

# DANCERgram

July 2023



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

## Table of Contents

2	72 <sup>nd</sup> National Square and Round Dance Convention
2	Caller Don Bachelder Recognized
3	Smooth Dancing
4	Mike Hogan on Marketing
6	The Big Picture (about Social Square Dancing) by Buddy Weaver
15	All Things Considered by Ed Foote – Contracts and Ethics
17	Social Square Dancing by Barry Johnson
17	Roots and Branches by Tony Parkes
20	CALLERLAB Viewpoints by Mike Seastrom
23	Inspirational Quotes

**Mobile, Alabama has been invaded by over 2,000 (2,084 as of June 8, 2023) square and round dancers! There are almost 200 (193 as of June 8, 2023) from the state of Florida!**

There are 16 Florida callers registered; one of them is a pre-teen from the Jacksonville area. There are seven Florida cuers plus Judy and Susan and there are two Florida line dance cuers. We are well represented!

## Caller Don Bachelder Recognized

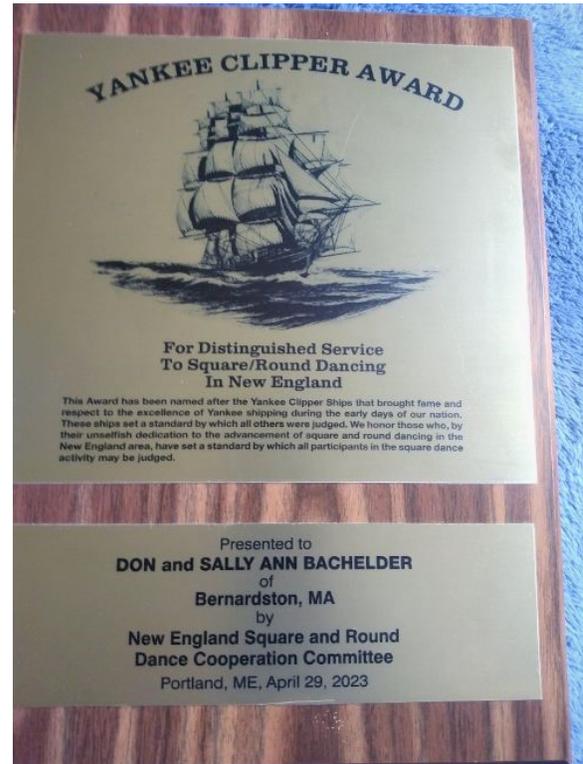
We love to hear when our friends are recognized!

Don Bachelder was recognized at the 69<sup>th</sup> New England Square and Round Dance Convention in Portland, Maine, on April 29, 2023, for his unselfish dedication to the advancement of square and round dancing in the New England area.

The plaque he received states: “This award has been named after the Yankee Clipper Ships that brought fame and respect to the excellence of Yankee shipping during the early days of the nation. These ships set a standard by which all others were judged. We honor those who, by their unselfish dedication to the advancement of square and round dancing in the New

England area, have set a standard by which all participants in the square dance activity may be judged.”

Don, and his wife Sally-Ann, are originally from Massachusetts, but they now spend the winter at Strawberry Square in Plant City, Florida. He occasionally calls at the Strawberry Square Dance Center and guest calls at several of the clubs in this area. He has been calling for 40 years.



## Smooth Dancing

This month we will feature the call **DIVE THRU**. A call with links to our square dance history (“Dip and Dive”, etc.) that has evolved into its current use – a smoother use of the call.

CALLERLAB defines the call as: “one couple makes an arch by raising their joined hands, while the other couple ducks under the arch. Both couples move forward. The couple making the arch does a California Twirl”. While simple in its description of the call, this leaves out some of the important nuances.

The Buddy Weaver teach goes like this: inside couple makes an arch. This is not a “hard arch” where hands are held continuously, rather it is a “SOFT ARCH”, where the action starts with hands held and raised, but will release as the dancers move forward. As they finish moving around the couple in front of

them, they re-establish a handhold for the California Twirl action. The couples on the outside will move forward through the arch but should not have to duck down to get there. The “SOFT ARCH” allows for smooth dancing. Shorter dancers will not have to feel challenged to make a hard arch. Dancers who cannot easily duck, are not forced to do something uncomfortable.

The most important part of incorporating a “SOFT ARCH” is the call Dive Thru, which is removing the risk that the arching dancers accidentally drag over the hair of the dancers who are “DUCKING”. For a lot of people who spend time looking good (the author included), this is a big thing,

Here is a video of Buddy Weaver teaching Dive Thru  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJfc8q5vVBk>

Here is the CALLERLAB teaching resource  
<https://teaching.callerlab.org>

**Smooth dancing is the foundation of sustainable square dancing.**

Reprint from *American Square Dance* – June 2023 Volume 79 Number 6

## **Mike Hogan on Marketing**

Promotion: Promotion includes many elements like brand building, brand management, image, public relations and advertising, marketing strategy, internet strategy, personal selling, direct marketing, sales force, sales promotions, purchase incentives, budget allocation, partnership, contests, and product sampling. Promotion is the delivery of messages that inform, educate, and persuade consumers to purchase the product and the methods used to communicate those messages.

When a business places messages in front of consumers they are trying to accomplish one of two things. The first is building their brand; telling consumers why they should buy their product. The second is a call to action; telling consumers to make a purchase now.

If I were to ask you to purchase Tirzepatide, you likely would not because you don't have a clue what Tirzepatide is. Clearly, I would have to explain what the product does, and get you to associate that as the solution to a want or need that you have. Asking consumers to purchase something they are unfamiliar with, generally doesn't work. I've covered the marketing funnel in prior articles

that you, hopefully, have read. The first stage of the cycle is awareness: Brand! Tirzepatide is a weight loss pill being developed by Eli Lilly. It's the first investigational medicine to deliver more than 20% weight loss on average. It may receive FDA approval in late 2023. When that happens look forward to seeing and hearing lots of advertisements about Tirzepatide. I'm guessing you have heard of Ozempic, which is for diabetes, but touts weight loss as a side effect. Why? Because Novo Nordisk, the makers of Ozempic, have spent millions of dollars building its brand.

Promoting square dancing and recruiting new dancers are related but are not the same. When we try to get a class started, we recruit new dancers, but don't usually promote square dancing. We recruit new dancers when we put an ad in the newspaper, or when we hang a flyer at the grocery store, on the bulletin board at work offering lessons, when we e-mail an invitation to lessons to a friend or post your event on Facebook. We promote square dancing when we dance at the mall or on a float in a parade, when positive articles are published about the activity, when we tell our friends about the fun we have or hold a party dance. Promotions tell folks why they should square dance; this is building brand and awareness. Recruitment often only invites people to participate without telling them why they should.

Purchases are made for only two reasons; because consumers need the product or because they want the product. We have a problem: non-dancers don't see a need for, or have a desire for, our product. We must figure out how to create a desire for the product, or we must convince folks that they need our product. If we can do this, then when we ask them to buy now, the results will be better!

It is possible to build brand awareness while asking for the sale simultaneously, however sales will be lacking until the campaign has had enough time with enough message frequency to establish the brand, then sales will pick up!

I'm going to pause this promotional discussion now and ask for your help! I'm hearing many stories of clubs that have been successful recruiting large classes, and I'm collecting and analyzing those stories. I plan to begin sharing those success stories and why they worked from a marketing perspective in future articles, I love case studies because they represent repeatable marketing campaigns that allow you to "do what they did" with the expectation of similar success! I'm a terrible cook but I can make a great apple pie if someone shares their recipe and gives me instructions. All I must do is follow them.

I don't want your apple pie recipe; however, I do want to hear from you if your organization is having success recruiting new dancers. Fill up my inbox! Give me details about what you did and the results. I'll reach out to you if I need

additional information. My personal email address is [mike.hogan@cox.net](mailto:mike.hogan@cox.net) or you can email me a work; [mikehogan@heartmedia.com](mailto:mikehogan@heartmedia.com). With your permission, I will share your story in a future article for those who read this, and write it up and submit it to the CALLERLAB Knowledge Base website so others who don't read this article can still have access to the information.

Next month I'll begin sharing some of those stories, the tactics used, the messaging, and why they worked. Hopefully, you will follow the recipe and have the same great results!

Reprint from *American Square Dance* – June 2023 Volume 79 Number 6

## **The Big Picture by Buddy Weaver**

This is a presentation from the recent CALLERLAB Convention regarding Social Square Dancing (SSD).

One of the most popular sessions held at the CALLERLAB Convention 2023 was "SSD: the philosophy behind the program". "Panelists: Buddy Weaver, Janice Cha, and Janienne Alexander. What is SSD and why is SSD designed the way it is? Join this panel as they discuss the need for this type of program and how to implement the SSD philosophy." This month I am featuring part one of the session, transcribed and edited,

Friends, good afternoon and welcome to the 48<sup>th</sup> CALLERLAB Convention in Reno, Nevada. Today is Tuesday, April 25. Our session is entitled SSD, the Philosophy Behind the Program.

I am your moderator and my name is Buddy Weaver, joining me on the panel are two fine panelists who have experience not just theoretically making a successful SSD program work, but actual field experience in how to make an SSD program work.

To my far left from Southern California, Janienne Alexander. To my near left from the Chicago area of Illinois, Janice Cha.

I'd like to lay some of the groundwork of what is SSD? It is a program designed to be taught in 24 hours. Many times and I'm speaking to an audience of callers, am I correct about that? Yes we get hung up on the idea of weeks. How many weeks does it take to teach something? How many months does it take to teach something? I'd like you to change the way you think about it and think about it in terms of hours, 24 hours. If you teach a 90 minute class as I do back home, that equates to about 16 weeks. It makes for a nice comfortable setting.

It allows us to be able to do more than one class per year. If you take the same concept of hours and you apply to mainstream and or plus, you will find that if you're doing a plus class – zero to plus in one year – you're not doing anybody a favor because you are not getting your full curriculum taught within that one year. It takes you much longer than that. I would also add one more little factor to it. When we talk about weeks we are talking about consecutive weeks. So, 14 weeks of classes is doable. How does that work for you when you're trying to do let's say zero to plus, as many are doing still or have done in the past where it takes you 10 months and you have to take time for a Christmas holiday. You have to take a time off because the hall is not available. You'll have somebody miss a particular week. Do you factor in anything that allows you to go back and help that one person who missed that one week? How about the folks who had took some time off to travel for work?

How about when you take your two weeks off for Christmas and New Year and you've left off a week, let's say 20, do you come back and expect people to be prepared to pick it up at week 21 because that's an unreasonable expectation. They've been off for two weeks. They're going to be more like mentally at week number 18. Have you factored those numbers in? If the answer is no, then let me tell you SSD makes it possible to do it.

Fewer calls to master mean people are able to master this program faster. It is a stand-alone program. It is the first time in CALLERLAB's history that we have ever had a stand-alone program. It does not come from a lower program nor does it go to a higher program. It is not a stepping stone to anything. It stands by itself. It fails or it succeeds on its own merits. Period. It doesn't go anywhere.

Here's what it does in real life experiences. It allows your beginner dancers to be full-fledged club members in 24 hours. For you folks whose method of operation has been zero to plus, and that means you've got to be in class for, oh, let's just say you're a miracle teacher. You can teach these people zero to plus in 10 months. If you are coming back in now, post COVID and you've lost 50% of your dance population, can your club sustain itself for 10 months on 50% of what you had? If you had three squares before COVID and you've come back post COVID and you've got a square and a half, can you last 10 months? Can you last six months if it's mainstream as your entry level? If the answer is no, SSD saves the square dance club. It saves the square dance program in areas where it is successfully implemented. It allows a club to do more than one class per year.

If you choose to do one class per year, terrific. But guess what? If your 24 hours translates to 12 weeks, you could do two classes a year. You could do three classes in a year. It's not so fantastic to think these thoughts. It only means that if we don't take time to open our minds to think these thoughts.

So, we're not talking about the way we've always done it. We didn't come in by horse and buggy, so let's kind of open our minds to that.

It is going to be a lifeline for club that have suffered losses of people, and I mentioned the numbers, but that also equates to numbers of dollars. If the club has come back post-pandemic and they're operating on 50% of their membership but their rent has gone up, and how many by show of hands have seen rent come up in your halls post-COVID? I see about one-third of all the hands come up, and if that's you, and I've had this conversation with other groups in my area who said, I don't want to do SSD we're going to stick with our Zero to Plus. I said, hallelujah, terrific. (The problem is they can't get a caller to call for them at the \$25 they are willing to pay). Think about the financial aspect of this. Now we're talking about how SSD impacts operations. Run those numbers for a second. If you have a square and a half of members, you're going to wait a year or to 10 months to 12 months to get new members coming in the door. Your hall rent has gone up. Who's going to subsidize it? Are you prepared to charge your members double? Triple. Will they pay 20 bucks a person to come square dance as they did pre-COVID? And if the answer is no, then friends, we have to look at the realities of what we have today. It would be great to say we could go back to what we were pre-COVID days and say that's going to be exactly what it is; well it's not.

So here we are, but hallelujah, we have SSD now as a means of saving the square dance program in many areas. I'm going to say one more thing about this before we start moving on and have panelists start to talk about how they implemented in their own areas. We've seen coming back from COVID, some of our dancers have come back in a position that they weren't as physically sharp as they were pre-COVID. Some of them are not as mentally sharp as they were pre-COVID lockdown. Now, if we were a strictly go back to where we were, Clippity Clop, we came in our horse and buggy, we're not going to change. We're going to keep it at plus and it's hard plus and it's the way it is. We would have gone from losing 50% of our membership to probably losing 75% of our membership because half of those people wouldn't be able to keep up. They're not able to keep up. And I can't in good conscience say, well, you can't keep up, you have to leave.

We have SSD, which allows even the plus dancers, even the "plus" (quotes intentionally added) dancers. I call them closet SSD dancers. They will never admit that they like SSD, but they love SSD because it keeps them on the dance floor. It keeps them on the club roster. It allows them to come out to their weekly dances and be with their friends and be part of square dancing and not have to drop out because every time the caller says spin chain and exchange the gears, they've gone wandering off. And the whole square goes down. And so this has become in our own neck of the woods in my market, which is San Diego, California. This has saved a lot of our plus dancers.

In areas where we've seen that there has been extreme pushback to SSD, we have seen a larger loss of dancers where they've maintained zero to plus. They have not been able to sustain it. And let me talk about sustainability too.

The definition of sustainable is able to maintain a certain level and rate. How are we able to call plus or even heaven forbid, I should say it, mainstream sustainable? Have we, let's take COVID and the pandemic lockdown out of the equation, have you grown? Have your mainstream clubs grown? Have your plus clubs grown? Have you not, sorry for saying this, but have you not all experienced the loss of clubs in your area? I see a lot of heads nodding. And even in areas that were mainstream and fundamentally strong have you seen the loss of clubs.

When you see losses that is not sustainable. This is the antithesis of sustainable. SSD for our group in our market alone us to maintain a certain level, SSD, at a certain rate, at a certain level and as we were able to, when we did our Friday night dances past weekend, and I called for the dance and we had 80 people on the floor. And I asked, how many of these people were SSD? The club came back with a count, 20 were SSD. So we've come back post COVID, we've graduated more than 20, but 20 of them have ventured out to come out to an open dance. Now if that dance was plus only, that dance would not have had 80 people. It would have had 60 people and that would have been reflected at the club when they go to pay their whole rent and their round dance, and they pay their caller. There's less money coming in the door.

For the folks who have said, we don't like SSD, we are opposed to it. Hallelujah. We'll take the 20 people. As a buddy of mine said, I should send them all a thank you card. So that may seem a little sarcastic, but it does drive home the point that SSD does work.

Now to my far left, this young lady is a recent arrival in California by the way, California really welcomes your tax dollars, and may I say, as a Californian. And she has been doing a phenomenal job with a club that was plus for many, many years and has got them going in SSD. A nice hand for Janienne Alexander, please.

All right, so I'm Janienne Alexander, I started calling in Oregon where mainstream is the king in Oregon, came down to California during the pandemic. And I started with a club who reached out to me and they said, yes, we are a plus club, but CALLERLAB has put out this information about SSD and we want to commit to SSD for three years. They said that's what we're going to do. We need to build our base. We do not have the dancers to be able to afford a dance. We don't have enough. And so they knew they needed to get the new dancers in. So they contracted with the city and with the Parks and

Rec. And the city offered us a chance to have lessons four times a year. And with SSD, we can do that. We can get in new dancers four times year. And the city, what they do, they have a magazine and they send it out to 80,000 people. I can't afford that kind of advertising. The club can't afford that. So we put it in there. And basically what it is, is the city hires me as a contractor and they pay me a percentage of what the dancers are going to pay. And then the club subsidizes that to be able to make it feasible for me to do that.

So since we started, we have had 40% increase in our dancers. The dancers that have come out and tried SSD are staying with it. I have only lost one person since I've started which I couldn't say that before the pandemic.

I don't know about you guys, but you get 20 people in the door. And by the time you've gotten to mainstream or plus, you have five left. But with the SSD program, they're coming back. They're having fun. What we do with that is as we go through our lesson, our 10 to 12 weeks, depending on the schedule the city has given us, sometimes it's 10, sometimes its 14, we spread it out. But those returning dancers, I give them some time at the end to practice those calls that they need help with. And we make it fun. We make it interesting.

It's a destination. They're not pressured to go on, to learn more, to keep looking for a puzzle or anything. They want the wind in the face. They don't want the, I don't have to commit for the next year before I can go to a dance because at the end of our session, they're welcome to come to the club. And one of the nice things about our club hosting, solid SSD, there are not anything else, there's no plus, no advance, nothing else, other clubs are like, oh, we need a place for our SSD dancers to go. So we've created that. We have, I have seen the difference between the clubs that are dedicated to SSD versus the clubs that will say, yeah, you're welcome to our plus club and we'll give a tip or two to dance.

I've gone to ones where, like Buddy's club where we've gone there to dance, the dancers who dance plus and advance and everything but they're committed to the new dancers they are excited. They play with their new dancers. They mentor them, they reach out to them. They're really super excited. And I can see that on the floor they're laughing and having a great time. I've gone to other dances where they'll have a tip for SSD, then they'll have two rounds, then they'll have plus, and they'll have two more rounds. Oh, yeah. One more tip of SSD before we go home for the night. Well, the SSD dancers don't want to be there, you know, to sit and watch everybody. They don't have as much fun on the floor and they feel that from the plus dancers of going, oh it's SSD. Yeah, I'll sit out. You guys go have fun. You guys go do that. Well, there's a huge difference and they don't have the draw that a club like Buddy's has or My Club or Mike Seastrom's club are dedicated to the SSD program.

So our philosophy on that is this is the destination. We are not a stepping stone to plus. We don't promote that to our dancers. There is a place for them to go. There is a place for them to dance. And a lot of our dancers we are finding a lot of them are in their 50s and 60s. They don't have a year or two years to commit to just learning. The first night we get them they're dancing. They're having fun and they don't realize how much fun this activity could be. Well, you guys all know that too. But they're able to dance right away.

(Question from the floor) How many per class? (Janienne answers) So when we first started out, we had a square. That was the first time. Now we have over 30 people that are joining each time. And probably over 50% of them are brand new people that said hey, I saw this in the magazine. I saw this in the newspaper. We want to try it. Our people are returning with their friends. And the biggest pull is, hey, I'm having fun. Come join us. And you don't have to wait a year before you come join us. In fact, oh, another session starts in five weeks or whatever amount.

(Question from the floor) So your former plus club has now become a SSD club? (Answer) Absolutely. (Question) And they're not dancing plus at all? (ANSWER) So, after two years, they have decided to ask me if I would teach plus to the former dancers who have danced plus before they said they would like a refresher. And I told them not on our SSD night. I will do it on a separate night for them. But as long as they're not pressuring our new dancers to come to that. And they have happily said yep, we want to be able to go visit and play with our friends, but we will do it separately away from the new dancers.

(Question from the floor) And what's your approach then to teach them the 12 missing movements at mainstream so those SSD dancers can dance in other places? Or do you care? (Answer) Well, why do I need to teach them that if they're having fun and they don't want to go to a plus? So that's been the thing right now is I don't, all of my new dancers, they're coming back for SSD, they're not looking for more. They're having fun where they're at.

(Question from the floor) So you just split your group in half that want to go on and do more. So how are you paying the bills? Are you getting paid for calling? You said you're getting a percentage from the county. So you got enough for gas money to get there? (Answer) So yes. Straight up. Absolutely. So I do get paid through the city and the club subsidizes that for SSD. The previous members of the club who want to dance plus, we have done that at someone's house that has a really big garage. And so we have two squares that they want to workshop some plus moves and everything.

(Question from the floor) What is the age, the average age level here coming into the program? Is there 30 or 40 or what is it right now? (Answer) So the average age of the newer dancers is in their 50s and 60s. But I have them from

20 to their 80s. (Question from the floor) After the 24 hours and you've taught in that one class of SSD how many dances do they have the option to go to from there on, you know, every first Saturday, second Saturday, every weekend, or what, how many dances do they actually have an option to go to? (Answer) So, our club has a once a month dance. And then they come back on Tuesday. That Tuesday night is usually their night. You know, they're excited about it. They come back and they dance. They help the new dancers. They are, you know, having fun with that. So they have one dance a month from our club unless they travel outside of the area to another SSD dance. So for our club in Santa Clarita, there is only one club that offers dances. There are other clubs in the area, but it's in the LA area, you have to drive for quite a while to get to any club no matter what program you dance.

(Buddy Weaver) Alright, so I'm actually going to pass it over to Janice so she can tell us about her club and her experience. Janice Cha, by the way, comes to us from the Chicago Illinois area and before we get to it, I just want to tell you right off the bat; I was not impressed with SSD when I first heard about it. I thought it was not an idea that would work for me at all but when I called the 2019 Illinois State Festival and this was your program that you instituted. Janice did. My eyes were opened. I'm here to tell you. I saw the enthusiasm, I saw the age group, I saw what was able to be done with SSD and I said I think I got this wrong. Now anybody who knows me knows that's a big set of words coming out of my mouth, but I was wrong. And because of Janice Cha, she turned me around and got my eyes open to what SSD is, ladies and gentlemen, this is Janice Cha.

Alright I'm just curious. You guys sitting in the audience, just by a show of hands, how many of you are currently teaching or doing SSD in your club or area? Pretty good. How many are not? Okay, so you're SSD curious, right? Yeah, good. I like that. So my name is Janice and I am from the Chicago area. My club is Glenview Squares, find it on the web at [Glenviewsquares.org](http://Glenviewsquares.org).

And I think it's not a stretch, as Buddy says, that I'm one of the reasons that SSD is pretty strong now in Chicago. And I don't think I'm exaggerating to say that SSD has made Chicago like the remaining hotbed of square dance growth in the whole state of Illinois. Would you agree, James? He agrees.

So in my part of this presentation, I'm going to give you a little bit of the background of how we got to this point in history. I'll tell you a couple of the benefits which Buddy already mentioned. I will tell you some of the nuts and bolts of how our club is making SSD work. And then I'll tell you a little bit about what callers need to know if they come to call for Glenview Squares. And I'm not a caller. I'm just a dancer. I'm a club organizer. I'm a, yeah, I'm somebody that makes things happen. Damn it. Okay, so I see things and I make them happen.

All right, so back when James and I started in the early 2000s, the Chicago area was really a zero to plus area and they were teaching zero to plus in 50 clubs in the Chicago area. I understand and Barry Johnson might be able to correct me, but I understand there were more than one-hundred clubs in the area, you know, about ten to fifteen years earlier. So it was already on the decline. We didn't know that. Today, there are just about 20 clubs left in the Chicago area and of those, of those, quite a few of them are like micro clubs with 10 or 15 members or fewer. One club is planning to close in August. So it's really dire. Back in the, oh, I don't know, the mid-2000s, one brave club up on the north suburbs in McHenry decided to test out this new club 50 thing, this 50 call list. And they did it for a year and we're like mmm, interesting. And we were watching them.

Let me backtrack a little bit. The year after James and I graduated from our zero to plus and 30 weeks class, we got snookered into becoming the head angels. And we had to serve, we served as head angels for the next 10 years and we thought we were doing pretty good. You know, we would keep about 30% of our class all the way from September through May and then of that 30% maybe, I don't know, two or three or sometimes zero people would actually join the club and become successful square dancers. What was happening, and we didn't think about it until, like, the scales fell from our eyes.

What was happening was our club would teach and we go through May and we do the big dinner dance and they would go dark for the summer. There's nothing, nothing at all. No workshops, no dancing, no nothing. And then dances would start up in September and these poor new dancers would come back to a club dance and they would crash and burn and they would quit.

Okay, so it was just awful. So finally, I'm like, this is not sustainable and we have to try something different. And that's where the shorter call list came into play and we just started to shake things up. This was in 2013, 2014, I believe.

And so it was not a smooth ride to where we are now. It was a little bit bumpy because things happen and members don't like to change and whatever, but long story short, we did implement the 50 call list. We tried various methods and our club, which has at 50 members and shrinking, started to go up and be pre-pandemic. We were around 100. You know, the shutdown for the pandemic, despite our great efforts with Zoom calling on Square Online, we did lose about 30 members. You know, they just decided not to come back.

And thanks to the SSD programs, multiple classes, we're back up to that 100 member number and growing. In 2017, one of our callers decided to go off and, you know, with our blessings, he decided to go up to a neighboring town and offer less and that grew into the first and only brand new club in Illinois in

years, decades, I guess. Their club, North Shore Squares, is now at 70 members and growing and this is all thanks to SSD.

So that's some of the background. The benefits, as Buddy mentioned and Janienne mentioned, is that with a 50-call program, we teach it, well, with a 50 call program, you can offer lessons more than once a year. It used to be just September. If you missed that window, too bad, wait another year. So we can get our club dancers into our club dances within a matter of weeks, months, rather than a whole year if they're lucky. So once they get to a club dance and they have the endorphins of the fun it is, and they're hooked and, you know, we've got them forever. They have to move away or die in order to leave our club. No, we're not killing them. Okay, really, we're not.

So some of the nuts and bolts that our club uses for SSD. We teach, we offer lessons in September and late January. Our classes run 18 weeks and we do it in two nine week sessions. That nine week is kind of a carryover from when we used to teach at the park district. But I like the idea of the two sessions because that way, they don't have to commit to the entire thing. They can drop out halfway through if they decide it's not for them. We learned that in order for SSD to succeed, the entire club, all the membership needs to be on board with supporting our new dancers. In our club, at our club dances these days experienced dance couples routinely split up in order to dance with our new dancers. In fact, you have to be a little bit fast to get a good new dancer. I mean, to get a new dancer, you know, otherwise somebody will grab them and you're stuck dancing with a long time dancer. Sorry.

And so at our club dances, because we started as a plus club, we still have plus. So it's kind of an SSD hybrid. It's not pure, but we've made it work.

So our club dances do alternate between SSD and plus, but we get, we start and we end with SSD so the majority of the dancers get the majority of the floor time. And it's all dancing. You know, it used to be bring the food, have a snack, have a long break. But at our clubs, I think like your clubs, as soon that music starts, our folks are trained. They jump in there and they square up and they do the SSD tip and that finishes. And then the plus dancers come up and they're ready to dance and then there's a short break. And then rinse and repeat. And it's one break in the middle. And it's in a 2.5 hour dance we can get in about 10 different tips, which I think is pretty good.

Reprint from *American Square Dance* – June 2023 Volume 79 Number 6

**(NEXT MONTH WILL BE PART TWO OF THIS FEATURE)**

# All Things Considered by Ed Foote

## Contracts and Ethics

Contracts between callers and clubs are the norm in our activity, yet many people, unless they are a club officer, will never be involved with these contracts.

Both CALLERLAB and the United Square Dancers of America have a Code of Ethics, and these codes are well-written. But when it comes to the ethical use of contracts, CALLERLAB has an established grievance procedure should problems arise. The United Square Dancers of America has nothing,

**Breach of contracts – callers.** Over the years both callers and clubs, on a limited basis have failed to honor contracts. Some callers will book two clubs for the same night decide which is more convenient or will pay more, and then cancel the other club with very little notice. The cancelled club has spent money to advertise one caller and then has to scramble to find a replacement at the last minute. Dancers show up expecting one caller and are surprised to find another.

Regrettably, some callers have established a reputation for such behavior. In fact, one of the reasons CALLERLAB was founded in the early 1970s was because some well-known callers were not showing up for contracted dances, and the club could do nothing about it. Many callers were upset at what fellow callers were doing and wanted an organization established with strong ethics that would curb this behavior

CALLERLAB quickly established a strong Code of Ethics along with a detailed written grievance procedure, and the number of complaints about callers dropped sharply. Today, any club that feels a CALLERLAB member has violated ethics can, after trying to work through the caller's local callers organization, contact CALLERLAB and have the matter considered.

**Breach of contracts – clubs.** Unfortunately, when clubs are unethical toward callers, the callers have no recourse. Often, except for club officers, most members do not even know their club is being unethical. Even the club officers usually think that their actions are fine, because "It has always been done this way."

The most common form of unethical behavior by clubs toward callers is refusing to honor a contract. The club will decide to do something else that night, so it will cancel the caller. The problem is the cancellation usually occurs

less than six months before their dance. With clubs in the area booking two or more years ahead, it is almost impossible for the caller to find another booking. The response of the club is usually: “We don’t care; this is what we want to do.”

Almost never will a club offer a cancellation fee, claiming such a fee is not in the contract. Legally, such a claim is meaningless. If the caller took the club to court claiming breach of contract, damages would be awarded. So the legal and ethical thing for the club to do is to offer the caller a cancellation fee. Of course, it is too costly for the caller to go to court, and the club knows this. So the caller is stuck.

Some clubs are intentionally biased toward callers. They will have a clause in the contract that says: “Either party may cancel up to six months (sometimes 90 days) before the dance.” If the caller cancels, the club is not financially hurt, because the club can always find another caller and the dance will take place. If the club cancels, the caller is definitely hurt, because with most clubs booking two or more years ahead, there is little chance the caller can fill a date only six months ahead.

If most clubs in an area have this clause in their contract the callers have to go along and sign or else they would not get any bookings. So they sign and pray the club will honor its agreement.

**Question.** Why does the United Square Dancers of America not have a grievance procedure, as CALLERLAB does? Clubs can complain to CALLERLAB about unethical actions by callers but callers have nowhere to complain about unethical actions by clubs. I raised this question to the United Square Dancers of America 18 years ago. Nothing has happened.

Since the United Square Dancers of America is the closest thing we have to a national dancers’ association it would be logical for it to establish a grievance procedure based on its established Code of Ethics whereby callers and clubs could air grievances. While any opinion rendered would not be legally binding, at least it would provide a forum for airing grievances where none exists now.

CALLERLAB backs up its Code of Ethics with a grievance procedure. Ask the next representative you see from the United Square Dancers of America why that organization will not do the same.

Reprint from *American Square Dance* – June 2023 Volume 79 Number 6

## **Social Square Dance by Barry Johnson**

One of the commonly discussed points about the Social Square Dance program is that it is intended to be used as a “destination program. What does that really mean?

SSD is a dance program with the same stature as Basic, Mainstream, Plus, Advanced and Challenge. Each of these programs can be considered “destination” programs: It is not unusual for a dancer to learn that dance program, and then stop learning new calls and figures. That dancer has decided that they’ve learned enough, and are satisfied to remain at the program they’ve reached.

The nature of the calls on the SSD list were consciously selected to provide the feel of Modern Western Square Dance folk activity while being relatively accessible to beginning dancers. The nature and variety of the calls in the program are such that many dancers can be (and are) satisfied to remain dancing only this program for a significant amount of time.

Does that mean that no one should ever dance any program beyond SSD? Of course not. There will always be some dancers that will desire to learn more, and we should be providing those dancers with continuing education opportunities should they wish to see them.

But – and this is a key tenant of the SSD program – it should be the dancer’s choice. Some dancers will choose to remain in the SSD program perhaps for years, and others may choose to prefer dancing SSD instead of more complex programs they’ve already learned. It is these dancers that SSD will be able to keep happy and retain in the activity instead of them being pressed to go beyond their comfort zone and drop out. Don’t underestimate the attraction for a new dancer to remain focused only on SSD for quite some time, and don’t push them to move along.

Reprint from *American Square Dance* – June 2023 Volume 79 Number 6

## **Roots and Branches by Tony Parkes**

It’s time to step back and look at the big picture. Our goal is to see where today’s square dancing – both “traditional” and “modern” – came from. Much has been written about square dance history, but a fair amount of it has been conjecture. The present survey is based as much as possible on printed and written sources from the eras in question, where guesswork is involved; I have tried to make it clear.

First, here's a paragraph from January 2022, the first issue of the revived American Square Dance, in case you weren't taking the magazine yet.

"...let me point you to a wonderful source of information: the Square Dance History project. It's a virtual museum of videos and other items that document the evolution of both traditional and modern square dancing. I'm a 'core consultant' to the Project, specializing in the dancing of New England – though I don't have much to do, as the founder and curator of the Project, my good friend David Millstone of New Hampshire, knows a lot about New England style himself. There are several other consultants, each an expert on a particular region, with veteran caller Jim Mayo (the first chairman of Callerlab) covering modern square dancing. You can access this treasure trove at [squaredancehistory.org](http://squaredancehistory.org)" (I've just learned that Jim Mayo passed away in mid-May, a great loss to the activity.)

Now for a quick view from 30,000 feet:

The shortest answer to "Where does square dancing come from?" is that for several centuries, Europeans enjoyed dancing not just in couples but in structured groups of couples. The three most popular formations were circles, squares, and longways sets (lines of couples). Some longways were "set dances," choreographed for an exact number of couples, others were "for as many as will" (the ancestors of the Virginia Reel and our modern all-moving contra dances).

Over the years, the pendulum has swung back and forth on whether squares or longways were the favored form. The oldest surviving collection with danceable descriptions is *The English Dancing Master* whose first edition was published in London by John Playford in 1651. Presumably the dances are older than that, as they were not presented as great innovations. "Playford" went through 17 editions culminating in a three-volume set in the 1720s. The first edition had 104 dances in various formations; only 3 were squares. In the last edition, 904 out of 918 dances were "longways for as many as will." But squares were about to gain in favor.

"The "cotillion," the first really popular four-couple square, was introduced in Paris in 1716. It made its way to England in the 1760s, and from there to her American colonies. A cotillion was danced to a single piece of music lasting several minutes. There were two parts: the "changes," a series of standard movements like circles and stars (similar to the "breaks" of a modern square), alternating with the "figure," a more elaborate sequence unique to each cotillion. Fancy footwork was included, which required a series of lessons from a dancing master. There were no calls; the dancers were expected to memorize each sequence.

In the early 1800s the “quadrille” emerged as the successor to the cotillion. It was essentially half a dozen cotillion figures done with the same partner, each to a different piece of music. It was common to use melodies from opera, theater, and popular songs, just as present-day callers use the latest hits for singing squares. In the 1830s the footwork was abandoned in favor of a simple walking step. Both cotillions and quadrilles were danced in strict synchronization with the musical phrase.

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century two things happened that began changing the quadrille into something we would recognize as a “square dance.” First, quadrilles fell out of favor in upper-class ballrooms as couple dances – waltz, polka, schottische – gained in popularity. In rural areas, which have always been less tied to changes in fashion, people kept doing squares, gradually making them less formal. Second, the practice of prompting or calling – made necessary by the great variety of quadrille figures, too many to memorize – developed into an art, with callers improvising rhymes and harmonizing with the music

Most of the rural tradition was oral, and few descriptions have survived. Formal quadrilles were written and used in Europe and America primarily between 1810 and the 1850s; informal versions must have started developing almost immediately. “Especially in the South, they were influenced by circular dance forms brought by settlers from Scotland and Ireland.) By the end of the century, country-style squares with their patter calls had emerged as a uniquely American art form. We have a few descriptions from around 1900, and several books from the 1920s with material collected in part from old callers.

In future issues we’ll look at the national and international square dance craze of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; the documenting of regional types of traditional square, and the blending of old regional forms and newer inventions into the “modern western” square dance.

\* \* \*

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](http://www.hands4.com).

Reprint from *American Square Dance* – June 2023 Volume 79 Number 6

# CALLERLAB Viewpoints by Mike Seastrom

A great reason to attend a CALLERLAB convention is to learn and to discuss with others how to navigate the art of square dance calling. Some of these interest sessions go beyond techniques of calling and branch into areas that involve both callers and partners. Some of these sessions look into how to navigate the leadership parts of our activity and some even look at personal issues that callers and partners are faced with.

At the 2023 CALLERLAB Convention in Reno this year, I had the pleasure of sharing an interest session with Shelly Lizotte, wife and partner of Ted Lizotte, the new Chairman of the Board of CALLERLAB. Her role as a partner is unique to their situation very much East Coast based. My role as a caller with my wife and partner, Lisa, is very different in many ways and is more West Coast based. I assuming that geography can be a factor in our roles too.

In our preparation for the interest session, we came up with a very important and hard to argue point. As alluded to above, every caller and partner's set of circumstances are very different in so many ways.

The title of the session was "Full House - Work Life Balance." The description was: "By definition, work-life balance involves the minimization of work related stress, and establishing of a stable and sustainable way to work while maintaining health and general well-being. The description went on to encourage attendees to join as we shared ways to balance a day job, calling career, and personal life while maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

These are some of the points of discussion we shared from Nellie Akalp, CEO of CorpNet.com:

## **1. Learn to say, "No."**

Saying "no" can be one of the hardest things to learn and put into practice, but it's an important part of setting boundaries.

It can be helpful to recognize that saying "no" to things that are less of a priority frees up time and energy to say, "Yes" and attend to other things that are important to you.

## **2. Take breaks.**

Even a 30-second break can:

Improve concentration.

Reduce Stress

Keep you feeling engaged.

Make your work feel more enjoyable.

It's recommended to take a break after 75 to 90 minutes for 10 to 15 minutes. This will allow your brain to consolidate and retain learning

## **3. Use your mealtime as a break.**

You can take this time to enjoy your meal mindfully. You can also do short meditations or breathing exercises if your stress levels are high or if you experience chronic stress.

## **4. Ask for flexibility.**

Having open, honest conversations about your needs and those of your employer and team can lead to productive solutions.

## **5. Prioritize your health.**

Recognizing the importance of maintaining your physical health, emotional well-being, and mental illness is the first step to making it a priority in your life.

## **6. Practice self-compassion.**

One of the most important ways to achieve a sense of life balance is to let go of perfectionism.

The approach of perfectionism may have brought some success during school and early career, but the stress it causes accumulates over time. The strain on our system and emotional resources increases as our responsibilities increase.

It's important to recognize that life isn't always easy. Everyone struggles, and you aren't always going to get it "right". Recognizing this truth allows

you to create a shift toward a more compassionate growth-and-learning approach to work and life.

### **7. Communicate boundaries so you can truly unplug.**

Set and communicate your work hours to your colleagues and customers so you have clear boundaries. This should include when you'll work and when you won't be available to respond.

### **8. Invest in relationships.**

Lack of strong relationships increases the risk of premature death from all causes by 50%. That's nearly as harmful as smoking 5 cigarettes a day. On the other side, solid connections and social support can improve health and increase longevity. Make sure to spend your time nurturing relationships that matter to you. If you took the previous steps to unplug, then you'll be able to give more attention to the people you spend your time with.

### **9. Make space in your schedule for family time.**

Block out some time that's devoted entirely to your family.

For this to work everyone in your family needs to make this time a priority. Make sure you're all on the same page. You all need to decide to take the necessary steps to carve this time out. You can also set this time apart to call family members or other loved ones who live far away.

### **10. Prioritize quality time.**

Rather than spreading yourself so thin that nothing feels satisfying, identify what's truly important to you.

Take an honest look at how you spend your personal time. Which activities and relationships are life-enhancing and which are soul-sucking?

With this information in hand, define for yourself where you'll devote your time. Make sure to prioritize high-value relationships and activities.

Don't forget that one of those relationships is with you! When you have downtime, allow yourself to enjoy that quality time for yourself to re-energize.

## **11. Start small.**

Healthier behaviors can support your sense of personal well-being. These could be behaviors like staying active and r improving your eating habits.

Who hasn't experienced the New Year's resolution that peters out by mid-February? Motivation alone isn't enough to drive behavior change.

## **12. Ask for help.**

High-achieving people are often guilty of taking everything on themselves. They don't want to "bother" anyone by asking for help.

Instead, consider that asking for help gives other people the gift of giving – and being part of a solution and support system. This builds the benefits of mutual relationships for all involved.

### **Make Healthy Life Balance a Priority.**

Creating the balance is an ongoing and fluid process. You'll constantly be learning and adapting as your interests and circumstances change over time. It'll require honing key skills, like time management.

Let it be fun! Don't forget to periodically revisit your priorities to see what's changed. You'll want to assess whether your priorities continue to line up with how you're spending your time and energy.

Reprint from *American Square Dance* – June 2023 Volume 79 Number 6

#### **Inspirational Quotes from Ed Foote**

"It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." ...Aristotle, Greek philosopher

"Love is taking a few steps backward, maybe even more, to give way to the happiness of the person you love." ...Winnie the Pooh, cartoon character

"Music cuts through all boundaries." ...Willie Nelson, singer and songwriter

"True beauty is never revealed in a mirror." ...Buddy Ebsen, as Barnaby Jones – TV program

"Resolve to be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the wrong. Sometimes in life you will have been all of these." ...George Washington Carver, American scientist

Reprint from *American Square Dance* – June 2023 Volume 79 Number 6

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**Joys, Concerns, & Sympathies** (as needed)

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

**This and That** (monthly) • Reprint of articles • New Articles

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