local summer event? Dance at your county fair? What normally happens in the summer in your area that you could participate in and get your club's name out?

If you are planning to travel over the summer is there a club that will be dancing where you are going that you could visit? Can you explore the square dance community and maybe bring some new ideas back? Are you going to one of the large conventions/festivals where you can meet dancers from other states/countries and talk about what works for them?

As you are out and about – please be a good visitor, a good club member, be positive and not negative. Promote our state, your club, your council and encourage people to visit and maybe try square dancing.

EXCEPTIONAL LEARNING RESOURCES JUST A CLICK AWAY!

Source: North Shore Squares, Chicago

Looking for HOW-TO videos for calls in the Social Square Dance, Mainstream or Plus programs? Or a handbook written in plain English explaining each call? Or flash cards?



All of these teaching resources can be found on Chicago's North Shore Squares website: <https://www.northshoresquares.com/>

Read more about this innovative club that built up from zero members to 50+ members in 18 months! Click here for the complete story as told by caller Bruce Holmes, Evanston, Illinois:

<https://knowledge.callerlab.org/north-shore-squares-zero-to-50-in-18-months/>. Bruce shares his personal experience of square dancing, how he

ended up learning to call, and finally how using the Social Square Dance (SSD) program helped build up the club by offering classes 2 or 3 times a year. There were many obstacles to overcome and important changes to make along the way. Today they have expanded to 5 clubs in the Chicago's North Shore area and they are all thriving.

STOPPING THE "ZERO TO PLUS IN ONE YEAR" TREND

Source: Social Square Dancing Public FaceBook Group

Rod Shuping, November 9, 2023

I live in an area that the classes are and have been for a long time 0 to Plus! In Sept the clubs start their classes and run until late May or June. This is not enough time to correctly teach people to dance but it is what we have and we have "adjusted". Generally the classes start losing students a few at a time depending on how good the caller is but many get overwhelmed by the continued new calls they are expected to learn each week! By the end of the class those left are not the strongest dancers that you will meet by any means! Many of the new dancers will not go to dances other than class night!

Now lets look at SSD:

12 lessons, I give them a break between a few of the lessons so it takes around 15 weeks to complete which is a much less stressful experience! I suggest that they come help out in the next class and we give them dance time to practice the entire list. If they go through the class the second time they have NO STRESS and learn the calls completely and become very good dancers by the end of the 2nd class!

Some of these dancers will be happy to just dance SSD for the rest of their time as Square Dancers but others will express a desire to move up. NOTE: Because they had a break in learning their stress levels are very low meaning that they can learn easier. But as they own the basics they can learn the rest of MS in a short time. Give them another break and they can then learn Plus with little or no effort.

Why do we push so hard to get them to a certain level? Do we need a time line? I feel that it is once more the clubs and some callers that just don't understand and are falling to peer pressure!

Jeff Palmer, Caller, Colorado Springs:

Great post Rod. Less stress and the mind/learning overload is much less and, they are dancing with the club a lot sooner. Having them attend the next class really helps them cement their confidence and dancing experience. 🍌

Phil Rarick, Caller, Kansas

Well said. Keep in mind the average age of students today as opposed to the 70s is much higher and they simply do not learn as fast generally.

If you consider general class teaching strategies for any school system teaching progressively harder material - math, english, etc. - students are taught in stages (english 101, english 102, on so on) and must show proficiency before moving on to the next class. **Our first and primary goal is to get new dancers dancing and having fun without being excessively repetitive, not to be master dancers.**

Teaching all the way through plus in one shot is like taking SD 101, SD 102 and SD 103 all at once without showing proficiency of each step before moving on to the next. The result is high levels of attrition of potential dancers either as students or weak new dancers breaking Squares too much.

A note about weak dancers: each square is a team and, as a rule, square dancers are very forgiving of mistakes of others on their team. Mixing strong and weak dancers can lead to frustration rather than growth of the weak dancers. A stair step approach like basic, mainstream, plus with opportunities to dance at those levels provides fun and growth opportunities for all dancers. In a similar way the SSD program provides a reduced stress level way to get dancers dancing and growing.

Charlie Robertson, Caller, Washington State:

Rod, you speak the truth!!!! The dancers wear their badges that say "plus" but they honestly don't know or really care what calls they are dancing. For several years I have been doing a couple of SSD or Club 50 tips at every dance no matter what the advertised level is. No one has noticed. As you know, a well prepared caller can make any list challenging, interesting and fun.

John Harden, Caller, Illinois:

Rod, thank you! **That is one of the most thoughtful and succinct descriptions of "why SSD" that I have seen.** At the end of the day, we Square Dance. At a dance, the caller calls to entertain the dancers. The only thing the "level" does is give the caller a framework for what calls he can use, and in my experience it's a loose framework anyway. There's no guarantee that the average plus dancer will be any more successful than the average SSD dancer; often it's just the opposite when the dancers have been taught in just the "no stress" environment that you describe above.

A funny thing ... one of my SSD students decided one night to try dancing with a Plus workshop. With very little coaching she was doing as well as, and sometimes better than, some of the "experienced" plus dancers in the square. **The lower stress teaching approach of SSD has a tendency to promote more confidence.**

WHY FACEBOOK 'LIKES' ARE IMPORTANT

**Source: FaceBook Page: EDSARDA Square Dance Promoters
- Lauren Cull Norford, Admin., February 18, 2024**

I often see clubs advertising dances, classes, events, and very few 'likes' to that post. This may be true even though the club's page has 200 or more followers or 'friends.' Did you know that the more we interact with each other's pages and groups, the larger our 'presence' is on social media?

If the algorithm starts to work in our favor, then square dancing and square dance activities start being 'suggested' to other active people who may not have ever thought of square dancing! This is why my Cast Off 8's FB page and Instagram continuously follow and Like other square dance club's pages, even if they are not close by. I will promote and forward that club's effort through my "like." Every "like" increases the likelihood that the square dance club advertising their event gets into someone's FEED (which is the content they didn't necessarily ask for, but comes their way.)

So, let's up our game! Click on Like or Love for as many other square dance clubs as you can. Heck, I even like the posts for clubs on the other side of the country that I may never visit. Because a rising tide lifts all boats! Social dancing is in, just look at my posts from the Dance Flurry here in Saratoga NY this weekend. Thousands of people, young, old, babes in arms, queer, straight, and everything else, here to contra, square, swing, tango, balkan, english, west african, polka, you name it. **Let's be sure MWSD is among that mix of activities people are seeking out!**

HOW CAN LIKES ON SOCIAL MEDIA HELP YOUR BUSINESS?

Mad Marketing Pro (www.madmarketingpro.com), December 14, 2022

More and more businesses are turning to social media as a way to connect with customers and promote their products and services. But many business owners are unsure of how social media can help them specifically. One of the most important aspects of social media is building relationships with customers. When you have a strong presence on social media, customers will be more likely to like your page, which can lead to increased sales and profits. In this blog post, we will discuss how likes on social media can help your business grow!

1. Likes signal approval

Likes let you know that your customers approve of the content you are putting out. **The more likes a post or page receives, the better it looks to potential customers and other businesses who might be interested in partnering with you.** This is because likes show that people already enjoy what you have to offer and are likely to do so again in the future. In addition, customers may also be more likely to refer their friends and family if they see that you have a lot of likes. For instance, likes on Instagram can improve your brand's engagement numbers and increase your followers. This will help you reach more people with your message.

2. Increase visibility

When customers like or share your content, it can help increase the visibility of your brand on social media platforms. This will enable potential customers to discover your products and services, as well as gain valuable insights about what is popular among existing customers. **Additionally, likes can give you a better idea of how successful certain campaigns are and what type of content resonates best with your target audience.** By using this data, you can make informed decisions about which content works best for promoting your business.

3. Foster relationships

Likes also create an opportunity for businesses to interact with their customers in a positive way. **When someone likes a post, they are expressing approval of what was said or shared with them.** This can provide businesses with valuable feedback and create deeper relationships between brands and their customers. Also, when people like a post on social media, it can help create a sense of community and encourage dialogue between customers. Additionally, customers may be more likely to recommend your business or products if they have a positive relationship with you.



4. Likes create social proof

By having more likes on social media, you can create a sense of trustworthiness for potential customers. People are more likely to purchase from a business if the content and page have been approved by people they trust. This helps build your reputation and can lead to more sales in the future. Additionally, when customers see that others have liked your posts or pages, it validates their choice in engaging with your brand and encourages them to continue interacting with you in the future. Also, a high number of likes can help boost your rankings on search engine results pages, making it easier for potential customers to find you online.

5. Likes generate traffic

When people like your page or posts, it can lead to increased website traffic because those individuals will be more likely to visit your site when they see what you've posted. This is especially true if the content provides value, educates them, or entertains them in some way. As these potential customers check out what you have to offer, they may be more likely to take the next step and become paying customers. For instance, if someone likes a post about a product or service that you offer, they may be more likely to click through to your website and make a purchase.

"I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones." Lauren, age 4.
"When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know your name is safe in their mouth." Billy, age 4

6. Likes give credibility

The number of likes on a post or page is often seen as an indication of its quality and reliability. When people see that an item has been liked by a large number of people, it can help give your business more credibility in the eyes of potential customers. This increased trust can lead to more sales and long-term customer relationships. In addition, having a large number of likes can help you stand out from the competition and give customers an additional reason to choose your business. For example, if two businesses are offering the same product, the one with more likes may be seen as the better option.

7. Likes can help with your marketing efforts

Using likes on social media to market your business is a cost-effective method of increasing brand awareness and engagement. **With just a few clicks, you can increase visibility and drive website traffic to your site.** This helps spread the word about your products or services and encourages potential customers to take action. Additionally, when people like posts from your page, it can show up in their friends' news feeds and potentially lead them to check out what you have to offer as well. This type of viral marketing is an affordable way for businesses to reach larger audiences without spending money on expensive advertising campaigns.



8. Likes increase user engagement

When people like posts or pages on social media, it can help keep them engaged with your business. For example, if they liked a post about a new product you're launching, they may be more likely to come back and check out the product when it is released. Additionally, having likes on your page can make customers feel comfortable interacting and engaging with your brand in the future. This helps create relationships between customers and businesses which can lead to long-term loyalty and increased sales.

In conclusion, likes on social media are an important tool for businesses looking to grow their presence online. They can provide valuable feedback from customers, boost search engine rankings, generate website traffic, give credibility to your brand, and help with marketing efforts. Additionally, likes can help keep customers engaged and create positive relationships between businesses and their customers. Therefore, it's important for all businesses to take advantage of the power of likes on social media and use them to their advantage.

MY FIRST ATTEMPT AT TEACHING A CLASS

- by Joni Micals Source: CALLERLAB Knowledgebase (www.knowledge.callerlab.org)

Editor's Note: Ever wonder what being a new caller is like? Joni Micals aptly describes her experience.

I attended two GCA sponsored caller schools, my first with Betsy Gotta in St. Louis, 2015, and my second with Randy Dougherty in Palm Springs, 2017. The first time my goal was to just do one-night stands at RV parks across the USA as I was living in my RV and each park had empty recreational halls just waiting for someone to do something in them. The second time my goal was to take eight non-square dancers and teach them to square dance while I learned how to use my equipment, acquire stage presence, figure out how to actually use my words to teach the calls, and most importantly, make it fun while trying to get everyone home.



Be careful what you wish for.

I had moved into a 55+ gated community with a very large auditorium and many club rooms. **I immediately petitioned to start a new club—square dancing.** It took over six months of attending the recreational board meetings, writing requests, and explaining myself during open forum before two board members decided they would join a class if offered. They finally convinced the board to give me the auditorium, starting January 2018. I had six months now to recruit.

This community has a bi-monthly newsletter and a Facebook group of which I took total advantage. I posted blurbs about how square dancing was good as physical and mental exercise, wards off dementia, get to know your fellow community

members, have fun, and learn something new. I posted pictures and videos of dancers smiling, memes of square dance sayings and images, and each time I left my name, number, and email, encouraging those that wanted inclusion to contact me. Without knowing the actual day and time (the Rec Board would let me know late in December!), my list of new dancers grew to 48.

Then our local area club, which did not have a class that year, started telling people that I was starting a class in January, and handed them my contact info. Dancers from that club, wanting to be angels, also contacted me. My numbers grew again.

I started to feel panicky. A group of eight to play with was now approaching five squares. I reached out to callers and dancers who all told me I would be fine, I could do this, I was a teacher for 38 years before retirement and this would be a piece of cake.



End of December and I was given a room (auditorium), a day (Tuesdays), and a time (10-12). I called back everyone to give them this info personally. **Three squares could do it at that time and day.** The rest had other obligations but wanted on my list for the next class if offered any day but Tuesday, in the afternoon, in the early evening, etc.

Class #1

Three squares of dancers age range 70-94. Everyone was given a name badge (Hobby Lobby, 12 plastic pin-on buttons for \$4.99). Everyone initialing by their name on a sign-in page. Following the SSD (Sustainable Square Dance) 12 Week Program they learned 20 calls (parsing out the Circle Left and Circle Right as two different calls). In the first tip we learned most of the calls in a big circle. Here they could dosado, allemande left, right arm turn, promenade, and do a really grand Right and Left Grand until they got back to their partner again. In the second tip we reviewed all that we learned and then did a scatter promenade. Two became a circle of four, four became a circle of eight, and bingo! Three squares. Now they learned their new labels, Heads and Sides, and numbers, evens and odds. As they now saw the calls in the context of these squares, with each additional call (2 and 4 Ladies Chain) I realized I could get them back to their partners, and if they got out of order, I told them to grab their original partners and go home.

Class #2 and #3



Since the first three weeks were open to anyone else wanting to join, the first lesson was repeated. Some people came down with the flu, some dropped out because they had obligations (but please put me on your next list) and new people joined, so my number of squares hovered around two. At one point someone had to leave early for a doctor's appointment, leaving one square with a hole. I put down the mic, took up the boy's position, and called from the square. I called this "Trial by Fire."

I should mention here that I have everyone's email and phone numbers. For the first three classes I called everyone each week to encourage them to come, warning others that if they missed three lessons in a row they would have to discontinue their lessons and reenroll the next class offered.

Class #4

On to Lesson 2 in the SSD Program. The class learned four new calls, but were having problems with the patter that I was using from the SSD manual. Nobody was getting home. There were a few calls incorporated that they hadn't learned yet. The sequences were too long for some dancers. I was getting frustrated. When class was over I complained on the Facebook site "Newbie Callers" only to find out I had an original copy, not the latest up-to-date version (look for the XX on the bottom of the page). I copied off the latest version (looks like they fixed Lesson 2), and I was a happy camper again.

Class #5

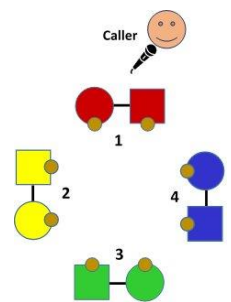
No new lessons. **All we did was dance all of the calls we had learned. They were reacting quicker to the calls, dancing smoother, and really looked like square dancers.** They were smiling, laughing, and told me how much fun this is. Only one sour puss in the group—an angel. Having been president for many years of the local club, he commented on how slow this class was moving through the calls. I said that I did not have a club over me demanding I reach Plus in 36 weeks, that I could take two years, if I wanted to, to just get them through Mainstream. Even though the SSD Program is a 12 Lesson program, it does not necessarily have to be done in 12 weeks. I wanted to make sure my class could dance, that everyone could execute the calls properly, that nobody felt stressed, and that everyone was having fun. That was my purpose.

The weekend before Class #6, I emailed everyone a copy of all the calls learned and encouraged them to print them out, highlight the ones they could do automatically, and mark the ones they wanted me to review more. Since I was being dropped off very early for the next class, I offered extra help to anyone showing up early.

Class #6

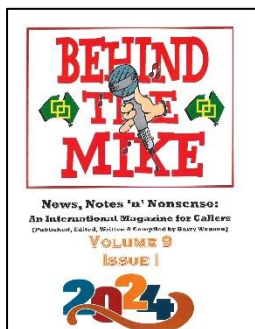
Six class members showed up early. We reviewed Star Thru and Slide Thru. **Those women acting as men put their name badges on their left side, and by touching that badge they knew which way to turn on a Slide Thru.** I answered questions, such as hand holds, and practiced swinging your partner. They also got a preview of one of the new calls, California Twirl.

A new lesson, four calls. Two squares (and another square's worth absent with colds, coughs, doctor appointments) dancing everything. Bend the Line was a challenge for some. California Twirl, not so much. **But when we learned Dive Thru, I introduced it as a swimming pool.** Do you dive into or out of a pool? Who are my outside people? You are going to dive into the pool. You are going to dive under the arch that the people in the pool are now going to make with their inside hands raised. When those on the inside go to the outside of the pool, use that raised hand to do a California Twirl. Oh my! They actually had to remember to do something more on the outside that was different from the inside people! They felt very accomplished.



All too soon I decided to do a singing call that I planned to do at my next caller school (teaching us how to do one-night stands with Rick Hampton). I realized that the song had two calls not yet learned so they were taught Right and Left Thru and Grand Square. Then we attempted the singer several times. It was decided that no matter how slow I played the music, they hesitated too much to execute the moves in the amount of time allotted. I should mention that up to this point in the lessons I have not sung a song, just did patter. I am not a singer, having been told all of my life that I cannot sing (my parents switched me from piano to violin so that I would not sing with the tune!). In any case, I turned off the music and sang the song with the calls and slowed down for them to catch up, left song words out so they could catch up without being confused, and lo and behold! They got through the singer! Even better, I got through the singer feeling pretty good about my singing voice.

This is all I have for now. By the time this goes to publication I will have the rest of February through April under my belt. Who knows, we might have even finished the SSD 12 Week Program!



FINAL ISSUE OF 'BEHIND THE MIKE' INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER - by Barry Wonson, Editor, 'Behind the Mike', Volume 9, Issue 1, 2024

After 9 years of BTM, I have made the decision to take a much-needed rest. I have really enjoyed creating BTM over the years...from its beginnings as a State Association Newsletter, with just our local members as recipients, through to the current position where there is a world-wide readership of over 1200 direct recipients, and who-knows-how many others who receive it via the website, friends sending it on, social media, etc.

Excerpts From “REFLECTIONS & RUMINATIONS ON 57+ YEARS”

- by Barry Wonson, Editor, ‘Behind the Mike’, Volume 9, Issue 1, 2024

Since I first started Square Dancing back in early 1967, there have been lots of changes

– some for the better, some not so good.

DANCING & MUSIC: When I first started as a dancer, it was very different to today. The musical arrangements were stronger than many today; the music reflected popular music of the time; to callers, each label had a truly unique sound, unlike today when many just seem to use the same backing with one or two instruments adding the melody. **To us as dancers at the time – we knew not only the lyrics of the songs, but we also knew what calls went with each song!** We used to have lots of social functions – weekends away, car trips, visits to dances that required a long drive. In these car trips we all used to sing the lyrics to singing call versions of popular music. Songs like Marina, Shake, Shake, Shindig in the Barn, Houston, Wooden Heart, Pussy Cat Square, Brazil, Riverboat, and lots of others. This was commonplace all the way up to Summer Sounds. In those days the callers did not change the calls...mostly because, as there were fewer calls, the calls used in Singing calls had to be more creative, and thus each one had its own individuality, not just in music, but especially in the calls used.

With the addition of more calls, the changes in programs, the addition of more programs, as well as more record producers, this gave way to a more generic style of choreography. Some labels seemed to use only a few basic figures and variations, and thus it became more common for callers to change the choreography to make it more interesting.

SPEED: The pace of our dancing was also faster. Most records (45s) seemed to be recorded at anywhere from 128 BPM to 138 BPM. And that is the speed they were called. The Beats per Minute did not matter...they were all played at 45 revs....some were sped up even more. I remember a trip to the US visiting Ron Russell in Anaheim for a dance where he called Louisiana Man (a fast recording to start with) at about 48 revs!! Of course, we were all a lot younger, and more energetic! The enthusiasm was visible in the vibrant atmosphere no matter where we were.

CLUB NIGHTS: Our dance nights were also longer than we have nowadays. Most nights were 3 hours – from 8 until 11pm. We used to have a break about 9.15 for coffee and snacks (what we call supper here in Australia). Now a long club night is 2 and a half hours. Many just 2 hours, and some only 90 minutes. **Here in Australia our brackets (tips) used to be three numbers,- a Singing call, a hoedown (usually just over one time thru the record) and a final Singing call.** This concept phased out with the ageing population after a relatively short time. Listening to tapes of my club nights, the last time I did a three number club tip was 1989 – and even then that was only in the final tip. Mind you, the 3 number 73 bracket/tip hung on here in some areas for quite a few years...some callers argued that the dancers liked it, however I think it was more for the caller’s ego in regarding to singing ability. Putting over a good singing call to add the smoothing touch (whether upbeat or a relaxer) feels good, but the real satisfaction is in presenting a hoedown that gives the dancers mental stimulation, smooth flowing dancing , ending up with them gaining a real sense of achievement.

THE SOCIAL SIDE: Our activity was much more social. **While our central commonality was square dancing, this became just the start...tennis parties, ten-pin bowling nights, house parties, weekends away, picnics, barbeques...all these were part of the activity’s social concept.** After a dance lots of dancers, and callers, would head to a local McDonalds for coffee and a bite. Of course we were all younger, and there were a lot more of us than today, so this was a naturally accepted aspect. With lower numbers, an ageing population, these social activities gradually slowed almost to a standstill.

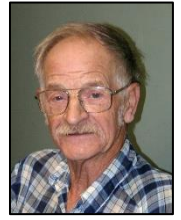
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For me, square dancing has given me everything – a wife and family, a career, friends in many countries spread far and wide, a time-consuming pastime, a passion that will never die overall, a wonderful life. I have been truly blessed. The ups and downs have been just building blocks in my life. And I would do it all over again. Square Dancing has not only defined my life, but it has also defined me. **When people ask me what I am...my answer is: A Square Dance Caller.** I hope you are as lucky as I have been.



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.

**SINGLE IN A DOUBLE WORLD**

I think anytime you hear the word dance, one of the first things that come to mind is the need for a partner. Except for a few dance styles, the expectation is that you have a partner with you when involved in dancing.

Historically square dancing was a couple's activity, but due to dwindling club memberships, times are changing and more single people are becoming involved. It might be a hard thing to say but it could be "get with the program, or get left behind". **Some square dance clubs have as many as 50% members who are single,** and many of them take on important roles in the club, ensuring its stability and viability. Further, square dancing is somewhat unique as a social dance in that it can be far more inclusive, not only for single people but also for all ages, orientation and ethnicities.

I think we all should be aware how few social activities single people can fit into. Very few people are single by their own choice. Newly single people are especially apprehensive to engage socially because being suddenly single is a totally new environment. Their friend's husbands/wives suddenly become wary and protective of their spouse; therefore newly single people generally change friends and activities. I would also think it is difficult, as a single person, to move to a different city to find inclusive activities to become involved in.

In square dancing, one of the easiest ways we can be inclusive is to adapt our thinking of what makes up a couple. Instead of a couple being a man and a woman, think of a couple being the right hand dancer and left hand dancer. This then makes it irrelevant if it's a mixed couple, two women, or two men dancing together. And because there are often more women than men in a club, we need to encourage everyone to be able to dance either side. This kind of thinking not only welcomes the single dancer, but it ensures there's no shortage - everyone wins because everyone is dancing.

I think as a square dance club, we need to take every effort to make our activity the best experience we can for everyone, especially single people.

2024 CANADIAN NATIONAL FESTIVAL, CALGARY ALBERTA

Remember to check out the Alberta website for the latest on the July National Festival in Calgary. Click here:

<https://squaredance.ab.ca/festival-2024-canadian-square-and-round-dance-society/>

- List of Callers & Cuers
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Camping
- Programme Schedule
- Newsletters (4)
- On-line Store

NOTE: The Trail-in Dance is included with registration, and therefore the Festival will not be able to allow drop-ins or single ticket purchases for the dance.

23rd CANADIAN NATIONAL FESTIVAL



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