

DANCERgram

January 2023



THIS &
THAT

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

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West Coast Association Membership Dances are Re-vamped

Regional dances formerly sponsored by the West Coast Square and Round Dancers Association (WC) will be sponsored by the Suncoast Callers and Cues Association (SCCA) in 2023. The first regional dance sponsored by the SCCA is being held on January 8, 2023. The flyer is below. Additional SCCA dances are being planned and will be announced when scheduled. Please come out and dance to great callers and cuers at these dances.

***The Florida State Square and
Round Dance Convention is in
20 days!
Have you registered?***

From the desk of Mark Fetzer, President, Florida Callers Association

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season.

I know my message is the same this month as last. I will have to change it next month.

The State Convention is January 20th and 21st. This is preceded by the Trail-In dance on Thursday evening, January 19th, and followed by the FCA meeting on Sunday, January 22nd. The trail-in dance and convention are happening at the Volusia Fairgrounds just outside DeLand Florida.

The FCA meeting will be Sunday January 22nd at the Comfort Inn and Suites DeLand, 400 E. International Blvd., DeLand, FL, 32724, Phone: 386-736-3100. The meeting will start at 9:00 a.m.

Saturday morning will be 3 hours of clinics that are being put together by Keith Stevens and Bill Chesnut. This will not all be geared just to new callers. Please come and participate.

When promoting the state convention to your dancers here are a few things to point out:

- Last year's convention had over 450 people there. If your club has been struggling to get a square, this will be fun and hopefully motivational.
- There are over 25 different callers calling on three dance floors, giving a wide variety of dance experience.
- There is a dance hall dedicated to round dancing. There will be over 10 callers and round dance teachers. Lots of round dancing and teaching.
- Camping onsite. This is a big change from Daytona where campers could not all get in the same campground.
- Lots of Hotels to choose from, close and affordable. There is a list on the State Convention website: <http://floridasquaredance.com/convention/68/hotel.html>

Wishing everyone a happy, safe and rewarding New Year.

Social Square Dance

By Barry Johnson

I was calling a dance last week and overheard conversation between two members of area clubs. As best I can remember it, the conversation went something like this:

“How are your classes going this year?”

“Pretty good,” came the response, “We lost about half of the dancers, you know, just like every year. But the ones that have stayed are doing really well.”

Let's hear that again – “We lost about half of our dancers, just like every year.” How did we get so accustomed to losing big chunks of our potential new dancers that we think a 50% graduation rate is “pretty good”?

Although I haven't asked him, I'm going to quote my friend Rick Hampton from a Facebook post he made just over two years ago. In Rick's words: “SSD is Callerlab; SSD is NOT a new program (like MS or Plus). It's based on decades of real world success in RETAINING dancers. Did you know the average zero-to-Plus 9-12 month class in the US loses some 890 percent in those 12 months (and) more subsequently? This is a huge reason for the decline in our numbers.”

“SSD changes this in (three) simple ways: 1) 50 calls, the most popular MS calls, the one most folks enjoy most often. 2) Around 12 weeks, plus or minus, to learn. This means if someone has to drop for reasons like work, illness, loss of a babysitter and other temporary reasons, then they can REJOIN IN WEEKS, not a year. Same for their friends, who can START IN WEEKS, not a year. And 3) SSD is neither a path to or a replacement of MS or Plus. It is a reality check that we are losing more via drop outs coming in, or age going out, than we can sustain.

“It need not be scary. It might need callers to do a little homework but that is OK.”

Rick has been running successful SSD programs in the San Joaquin Valley area of California continuously since he wrote that note. He, and others, have said that the SSD program has revitalized square dancing in the area and kept it alive.

It really works. Shorter, simpler lessons taught more times per year provide more new, happy, committed dancers. If you are concerned about membership and the number of dancers in your area, you need to be looking at this.

Reprint from *American Square Dance* – December 2022

Roots and Branches

By Tony Parkes

Of the three books mentioned last month, the first to be officially published was *Old Square Dances of America* by Neva L. Boyd and Tressie M. Dunlavy. It was originally issued in 1925 by the Recreation Training School of Chicago; later it passed to the H. T. FitzSimons Company, also in Chicago, which published other work on recreational dance. It appears that Dunlavy did most or all of the primary research, transcribing calls and figures in Taylor County, Iowa. Boyd, a pioneering social worker and academic, founded the Training School and had

published several books of games; she may have polished Dunlevy's prose, and her name on the book was probably a selling point.

Pay attention now: In order to appreciate the first decades of the great mid-century square dance revival, it is important to scrutinize the content of this little book. Why? The dance material collected here will appear again, in fuller form, in Lloyd Shaw's classic 1939 work, *Cowboy Dances*. Ricky Holden, a caller and dance historian (and editor of *American Squares* from 1952 to 1956), was convinced that Shaw lifted the dances wholesale from Boyd and Dunlavy. Whether through conscious copying, subconscious recollection, or pure coincidence, about half of the figures in *Cowboy Dancers* appear in the earlier book. Many are even organized in the same way: the Divide the Ring Group, the Right and Left Through Group, the Do Si Do Group.

But right now we are concerned not with questions of authorship, but with the nature of the dances in both books. Again, why? Because these dances, and others like them, formed the core of what was known as "western square dancing" for over a half a century. Remember that some of the calls had appeared in print as early as 1903. The dances in Boyd and Dunlavy's book were surely much older than that, having been collected from callers who were old in 1925. And although many aspects of the "modern" square dance hobby were in place by the 1940s – the network of clubs and federations, the preference for couples over singles, the formal lessons, the special clothing and shoes – the basic repertoire of figures remained largely traditional into the 1950s.

So: What were they dancing in "the old days"? Most importantly, they were doing complete figures rather than short basic building blocks strung together in varying order. Some figures, like "Birdie in the Cage" or "The Lady Walks Round," were unique: that is, they appeared in no other dance. Others, no doubt stemming from the 19th-century quadrilles, were made up of basic movements; but only a dozen basics were in common use, not 50, 100 or more. In each figure made from basics, those basics were done in the same order each time. There was generally little or no instruction at dance parties; newcomers were advised to take a position as Couple 4 so they could watch others lead the figure first.

It's important to remember that traditional square dancing was not a monolith. The caller in one town might have a repertoire of only half a dozen figures; a few miles away, another caller might pride himself on being able to call any of 30 figures at a moment's notice. Visiting-couple dancers were among the most

popular, but by no means the only, structure. As for decorum, a typical party in one town might be entirely proper and family-friendly; in another locale, the liquor and the fists might flow freely. People's attitudes toward the dance depended on what kind of dancing they had been exposed to.

Here are some figures from Boyd and Dunlavy:

Birdie in the Cage

(a typical visiting figure)

First couple balance and swing, out to the right,
Birdie in the cage and three hands round,
Birdie hops out and the crow hops in,
Crow hops out and,
Four hands round and round you go,
the lady go si and the gent go do.
On to the next (etc.)

You probably know that the “birdie” is the active lady and the “crow” is her partner. The two lines beginning “Four hands round” call for a hand-turn do-si-do (which Lloyd Shaw spelled “docey-doe”). There were, and still are, many versions of this; Boyd and Dunlavy describe one of the simplest: The two couples circle left halfway around, pass through, do a left-hand pull-by with partner, turn their opposite by the right once, then turn partner by the left and put the lady on the gent's right side – like a courtesy turn without his right arm around her waist. (A similar sequence common in Texas, became the modern do paso). In some places this do-si-do was a standard subchorus following each visiting figure; in other areas, after circling, the couple merely passed through and went on to the next.

Divide the Ring and Forward Up Six

(one of many figures that did NOT have the active couple visit around the square)

First couple balance and first couple swing,
Down the center and divide the ring,
Lady go right and gent go left,
Tween side couple remain.
(i.e. each active goes around two people stands between a side couple)
Forward up six, fall back six,
(in modern terms, pass through and U-turn back)
Forward up six, fall back six,
Forward again and right and left through.
Same couple center and couple up foot,
(i.e. Couple 1 forms a ring with Couple 3)
Four hands round and round you go,

the lady go si and the gent go do.
(as above under “Birdie in the Cage”)

Next month we’ll look at another very influential book, the one commissioned by Henry Ford.

As always, if you have questions or comments or there’s anything special you’d like to see here, please drop me a line. You can use the contact form at my website, www.hands4.com.

Reprint from *American Square Dance* – December 2022

The Big Picture by Buddy Weaver

(Edited writings by Harold and Lill Bausch)

Very few people today would recognize name, but for fifty years, Harold and Lill were the most successful caller/cuer couple in the mid-west. Based in Fremont, Nebraska, they were the driving leadership of square dancing throughout their region. Reaching outside his area, Harold conducted caller schools that produced strong club callers. He was a leader in caller education long before CALLERLAB entered the field. Harold and Lill were contributors to *American Square* magazine for many years; here is one of their articles that is as important now as it was when first published.

☆☆☆☆☆☆

A successful club is no accident – it takes a lot of thought and consideration, it takes good officers and good callers to maintain that success.

Of course we sometimes see a club start out with much success and big crowds (although crowds alone are not the real mark of success) and then a few years down the road, the club is no longer in existence.

Perhaps it would be good to examine just what makes a good club and some of the problems that must be solved to keep the club going strong. My first thought is the friendly atmosphere that must always be there. Dancers tell me they attended a club where they were greeted warmly at the door but where they were ignored once the dance started. One such group told me that if one other couple of guests had not joined their group of three couples, they

would not have had a square in which to dance. Can you imagine that? Have you gone to dances and observed that the squares are pre-set and that you are not invited into those squares? Have you ever gone to a dance and not been asked to join other squares? This should never happen. Each club should welcome guests, visit with them and exchange dances with them.

The program danced should fit the club members' ability and ha of their guest couple. Today, we may be locked into the name game of SSD, Mainstream, or Plus. If the club has an experienced caller, they should give him or her the freedom to call to the dancers in a manner that will entertain them without frustrating them.

We must remember that everyone makes mistakes and this is no sin. We would never have progress in any endeavor if we were never allowed to fail. Dancers enjoy successfully completing he call on the first try or recovering on the second. We all like to feel we are improving all the time.

We sometimes hear of problems where the round dancer and square dancers each feel the other is taking too much time at club dances. We like to accommodate all the dancers, however when the number of round dancers is small, say only 10% or 15% of the crowd, then I don't think we should devote equal time to them any more than we should call square dances that accommodate only 10% or 15% of the floor.

Judgment is needed to keep a club happy and growing. Diplomacy is needed to smooth out disagreements. You don't answer criticism with ore criticism, instead you say, "Let's talk about it and come to an agreement". Problems can be worked out if people will talk and be reasonable, and most people are reasonable if treated correctly.

Believe me, when CALLERLAB created the programs, they did so with good intentions. They were searching for as solution to the rapid increase in new calls (pub: in recent time, CALLERLAB has been searching for s ways to bring square dancing back after the losses caused by the pandemic). They were not trying to separate dancers from one another. Just as you cannot say flatly that Ford is best or Chrysler is best, you cannot say that Mainstream is best or Plus is best. But with judgment and consideration, we can take the best of the lot n due it, if we keep the majority of dancers happy.

There is no way that worked quite as well as having good officers and good callers working together to keep everyone dancing.



It has been my experience that good clubs are made of dances members who have only thought in mind at every dance – what is good for the majority of the people here? Many years of research has gone into addressing that very question and here a few years ago, bob Osgood wrote about what makes square dancing good for the majority.

Be a courteous dancer. When the caller announces “square up”, join the square nearest to you that needs a couple. It is customary to greet all the dancers in your square as you join together. It is considered bad manners to pass square needing dancers in order to fill another and even more important, never leave a square once you have joined it until the tip is over If you must leave in an emergency, find a substitute to fill your spot.

Be a thoughtful dancer. Personal cleanliness is important to any activity where folks exercise vigorously in close contact with each other. For that reason, a good deodorant and an effective mouth wash are among square dancers' best friends. Also beware of perfumes and other cents which may be difficult for other dancers to be around. Because the enjoyment of the other people in a square depends upon you and your coordination, don't drink before or during a square dance.

Be a friendly dancer. You are the host in square dancing, as a matter of fact, everyone is. Take the opportunity to get acquainted with other in the square and make it a point to dance with as many different dancers as possible.

As Harold and Lill said, “a successful club is no accident.”

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All Things Considered

By Ed Foote

ARE YOU A DANCER OR A WALKER?

When you are “dancing”, the front half of your foot hits the ground first. When you are “walking”, the heel hits the ground first.

Unfortunately, our activity today should be called “Square Walk” instead of “Square Dance”, because that is what people are doing. My guess is that over half of all dancers I see in my travels are "walking" and not dancing.

Check yourself at the next square dance. Are you moving, ask yourself; “Is the ball of my foot (front half) hitting the floor first, or is my heel hitting the floor first?” Then watch other people on the floor and ask the same question about them.

When you are “dancing,” you are keeping time with the music, you are thinking ahead, you are alert. When you are “walking”, you are more relaxed and moving slower, and thus apt to fall behind in the execution of the call. In addition, being relaxed tends to cause one to think a little slower.

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Inspirational Quotes from Ed Foote

“A problem well-stated is a problem half-solved.” ...Charles Kettering, American inventor

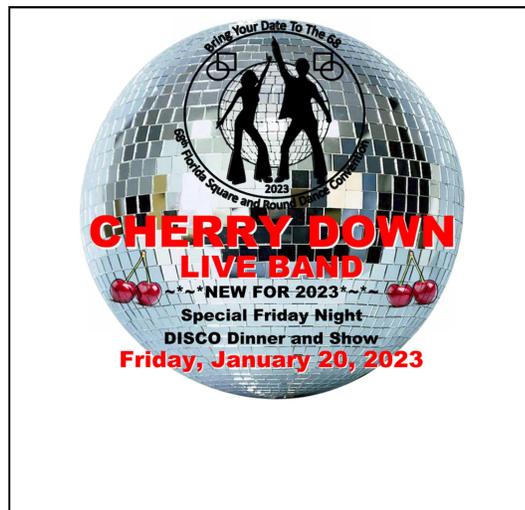
“Failure is just another way to learn how to do something right.”...Marian Wright Edelman

“When in doubt, look intelligent.”...Garrison Keillor, radio personality

“I know for sure that what we dwell on is who we become.”...Oprah Winfrey

“One of the secrets of life is to make stepping stones out of stumbling blocks.”...Jack Penn

Reprint from *American Square Dance* – December 2022



SCCA

WWW.SCCAFL.COM

WEST COAST DANCE
PRESENTS

DARRIN HENRY

&

JUDY BARNHILL

Sunday, Jan 8th, 2023

1:30 PM - Rounds 2:00 PM - Squares

Alligator Park Clubhouse

6400 Taylor Road

Punta Gorda, Florida

ELMER SHEFFIELD, A LIFE OF ADVENTURE!!

It was an amazing day back in 1938 in Damascus, Georgia!

Elmer Sheffield was born that day and shortly after, moved with his family to Tallahassee. As he grew up, he became a fine young man, very popular in his teens because he was handsome, kind, had a great singing voice and---had a car!

We now know him as an outstanding square dance caller, well-known by many dancers all over the world and well respected by his fellow callers.

Elmer's life has covered many facets and here are just a few:

He has always loved sports and competition. At an early age, he played baseball and was involved when Tallahassee's first little league was formed. He continued to play through high school and was voted Most Valuable Player in his senior year. Also at Florida High, Elmer became the star quarterback for the Demons.

In Jr. High, Elmer learned to play the trumpet and continued through high school. At football games, since he was in the marching band and also the quarterback, he would play the first two quarters dressed out, and at half time he would grab his horn and march with the band on the field without changing clothes, returning to play in position again to finish the game!

After attending FSU for a couple of years, Elmer could resist those big brown eyes no longer and he married his childhood sweetheart, Margie. Together, they have raised a family of two children, five grands and 1 great grandchild.

Elmer loved speed and adventure! He worked in his dad's auto shop growing up. He took up power boat racing and drove a high speed tunnel boat for Johnson Motors for several years. Then built and raced go-karts. He and his son were both quite successful in competitions. Soon drag racing claimed Elmer's interest and he built his own drag racing car, having learned how from his dad! Drag racing continued to enthrall Elmer until a few years ago and in 2022 he was inducted into the Southeastern Drag Racing Hall of Fame.

About 1963, Elmer and Margie attended a square dance and before it was over, the calling bug had bit him and his career as a caller began a couple of years later. Elmer was/is very handsome and, as it turned out, has a beautiful singing voice so he became very popular! He has called all over the world and all over the United States and is not only loved by dancers but by callers he has mentored and befriended during his years of calling. He has seen the style

of calling evolve during his calling life, beginning with the singing callers, then to non-singing, choreographed calling, and now to the calling that we are used to today.

After about 3 years of calling, Elmer was invited by a major music producer to record a tune which became a number one seller. He credits caller and good friend, Gary Shoemake, who suggested the first tune that Elmer recorded. The title was “GOOD MORNING COUNTRY RAIN” and it became a huge hit, launching his career with Red Boot Recordings. Elmer was on staff and called at Kirkwood Lodge in Missouri for 15 years where he called with Marshal Flippo, Ken Bower and Darryl MacMillan. There must be many stories from that time! He also spent time calling at Copecrest Square Dance Resort in Dillard, Georgia.

In 1968, Elmer formed his own recording company, Elmer Sheffield productions (ESP) which still enjoys being one of the most successful today! He has recorded over 500 square dance tunes and even as we go to press, he is recording! He also has held the honor of being Chairman of Callerlab, the caller’s professional organization.

In Tallahassee, Elmer has been the beloved caller since 1968. He has called and taught numerous classes—always patient, encouraging and friendly, beloved by his dancers. Elmer’s comment: “All of the callers who are attending and many who are unable to attend this dance honoring me are my friends and are special to me. I could share stories about most but I would run out of time. Ask Wade Driver about our harmony singing at Jekyll Island. Ask Tony Oxendine how I helped him become the star that he is. Ask Darryl MacMillan about our “after-party” skits.....it goes on and on!”

Elmer’s memories shared with Libby Penrod, December 15, 2022
Tallahassee, Florida.

The DANCERgram magazines presented on this website 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 or the West Coast Square and Round Dancers' Association. 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 sqdnxfan@gmail.com or 863-224-3393.

DANCERgram Magazines

Planner (weekly)

Joys, Concerns, & Sympathies (as needed)

Directory (as needed) • WC Key Contacts • WC Dances • SCCA • Links

This and That (monthly) • WCA president's message • Federation president's message • Club News • Reprint of articles • New Articles

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