

A Great Idea to Make Dancing Fun

Listen to Your Dancers First

by
Patrick Demerath

The American Callers' Association in its attempt to be of service to all callers, dancers, and associations provided current, timely, and effective information on new dancer recruitment, winning ways to retain club dancers, and pitfalls to drive square dancers away from 2001- 2012. ACA appreciates the positive comments, encouragement to continue, and contributions from square dance leaders, callers and dancers all over the country and from abroad to continue these initiatives. ACA will continue to provide information that will help the square dance community recruit, retain and retrieve square dancers as well as encourage the dancers, callers and square dance leaders to communicate their viewpoints.

This month's American Callers' Association VIEWPOINT was submitted by caller L. W. Moe Brewer in Decatur, Indiana. Moe narrates his creative anecdotal story by narrating that when he started calling 23 years ago that he as a new caller tried to be the best patter caller around. He studied chorography, wrote figures, zero movements calling, sight calling, attended workshops and schools and everything else he believed he was supposed to do. In fact, he did very well.

Moe spent the next 15 years trying to make his calling more interesting with catchy figures and slick moves. Moe notes that despite his best efforts with incredible square dance choreography that he could not build much enthusiasm as the dances progressed.

Like so many callers, Moe noticed that he was losing square dancers during the last half hour of the dance. At the same time, Moe noticed that many of his singing calls perked the dancers up, and dancers began asking for more singing calls. Moe started concentrating on getting peppy singing calls with GOOD music from songs people knew and the enthusiasm started to build.

With approval and encouragement from his wife Connie and the dancers, he developed a new agenda. He started his dances with 2 singing calls followed in the next tip with a patter and singing calls with alternating tips. Moe noticed that the dancers were much happier and communicated this to him. His club members communicated to him that they liked the singing calls the best and requested all singing call dances.

The result is almost astounding as the dancers communicated to Moe what they liked and Moe listened to them. The second astounding result was that Moe never called a patter tip for 5 years. In all these 5 years Moe may have had 2 complaints. The third astounding result is that the complaining dancers still regularly attended his dances. The result is that if Moe has 5 or 6 squares for his first tip, he still has the same number during his last tip. The dancers do not go home early and if they do, they usually apologize and tell him why they are leaving early.

Moe calls special dances and the floor stays full. Te dancers have communicated that they like the fact that he uses the same 4 figures so if they miss the figure the first time, they have 3 chances to pick it up. It is apparent that as the dancers age and slow down, that they appreciate all the help Moe offers give them. This creates fun and enthusiasm, which is what the dancers want and pay for.

Moe suggests that callers must never use their calling skills to run their dancers to death and break down the floor. Callers must put this false sense of pride in their pockets and let the dancers have fun.

Moe and his wife Connie bought a home in Tarpon Springs, Florida and started square dance lessons where no one had ever danced before. Moe devised fulfilled easy openers, breaks, and closers coupled with easy figures to start them dancing. Moe is a very sharing, caring and generous caller and will share his programs with any caller who wishes to use them. Lastly, Moe suggests that callers use singing calls that are familiar songs as people relate to the song.

Moe suggests that callers teach and promote the American Callers' Association One-Floor Program. This would free club callers to teach fun dancing not stressful quantity dancing and lessons could be reduced. This would keep dancers coming back reducing the attrition of dancers.

The American Callers' Association and the square dance community are indebted to caller L. W. Moe and Connie Brewer for their well-founded ideas on how to improve the quality of dancing, reverse the decline in square dancing and bring happiness and fun to so many people. ACA is willing to work with local, state, and national caller associations and dancer associations to modernize the dance programs closer to today's lifestyles and reverse the freefall decline in square dancing.

Any individual, club, caller, or association who wishes to communicate his/her opinions on this subject or communicate their success story in recruiting is encouraged to contact the American Callers' Association at Loulet@aol.com or Dr. Patrick Demerath at pdemerath@uwa.edu. If anyone would like to contact Moe Brewer, please email him at moeconbrew@yahoo.com or contact the American Callers' Association. Please visit our website and newsletters @American Callers.com/news.

Until Next Time, Happy Dancing.