



# American Callers' Association

P.O. Box 2406

Muscle Shoals, AL. 35662-2406

Ph 256-383-7585-Fax 256-383-7583-Web Page [Americancallers@aol.com](mailto:Americancallers@aol.com)-Email-[mac@americancallers.com](mailto:mac@americancallers.com)

## July 2006 Newsletter

### How and why American Callers was established

When the AMERICAN CALLERS ASSOCIATION was established, there was an uneasy consensus among the square dance world of callers and dancers which believed that square dancing could no longer wait around for things to improve and get better on its own. If we were to stop the decline in the square dance activity, some changes would have to be made. When Bob Fisk, Bill Volner, Mac Letson, Gary Shoemake and others first started talking about this, the one thing that we all agreed on was that you could no longer expect new dancers to stay in a class until they were old enough to draw social security, just to be a square dancer.

We had tried through Callerlab (which we were all members of at that time) to bring about change. But we were told that nothing was wrong with the Plateaus, Lists, Levels, or Programs or whatever they were being called at that time.

So we concluded that the only thing to do was start another national organization called AMERICAN CALLERS. Bob Fisk, Bill Volner, and Mac Letson took money out of their own pocket and paid to have the corporation formed.

Within 30 days we had enough members to go negotiate contracts for music performance license with BMI & ASCAP, which was done by Mac Letson. At the time Mac & Lou Letson owned LOU-MAC & MAR-LET Records and all of the expense for running the office was paid by the record company until such time as the AMERICAN CALLERS could pay its own expense.

AMERICAN CALLERS was established to work for its members and with the square dance activity to do what could be done to make square dancing bigger and better for all. Since all callers are important to the square dance activity, we have only one class of membership with all rights being the same for all. All members have a voice and vote and they would not have to attend any meetings to be a full member.

Why an alternative? History has proven that when alternatives are not offered, bureaucracy and complacency set in and in many cases, when only a single choice is available, all the positive and beneficial aspects for which a professional organization was originally established are greatly diminished. Then the good of a few suddenly outweighs the good of the activity.

We are a non-profit organization. In an effort to keep the cost down to our members, AMERICAN CALLERS has only one paid employee, the office manager. The Executive Director and all other workers for AMERICAN CALLERS are done at no charge by people that truly care about the square dance activity.

We started with a dues of \$20.00 a year for our members and still have a \$20.00 a year dues. Because of an increase in the cost of postage and other things to run the office, we may have to increase our dues a little next year. Let me give you a break down of our membership fees for this year ending 3-31-07. Fifty dances a year or less: BMI license \$41.00 with a \$10.00 administrative fee; ASCAP license \$28.00 with a \$10.00 administrative fee; Insurance \$20.00;

Membership dues \$20.00; for a total of \$129.00. By the time we send money to BMI, ASCAP & Insurance, we have very little to run the office for you. But we enjoy doing it and will always do our best to keep the cost down for you.

## Page 2

When AMERICAN CALLERS ASSOCIATION was established, we applied logic, facts, experience and reason to the problem of our shrinking numbers and came up with a workable and effective solution; do away with existing barriers between dancers and return to the days of undesignated dancers. In other words, we should discard the present terms Basic, Mainstream and Plus.

We should replace all the basic, mainstream and plus programs with one program of square dance choreography that can be mastered in a reasonable amount of time that will include the very best and most frequently used calls.

By doing so we can bring all the dancers back together on ONE FLOOR and put the FUN back into square dancing. Then we will have a happy, enthusiastic and more **motivated** dancer to bring more people into square dancing.

No longer will dancers be named and categorized in a divisive manner. No longer will dancers be forced to spend inordinate lengths of time to master the necessary choreography to be a square dancer. We need to condense everything below Advance & Challenge into one sensible and manageable program which should be called SQUARE DANCING.

AMERICAN CALLERS has not only suggested the concept, they have, through committees and review of tapes of recent dances held in many areas of the country, determined that ninety five percent of the dancing time was devoted to only 45 or 50 calls. These calls, in terms of frequency of use and popularity, convincingly dominate our square dance choreography. We were not the first to discover this, it has been known for a long time.

The determination of these calls was made in an entirely objective manner, with no preconceived bias toward or against any of the calls. Using these analytical studies as a basis, we developed a **recommended** program of calls that includes the order in which they should be presented and taught during the learning cycle. The program can be viewed on our web page [americancallers@aol.com](mailto:americancallers@aol.com) or contact the AMERICAN CALLERS office for a copy.

We would like to see this program cut more to cut the teach time. If you think what you are doing now is a better way to go, please share it with everybody. The sad thing about this is that if we do not put into effect a workable solution, the decline will not only continue, it will worsen. We can all agree that we will all be the losers.

There have been all kinds of programs offered that did not work, because there was no place for the people to dance.

What AMERICAN CALLERS is recommending is a program that is now being called, because the calls are the most frequently used and popular calls that most callers know they can call and the floor can do. The tapes that we just reviewed prove it. Again, if this is what the dancers can dance and the callers are calling, **WHY** would anyone keep holding on to and pushing programs that have failed and cost the square dance activity more people than anything in the last twenty -five years.

For the last twenty- five years, square dancing has been getting smaller and smaller. Most two square clubs today twenty-five years ago would have been called basement groups. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that we took square dancing that back then was ONE FLOOR, ONE PEOPLE, ONE ACTIVITY (with a focus and a motivation to bring more people into the activity). We split it up into four special interest programs, and each focused on its own special interest. What was forgotten was the one thing that built the square dance

activity to its largest numbers ever, one program called SQUARE DANCING not four. The three top programs have to depend on the bottom program for more dancers. The three top programs got so involved in its own self-excellence, and forgot why we had a one floor, one people activity called SQUARE DANCING. Now everyone wonders where they will get the dancers to keep their program going. If somebody does not put them in at the bottom, you can't get them to the top three programs.

Again that's why we should replace everything below Advance & Challenge with one program called SQUARE DANCING and rebuild with a focus on a shorter learning cycle that will allow more people to become involved in square dancing. If the split programs were working we would still have the numbers. The numbers say that they are not and never did work. Callers jumped on the split programs thinking now I can have four clubs to call for instead of one.

**How wrong we were!**

Page 3

## COMMENTARY FROM THE PAST

By Art Springer

In traveling around the country, I've talked to a great number of callers who were all in agreement that the "pyramid" of the square dancing activity is in the inverted position. Meaning we are not feeding enough new dancers into the activity to replace the dancers who drop out, hurry to climb the ladder to the higher programs long before they are ready, or are deceased.

We know that we can't do anything about the deceased dancer, but we can think about some types of solutions for the other two problems. This is not a problem or a unique situation to any area of the world, but a universal problem to most areas that enjoy the activity. There are so many pros and cons that it would be impossible to cover them all on a few pages. At least this might get our minds back on the right track to start looking for and working toward a solution.

Here are a few of my thoughts for possible solutions to our problems:

1. Most beginner classes are sponsored by clubs. When you see a very active club with a good club-caller relationship, the members are more interested in the club's success. Thus, the happy, satisfied and enthusiastic dancer will be more motivated to bring prospective dancers into the activity.
2. All callers who are capable of teaching should be teaching at least one beginner class a year. Look at the impact if all who could teach would teach.
3. Let's not push our dancers toward the upper programs before they are ready. Be a little selective and honest with the dancer and yourself.
4. As callers we need to get more mileage out of the lower programs. This is accomplished by doing our "homework" and using innovative ways to serve up our "hash" for the enjoyment and satisfaction of the dancer.
5. In many areas we need to strive toward a better working relationship between the following: Caller to caller. Caller to association, caller to club and club to club.

Don't be alarmed! Our great activity is not going to disappear in our lifetime, but it sure would be nice to invert the "pyramid."

***We would like to thank Art Springer for allowing us to reprint his commentary. It was first printed in February of 1985 and we still do not have a solution to this problem. We feel that what AMERICAN***

**CALLERS is recommending Is a solution to the problem. ONE FLOOR ONE PROGRAM below Advance & Challenge known only as SQUARE DANCING.**

**What Art was recommending in 1985 is still being recommended today but, all the great experts that we have in square dancing still will not accept the fact that our great activity could disappear in our lifetime if we are not willing to bring it back together with a program that will fit the life style of the prospective dancers we are trying to attract .**

### COMMMITTEE REPORT

The work committee that **Paul Marcum & Tom Davis** were in charge of to recommend changes to the "One Floor Program" has completed their work and have recommended that no changes be made at this time.

### REMEMBERING

It seems that in every newsletter we have to report the passing of another fine caller .This time it's a caller that he and his wife have been involved in square dancing in many parts of this country. In June we lost **Diamond Jim Young**.

To Paula and the family we extend our deepest sympathy. Jim will be missed.

**Contra Page:** In the months immediately preceding the 1988 National Square Dance Convention my poor head struggled with something I called "chasing the phrase". At the convention itself I raised the idea on a panel presentation but it was quickly forgotten. "Chasing the phrase" grew out of my intention to counteract the image that some contra dancers and leaders were selling about the musical superiority of contra dancing over square dancing. As a square dancer and a contra caller I was having an argument with myself. Today, "chasing the phrase" is still, I think, the right idea, but it deserves a better and fuller treatment than it received two decades ago. So here goes, one more time.

My argument begins with the belief that the enjoyment and excitement in square dancing has its roots in exactly the same place that all forms of dance have their roots. That would be, in the music. Further, the music plays just as important, just as full, just as necessary a role in square dancing as in any other form, and certainly as big a role as in contra dancing. The trick is to see how this comes about.

Consider. A contra caller puts the commands for his figures on top of music that comes before the start of the 8-count phrase. By contrast, the square dance caller puts his commands right on top of the 8-count phrase. Now, suppose we try to present this - look at this - with real dancers and full sight and sound. We can put two squares on the floor side by side and have them dance the same figure to the same piece of music with two separate callers. There are some real problems here, but "let's pretend" that we can hear the two callers simultaneously and not get mentally shook up by the goings on. First, we would *not* hear them simultaneously. If they limited their commands to the appropriate 4-counts of the phrase we would hear the contra caller first (5,6,7,8 of the intro phrase) and the square dance caller immediately after (1,2,3,4 of the opening phrase that follows). Likewise, the dancers would be separated by 4 counts, the contra dancers moving together along with the sounds of the square dance caller (paying no attention to his words), and the square dancers moving in the 4 counts that follow the square callers directions but together with the contra callers words. Listening to all of this simultaneously we would hear the callers following one upon the other, there never being a silent time. Watching it simultaneously we would see continuous motion in both squares, the contra dancers in synch with the square dance caller and the square dancers in synch with the contra caller..

Are both squares "dancing"? Well, of course they are. But they *are* 4-counts apart, aren't they? And they *are* in a different place in the music. So, here comes the zinger question. Does it feel the same to the two different groups of dancers? At this point we are in quicksand. That being the case, I will speak exclusively for myself in order to keep the ideas moving. You, the reader, will have to use your own head and feet. My answer is no, it does not feel the same. It feels different! In the C-Square I tend to stand tall and my feet seem to lead. In the S-Square I tend to lean forward and it is my hands that lead. These differences can be very exaggerated or they can be very subtle. How much of a difference there is tends

to be a matter of individual physical and mental habituation, but across the board the difference - I believe - is clearly real and clearly evident.

There is one difference that cannot possibly be missed. *The number of steps or beats per figure often changes.* The square dance style, unimpeded by the phrase markings on the sheet music, wants to "get there" and reaches with hands and feet to do so. It outruns the "classic" musical score. It is in this process that square dancing movement - square dancing - finds its energy and excitement. However, it is a mistake to think that square dancers are unaware of the phrase in this process. A sense of the underlying musical rhythm is in their childhood genes and will not go away. It needs to be tended to now and then. Square dancers, enjoying their dancing by "chasing the phrase", *must be allowed to catch it now and then*, or they will, without knowing why, feel subliminally frustrated. There is choreo magic in being able to "chase & catch" in the same dance and they are missing out on it. In a strange way, "chase & catch" dancing helps relieve tensions, promote variety, and break "levels". Masters of this technique were Ed Durlacher and Ed Gilmore. What they did and how they did it ought to be carefully studied.

**Hal Rice 1919 W. Coronet #227, Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 778-0849**

**These notes are based on the American Callers (ONE FLOOR PROGRAM )**

**FUN WITH CENTERS IN**

**By John Saunders**

BOX 1-4... CENTERS IN... CENTERS TRADE... All STAR THRU... ZOOM...  
CENTERS PASS THRU... LEFT ALLEMANDE.

---

. BOX 1-4... CENTERS IN... CAST OFF 1/2... CENTERS TRADE... All TOUCH 1/4...  
BOYS RUN... CENTERS PASS THRU... LEFT ALLEMANDE.

---

BOX 1-4... CENTERS IN... CAST OFF 1/2... ENDS FOLD... CENTERS IN... All  
TURN BACK... STAR THRU... PASS TO THE CENTER..  
CENTERS SQUARE THRU 3/4... LEFT ALLEMANDE.

---

1 p2p LINES... PASS THRU... ENDS FOLD... CENTERS IN... CAST OFF 3/4... ENDS  
CROSS FOLD... CENTERS SWING THRU... EXTEND... SPLIT CIRCULATE... BOYS  
RUN... 1/2 TAG... FACE RIGHT... PASS THRU... RIGHT & LEFT GRAND.

---

BOX 1-4... CENTERS IN... CAST OFF 3/4... ENDS CROSS FOLD...  
CENTERS RIGHT & LEFT THRU... ZOOM... CENTERS PASS THRU...  
LEFT ALLEMANDE.

---

The following figures use Centers Out

BOX 1-4... CENTERS OUT... New CENTERS TRADE... CAST OFF 3/4... STAR THRU...  
ZOOM... CENTERS SQUARE THRU 3/4... LEFT ALLEMANDE.

---

1p2p LINES... PASS THRU... WHEEL & DEAL... DOUBLE PASS THRU...  
CENTERS OUT... BEND THE LINE... STAR THRU... CENTERS PASS THRU...  
SWING THRU... RIGHT & LEFT GRAND.

---

BOX 1-4... CENTERS OUT... New ENDS FOLD... CENTERS U TURN BACK...  
PASS THRU... RIGHT & LEFT GRAND.

---

**Following are some singing call figures:**

HEADS SQUARE THRU 4... CENTERS IN... CENTERS RUN... TOUCH 1/4... BOYS RUN...  
SWING THRU... BOYS RUN... FERRIS WHEEL... CENTERS PASS THRU...  
SWING CORNER.. PROMENADE.

---

HEADS PROMENADE 1/2... SIDES STAR THRU... DOUBLE PASS THRU...  
CENTERS IN... CENTERS RUN... New CENTERS TRADE... TOUCH 1/4... BOYS RUN... PASS  
THRU... TRADE BY... SWING CORNER... PROMENADE.

---

HEADS-LEAD RIGHT... CIRCLE TO A LINE... PASS THRU... WHEEL & DEAL...  
DOUBLE PASS THRU... CENTERS IN... CAST OFF 3/4... ENDS STAR THRU...  
CENTERS TOUCH 1/4... CENTERS WALK & DODGE... SWING CORNER...  
PROMENADE.

---

HEADS SQUARE THRU 4... CENTERS IN... ENDS FOLD... CENTERS IN... ALL U  
TURN BACK... GO FORWARD & BACK... TOUCH 1/4... BOYS RUN... SWING  
THRU... BOYS TRADE... SWING CORNER.. PROMENADE.

---

## FUN WITH SWING THRU

By John Saunders

FOUR LADIES CHAIN...ALLEMANDE LEFT... ALAMO STYLE... *SWINGTHRU*..  
\_BOYSRUN... PARTNER TRADE... LEFT ALLEMANDE.

ALLEMANDE LEFT... ALAMO STYLE... *SWING THRU*... BOYS  
RUN... PARTNER TRADE... CIRCLE LEFT... LADIES IN MEN  
SASHAY... LADIES IN MEN SASHAY... LEFT ALLEMANDE.

1p2p LINES... PASS THE OCEAN... *SWING THRU*... 8 CIRCULATE... GIRLS  
RUN RIGHT... GIRLS TRADE... GIRLS RUN RIGHT... *SWING THRU*..  
GIRLS RUN... WHEEL & DEAL... RIGHT & LEFT GRAND.

1p2p LINES... PASS THRU... BOYS RUN RIGHT... *SWING THRU*... 8 CIRCULATE...  
*SWING THRU*... GIRLS RUN RIGHT... TOUCH 1/4... BOYS RUN... PASS THRU... U  
TURN BACK... RIGHT & LEFT GRAND.

HEADS SQUARE THRU... SIDES HALF SASHAY... *SWING THRU*...BOYS RUN RIGHT...  
*SWING THRU*... BOYS RUN... WHEEL & DEAL... SWEEP 1/4... PASS THRU...  
TRADE BY... LEFT ALLEMANDE.

1p2p LINES... PASS THRU... BOYS TRADE... CENTERS START *SWING THRU*..  
CENTERS TRADE... GIRLS TRADE... PASS THRU... FACE PARTNER...  
RIGHT & LEFT GRAND.

1 p2p LINES... PASS THRU... U TURN BACK... PASS THRU... GIRLS TRADE...  
CENTERS START *SWING THRU*... CENTERS TRADE... BOYS TRADE... STAR THRU...  
SQUARE THRU 3/4... LEFT ALLEMANDE.

BOX 1-4... STAR THRU... PASS THRU... BOYS TRADE... *LEFT SWING THRU*..  
*LEFT SWING THRU*... BOYS TRADE... STAR THRU... DIVE THRU...  
SQUARE THRU 3/4... LEFT ALLEMANDE.

1p2p LINES... PASS THE OCEAN... CENTERS START *LEFT SWING THRU*..  
BOYS TRADE... RIGHT & LEFT GRAND.

### Following are some singing call figures:

HEADS PROMENADE 1/2... HEADS RIGHT & LEFT THRU... HEADS  
FLUTTERWHEEL... HEADS SWEEP 1/4... CENTERS PASS THRU... RIGHT & LEFT  
THRU ... *SWING THRU*...*SWING THRU*... BOYS RUN RIGHT... PROMENADE.

HEADS SQUARE THRU 4... *SWING THRU*... BOYS RUN... FERRIS WHEEL...  
CENTERS PASS THRU... *SWING THRU*... BOYS TRADE... SWING CORNER...  
PROMENADE.

HEADS PROMENADE 1/2... HEADS SQUARE THRU 4... DO SA DO... *SWING THRU*..  
*SWING THRU*... 8 CIRCULATE... SWING CORNER... PROMENADE.

HEADS LEAD RIGHT... CIRCLE TO A LINE... PASS THE OCEAN... *SWING THRU*..  
BOYS RUN... WHEEL & DEAL.. SQUARE THRU 3/4... SWING CORNER...  
PROMENADE.



