

April 2024



... for the latest news in the square and round dance community.

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Message from the Editor

Most of this newsletter is reprints of articles from *American Square Dance*. The January and February issues were combined into one magazine, so I didn't forget the January issue; I didn't receive it

until February after the March issue of *This & That* was sent. Please note that since these articles are reprints, I can't make corrections to them.



FCA President's Message

Hey all you Fellow Callers, Cuers and Dancers,

I hope everyone had a wonderful time at the convention this year at the new venue at the Deltona Convention Center. With all the comments in regards to the venue and all the calling and dancing I think everyone had a great time and

everyone is looking forward to next year.

I want to thank each and every one of you for the great honor for the Extra Mile Award that I was presented after the nomination from all the dancers. I am humbly grateful for your support and I hope to continue to share the joy of square dancing with others for many years to come.

As we start to enter into the spring months I hope that everyone gets their tickets early for what sounds like a great convention next year.

The Florida Square Dance Federation has chosen the theme for the 70th FSSRDC Convention "Spin The Big Top" on January 17 and 18, 2025. I am sure there will be many surprises in store for all especially after the opening night with all those clowns and mimes. You never know what they might have in store for the fund raiser dancers this year. Watch out if they come at you with a bucket!

Please go out and support your local clubs including with the helping with the new dancers and the lessons for beginners I know that the clubs can all use more "angels".

Until next time I hope you get a chance to clover-leaf in your squares sometime for this month of March. So Shamrocks and Yellowrocks.

Rod Barngrover FCA President

Publisher Comments from Buddy Weaver

Yesterday, the co-president of the square dance club that I teach for was sharing some of his observations based on researching class and club membership records, both pre and post pandemic.

Some of the findings, I was very familiar with, such our retention rate of students was about 80-85%, which meant that when we started with thirty-two students, we graduated around twenty-five, almost one year later. It truly was at least one year since our model was zero to Plus so the students had to learn

well over a hundred calls just to attend a dance. In California (and many other states) there was no other entry program other than Plus. The same retention rate was found pre and post pandemic.'

What is surprising is the club member retention rate three years after graduation from class. Only 20% of the new members stayed on past three years! Wow, that is deflating. In the big picture, so much energy was spent in recruiting and teaching new dancers with great success during class (held on to 80% of them for a year) only to lose most of our new friends once they leave the safety of a class environment.

Now, instead of exploring possible reasons why we lose so many newly-minted club members, let me tell you what is happening to our club post-pandemic. For starters, our club made the decision to embrace SSD – Social Square Dancing as the new club level. The leadership agreed with me that we would probably suffer from the loss of many dancers when we returned to dancing after the pandemic shutdown and we knew the model of one-year of classes would no longer be feasible. My club decided all of our classes would teach the 53 or so calls ONLY. All membership requirements were changed to accept SSD graduates as full members. Today, we are almost two years since returning to dancing and the report is while we have still lost about 20% of new club members our club has grown by over 40%!!

How can this be? Simple math. By using SSD as the destination level, we have been able to hold more than one class per year. We have averaged 2.25 classes per year, in fact and each session found a lot of good people working promotions and advertising. It has been a collaborative effort of club and caller to grow a whole new membership in a post-pandemic world. So, thank you Social Square Dance; the SSD program saved our square dance club.

Reprint from American Square Dance - January 2024

Mike Hogan on Marketing

The CALLERLAB Square Dance Marketing Manual is a resource that I often refer to in my monthly article and in every face-to-face marketing presentation I give. I wrote it with some assistance from a few members of the CALLERLAB Marketing Committee and published it in March of 2018. While it needs some updates, everything in it is relevant.

CALLERLAB's goal was to provide callers, dancers, and organizations the tools they need to recruit new dancers in their local markets, All in support of

CALLERLAB's mission: "To foster the art of square dance calling and improve caller skills." These tools fall in to five categories:

- Education
- Guidance
- Research
- Collateral Marketing Material
- Funds

With this goal in mind, the manual was written as a comprehensive resource to provide callers, dancers and dance organizations with research, education and guidance needed to create solutions to the existing challenges our activity faces. The CALLERLAB Marketing Manual includes:

Education about marketing fundamentals

The Marketing Bridge

The 4P's and the D

The Zero Moments of Truth

The Sales/Marketing Funnel

Research about the state of our activity.

Census and trends of dancer population

Demographics of dancer population

Public image of square dancing

Public awareness of square dancing

➤ Marketing strategy element exercises to determine:

Target demographics

Benefits sought by each target demographic

Analysis of our product versus products we compete against

Defined marketing challenges

Position statement

> Brand management tactics

Logo

Slogan

- > National Website Initiative
- Generational Marketing

Appealing to a younger generation

Fit

Age differentials

Generational Profiles

Music preferences by demographic

➤ A large list of marketing tactics with "How To" instructions for each

No cost tactics
No cost internet tactics
Social media
Low-cost tactics
Video Production
Internet tactics
Mass media marketing tactics

Recommended management structures:

Local dance organization structure Local club organization structure

- > Fundraising tactics
- > Recommendations to begin marketing square dancing
- Case studies to demonstrate successes that are repeatable

CONTINUED NEXT MONTH ---

Reprint from American Square Dance - February 2024

The Big Picture by Mike Seastrom

A Winning Way to Have Your Club Grow with Young Dancers

Recently I had someone ask me why I thought our Silver City Squares Dance Club has attracted and sustained so many young people.

Here is a bit of background on me. I am a homeschooling mom to four of these teenagers they all love to dance at our club. My two older kids joined our club in 2021; my other two joined in 2022 and have loved every minute of it. But how did they get involved?

Not far from the grange hall is a church camp. My kids had close friends that they spent all summer with as camp staff, and who also happened to be square dancers. At that time there were enough youth for about three squares in our club.

The following September, another homeschooling parent and I decided to post videos and information on our community homeschool Facebook pages and we had a significant response. Our club is now bursting at the seams with an average of ten squares on lesson nights.

I am sharing this with all of you as a way to hopefully have more successful clubs around our lovely state and promote square dancing further.

Here are a few suggestions to get teens to come to your club:

- Are there church camps near your square dance club? Call them in January and ask them if they would ever be interested in having a team building square dance event for their staff. I encourage you to keep it to the staff in their off hours during the summer because campers do not carry the same enthusiasm as camp staff do. Camp staff love being silly and have fun doing things they don't normally do.
- Find local homeschool co-oops, many meet in churches. Most of these offer elective classes. Check to see if they want to have lessons as a class hour.
- Find homeschool families that can advertise on their homeschooling Facebook pages.

Here are a few things I've learned from my teens that I believe have kept our club strong and growing. Some of these might be things you already know, and some points might cause you to feel a bit offended. It is not my intent to be offensive; instead, I'm trying to communicate through the lens of our youth.

- When new youth come to dance lessons for new dancers, try not to split them up from a friend. I know it's customary for an angel to be with a new dancer as a partner, but this breed of teen does not like to spend the night dancing with "old people." They want to dance with their friends. Instead, put a couple of energetic adults in the square with them. Since we all know that those dancing the women's part are circulated through the square, eventually they have an angel as a partner. Allowing the teens to start out in the same square and holding hands with the partner of their choice lowers their inhibitions and prevents a possible reason why they won't want to come back. This might be good for adult couples too. My husband stopped attending lessons with me 10 years ago, because the club we attended insisted that we could NOT start out in square dancing as partners with each other. He hated having the lessons with someone he didn't want to dance with, quit the lessons and never returned.
- ✓ Let teens try to dance with whomever they want to in a square. Yes, they will screw up. Yes, they will struggle, but in the end, they will be much more willing to have a mixed square with angels who are older, because they learn that they really don't know much and need help. Their failures will also take their arrogance down a few notches.
- ✓ Don't put pressure on them to have square dance attire at dances. Kids just want to have fun; some want to wear petticoats and skirts and collared shirts. Some just want to come and not dress up. There is an added stress of wondering how they look and the possibility of feeling like

- they have to spend money on an outfit, even if it is a gently used item. They might also wonder if they will be the only teen there wearing square dance attire and would then feel like an outcast. Give freedom for teens to choose to wear their normal street clothes.
- ✓ Let kids go bare foot if they want to. Yes, we know they can have their feet stepped on by boots, but it's their problem, not the person who is wearing the boots. I don't know why but there are many kids in our club that just prefer dancing barefooted. We don't care, we are just happy they want to dance. If this is an insurance issue, have the kids sign a waiver that they won't hold the club liable for any injury they incur rom going barefoot.
- ✓ Don't be offended if teens don't want to dance in a square with older adults. The teens want to dance with their friends and while it was not the code of conduct 20 years ago, it may be time to change. I promise that eventually teens will warm up to dancing with adults, but the majority feels they have the most fun with their peers. Remember these are teenagers, with lots of hormones, and they are looking to dance with their "crush". Let's let them.
- ✓ We all know teens love to do all the fancy swings, twirls, and the Grand Square to show off moves. Teens don't know which adults have bad shoulders or get dizzy easily. Teens also like to dance FAST! In the square dance move, Circle to the Left, our teens practically run-skip while traveling in a circle. They don't want to go slow with older adults. Please don't be offended by this.
- ✓ Most kids hate Do Sa Do, but they love the Highland Fling." Let them. If you put rules telling them that they can't dance this move in square dance lessons, after they have learned it from a friend, it may be one more reason why they don't want to come back. They love the fancy moves and Do Sa Do for some reason has a really negative history and is the butt of many square dance jokes.
- ✓ Have a caller that is extremely patient. These kids talk a LOT during lessons. This is a huge social hour to them. If a caller is easily getting frustrated that students aren't listening, it will reflect in his/her manners and tone. The kids may interpret that the caller doesn't like them. Yes, they should be respectful and not chatter during lessons. Yes, the caller needs to keep order, but patience with frustrations matter. I suggest you find a caller that has worked with youth and learn some tips on how they have navigated teaching and keeping youth.
- ✓ Ditch the mealtime. From what I have observed, most teens want to dance and snack and dance and snack. To sit down for a potluck meal means they might have to have conversations with adults they don't know. This causes a stressful situation for many young people. The reality is it can cause a stressful time for many adults. If you think about it, we have society that doesn't often eat meals together. Yes, any clubs do this because they want to encourage relationships with each other.

- However, I suggest having an open snack bar during a dance or lessons and an optional meal for all the long-time club members and new dancers after or before a dance. Don't be too surprised if the youth don't stick around, I just takes time for them get comfortable.
- ✓ On the subject of music, I know this is a tough one. Everyone has a different opinion. However, if we have songs that are the oldies like "Elvira" by the Oakridge Boys, most youth aren't' going to want to stick around. Ask around and find out what songs the kids like to listen to. It may take some extra work to accommodate, but I think it will be helpful to keep people and youth returning if they like the music.
- ✓ Last but not least, our kids love all kinds of dancing. Consider offering line dancing at the end of a square dance lesson, or between tips if you don't have round dancing already. Kids and adults love line dancing. It doesn't require a partner, so it feels more comfortable for them and its fun!

These are a few thoughts that I hope aren't offensive, but are helpful to your club's growth and the possibility of bringing in more young dancers.

Submitted by Donaca Fouts from the Silver City Squares, Silverton, Oregon.

Reprint from American Square Dance - January 2024

All Things Considered by Ed Foote

A THOUGHT ABOUT BROKEN DOWN SQUARES

Last fall Buddy Weaver had an article in this magazine about what dancers should do when a square breaks down. He said, correctly, that if this occurs during the patter portion of the tip, that the square should form normal boygirl-boy-girl lines facing the side walls. This is the Callerlab accepted procedure

However, Callerlab also says that the dancers should go back home first, and then make lines at the sides. Buddy disagreed with this, saying that "going home" first was too time consuming. He said that going directly to lines at the sides would improve the awareness of the dancers as to where everyone is in the square.

I agree with Buddy that in a perfect world this is what should be done – that the dancers should go directly to facing lines at the side. Unfortunately, we do not live in perfect world.

Dancers tend to know about making lines at the sides of the square when they break down, but they often forget about squaring up first, so I have seen Buddy's suggestion trying to be implemented on numerus occasions.

The result is usually a disaster. People are milling around, often not being sure where the sides are. When they do form lines, often they are not boy-girl-boy-girl but may be same sex lines or half-sashayed lines, or some couples normal and others half-sashayed. The dancers seem to focus on trying to make lines and disregard where the sexes are located in those lines.

So, in actual practice, it seems to take longer to make lines by attempting to go directly there. I have observed this to be true at all programs through Advanced. Only at Challenge do dancers seem to have enough awareness to be able to go directly to facing lines at the sides.

Why does Callerlab say to square up first before making lines? Because it is easy. It ensures standard boy-girl set-up, and also keeps everything organized and simple.

So, I submit that while Buddy may be correct in theory, in actual practice his suggestion to not initially square up results in added time and problems for the vast majority of dancers.

If you have thoughts on this, drop a note to American Square Dance.

Instant response from Buddy Weaver

If there is one thing experience has taught me is there is no single idea that should not be reviewed and if possible, improved upon. There are many examples of this in the square dance world, from costuming to music to sound equipment to teaching methods. In my opinion it is evolution.

Experience has also taught me that professionals may have differing opinions on what they think is best for their customers ad there is not <u>always</u> one "right" answer nor a "wrong" one. As a calling professional, I prefer to give the fewest amount of words and processes to the dancer but still insure their success. In this instance, having the dancers go home first then make lines was a method that I used in the eighties, when it first came out, but over the years, I have found it is too much for SOME dancers to compute and remember. There has to be another way for squares to recover.

The method that I've been using:

If your square breaks down during the Singing Call

Simply, keep moving and get back to your original home position as quickly as you can and wait for the next routine to begin. Singing call routines usually run about thirty seconds so the quicker you get back home and get ready to dance, the quicker you'll be back in the dance.

If your square breaks down doing the Patter (non-singing call) part.

Two things:

Keep moving and start to form lines of four dancers facing the side walls. The lines should be standard, boy-girl-boy-girl lines.

Wait and watch for other squares to be in lines of four dancers, like yours or wait for the caller to say "lines up to the middle and back", then start dancing again.

On the dance floor, this method serves the dancers well. When taught, we actually practice breaking down and making lines from all kinds of possible set-ups.

As I said in the August 2023 issue: "It is important to note that good dancers are in squares that breakdown all the time; it is the better dancer who recovers and gets their square back dancing again. We'd rather be square dancing than square standing".

Reprint from American Square Dance - January 2024

All Things Considered by Ed Foote

Last month we discussed the fact that if your square breaks down and the rest of the floor is moving, the solution is to form facing lines at the sides of the square. The caller will see that you have done this and will maneuver the floor so that everyone is in facing lines, thereby enabling your square to resume dancing.

But there are two potential traps here, and these need to be discussed.

Trap #1. Callerlab recommends that if a square breaks down, people square up and then the Heads back out to the right to make facing lines at the sides. Last month we pointed out that Callerlab says to square back up first, in order to have an easy and orderly process to get to the facing lines.

But the Trap is: What if, after square backing up, the Heads don't back out to the right? What if they just stand there, not realizing that they should be trying to form lines?

Solution: If you are a Side Couple and you see the Heads are not moving, then you have to move to form the lines. Give the Head Couple five seconds to wake up, and if they do not, then you move. Because somebody has to move! If the Heads are asleep, then the Sides have to act.

Once you have formed a line with the Head Couple to your right, the other Side Couple will see what you have done and will also back out to the right.

In other words, if you know what's going on and others do not, then you take charge and get the square ready to dance again.

Trap #2. Once lines are formed, the lines must WAIT until the caller has maneuvered the rest of the floor into facing lines. To get the floor to facing lines, the caller will often have to use calls such a Star Thru or Pass Thru

If the waiting lines act too quickly and do a Star Thru or Pass Thru before the caller has maneuvered the rest if the floor into facing lines, the broken-down square will immediately be broken down again!

I have seen this happen on numerous occasions, where broken down squares have formed facing lines but they react to the first call they hear after forming these lines, thereby causing themselves another breakdown.

At this point stop trying to get the floor to facing lines to try and pick up the broken down square, because I realize that the broken down square does know what it is doing.

Summary: It is vital that callers inform their dancers of these two traps. Unfortunately, most callers do not, which is why I so often see squares being unsuccessful at recovering if they break down.

Reprint from American Square Dance – February 2024

Social Square Dance by Barry Johnson

A short time ago as I write this column, Ted Lizotte (CALLERLAB's Chairman of the Board) sent a video message to the organization's membership In that message Ted observed the large overlap we currently have between Basic 1, Basic 2, Mainstream and SSD programs, and the relatively small step (by count of calls) from those programs up to the next dance level, Plus.

Ted suggested that perhaps we should think about rearranging things, moving to more of a two-program structure with a smaller entry level (about 50-ish calls) and a larger "next step" containing all the calls through Plus that were left over. That's an interesting idea and one worth discussing; I'm sure a lot of people will have a lot of opinions on the subject.

But to me, that wasn't the most interesting part of the message! Ted and the CALLERLAB staff took the time to review the year-by-year history of the dance program lists. When you look at the complete history of Modern Western Square Dancing, the truth is that stability in the program lists is more of an exception than the rule.

For well over half of the history of MWSD, the lists of calls that typical dancers needed to know changed frequently compared to today. For most dancers and

callers today (not all, but most!) when we say "But it's ALWAYS been this way", we really mean "But it's ALWAYS been this way for me!"

Ted also pointed out that changes to the set of calls in the past really weren't considered monumental upheavals. People shrugged, maybe learned a few other calls, and moved on. It really wasn't all that big of a deal when the lists changed.

That's a very healthy thing for us to remember. I don't know if the CALLERLAB membership will take up discussions about the dance programs or not. But Ted's factual look back at our history is worth remembering today. Just because we've done it this way for the last decade or two doesn't mean that change is really all that hard. We have easily moved through far more change in the past, even with many times more active dancers, and it just wasn't a big deal.

If we do start thinking about a shakeup in the dance program, the opposing argument that "we've always done it this way" isn't really true. And while change can be unsettling, past history shows us that this type of change wouldn't necessarily turn out to be a giant disruption. Let's keep that historical perspective in mind as we look towards the future.

Do you have an SSD start-up?
Please email Barry at: chairofssd@gmail.com

Reprint from American Square Dance - February 2024

Smooth Dancing

What is Styling?

The term "style" means the execution of various calls to provide smoothness from one movement to the next, in time with the rhythm of the music. Good square dance styling is nothing more than good square dance habits. Experienced callers have found it easier and more effective to teach the elements of styling from the very first night of a beginners group. In this way, the learner has no bad habits to break later on as he/she becomes aware of good styling. Proper styling – good styling can be learned by any dancer and caller at any stage of their dance life. It is never too late to learn good dance styling.

Start with control of your body movements. In square dancing we teach "shuffle" steps, which is where your body weight is shifted forward over the balls of your feet. Make sure that both feet are in constant contact with the ground. This adds stability. When someone is shuffling (sliding with both feet

on the floor), it is difficult, if not impossible, to push them over. By contrast, a person simply walking lacks this stability and is very easy to push over.

(from WikiHow.com)

Take small steps and move light to stay in control.

Square dancing requires the full coordination of everyone in the square, so don't take overly long or dramatic steps. Keep your weight on the balls of your feet and use your partner for balance – just don't lean on them too much

The dance step in time with the music has the forward slide on the down beat of the rhythm. Practice this step just by clapping your hands and shuffling forward on every clap. The speed of clapping is the tempo. Clap too fast and you won't keep time with the beat for very long; probably end up just walking on very other beat. If you can't step to the beat of the music because it's too fast – ask your caller to please slow the music so the dancers may enjoy shuffling.

Next, dancers should have hands at waist height and shoulders relaxed. The strength of your grip is best explained by imagining you are holding hands with your grandmother. Firm but gentle. Keep elbows pointed down and at your side, especially when dancing calls in ocean waves. When elbows come up, dancers build torque in their shoulder muscles and often, without realizing, are bearing down on the adjacent dancers. Sometimes the force is great enough to hurt adjacent dancers.

(from WikiHow.com)

Use a light grip when holding hands.

It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of the music, but mind your grip when taking hold of your partner. A too-firm grip is uncomfortable and can make it difficult to perform certain moves. Hold the dancer's hands gently so that you can meet and part easily during the dance, without any fuss.

For many years we (Buddy Weaver and his club) have taught dancers to stand up straight, sucking in their "dining room". This simple act allows dancers to not only look good, but also keep their square from breaking down. Aside from a physical disability that may preclude good posture, a dancer who slouches will not be able to properly execute "pull by" calls like "Right & Left Grand" because their hands are too low almost like they are dragging their knuckles on the ground. It is a lack of good dance posture that causes many breakdowns.

At the same time, dancers are taught to tuck in their sitting room. A polite way of saying "tighten their gluteal muscles". This action keeps their feet directy under their moving bodies so they don't get their feet in another dancer's path. "Suck it in and tuck it in" creates dancers who dance well and look good.

Experience has taught us that dancers who believe they look good will continue in dancing for years.

(from WikiHow.com)

Part of the fun of square dancing is executing this twirling, dynamic puzzel together. Listen intently to the caller, keep your square tight, and guide other dancers with your actions, not your words, to avoid confusion. If someone makes a mistake, complete the call to the best of your ability and wait for the next one.

(credit to the Wikihow website for suggestions, along with ideas presented by Doc Alumbaugh)

Reprint from American Square Dance - February 2024



Inspirational Quotes from Ed Foote

"Whatever you are, be a good one." ... Abraham Lincoln

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." ... Antoine de Saint-Exupery in The Little Prince

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." ... Maya Angelou

"Animals are such agreeable friends – they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms" ...George Elliott

"Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty." ... Albert Einstein

Reprint from American Square Dance - January 2024

"No effort that we make to obtain something beautiful is ever lost." ...Helen Keller

"When you consistently make better choices, you make better habits." ...Jack Canfield, author

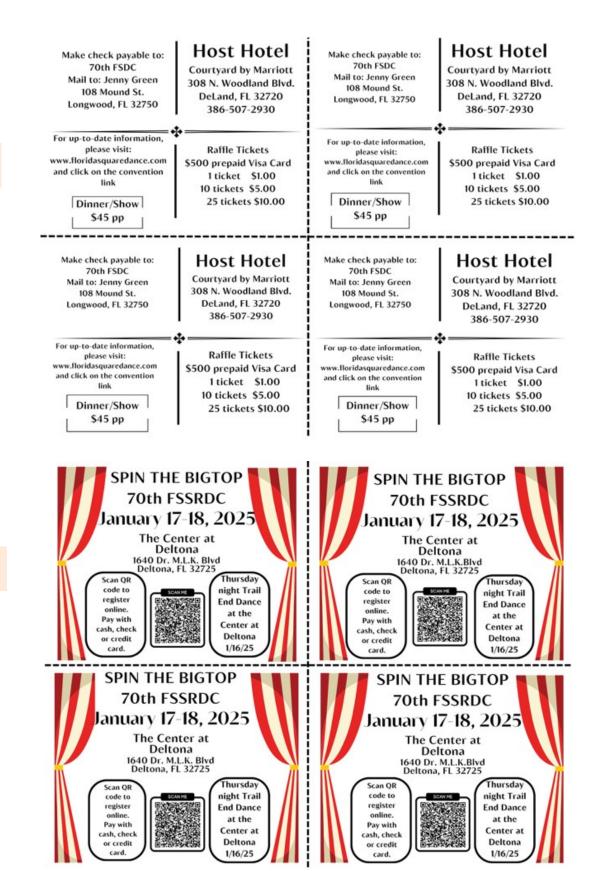
'In helping others, we shall help ourselves, for what ever good we give out completes the circle and comes back to us." ... Flora Edwards, author

"We have no idea what tomorrow may bring, but today is overflowing with potential"....Allan Lokus, author and teacher

"If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." ... Albert Einstein, physicist

Reprint from American Square Dance – and February 2024





BACK

FRONT







The DANCERgram magazines are written and published by a square and round dancer concerned about preserving our dance activity. The magazines include *Planner* (weekly), *This & That* (monthly), *Joys, Concerns, & Sympathies* (as needed), and *Directory* (as needed). All of the magazines are under the DANCERgram banner. In the event of new information between publication dates, notification is sent via the *Flash*. The Editor reserves the right to edit, condense, or rewrite any submission to the DANCERgram magazines. Opinions expressed in any DANCERgram magazine or on this website are not necessarily that of the Editor. All new information (since the previous issue) in these magazines is highlighted in yellow. Distribution of the DANCERgram magazines is encouraged via forwarding or hard copies. All of the Magazines, as well as additional content, can be found at www.dancergram.com. If you would like to receive the DANCERgram Magazines via email or you would like to submit information to any of the magazines, please contact the Editor at sqdncfan@gmail.com or 863-224-3393.

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