

# Dance Programs Proliferation

by

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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.

The purpose of this American Callers Viewpoints is to put forward a viewpoint of square dancing programs, which are separating a steady decline in the number the dancers by dancing skills. Those of us in American Callers who danced and called in the 1960s and 1970s experienced a unified dance floor normally dancing the Basic 50 movements, the Extended 75 and some Experimental movements which were often brought in by a note service or a traveling caller.

The visiting callers often introduced the new movement and taught it during the dance and told the dancers that this was not a call they should have to remember. This was done to add variety and some still use it today. The idea of something different was on the surface a good and pleasant experience for the dancers. One thing that would happen from this introduction of a new movement at the "federation" dance was that local callers would sometimes teach these movements in their clubs to renew the good and pleasant experience for the dancers compounding unforeseen problems.

If we include the calls introduced by the visiting callers and continued by the club callers, one might conclude that each club danced its own set of calls, but they all still danced the 75 calls that comprised Square Dancing. I cannot remember this being a major problem when I was dancing and calling in Texas, Taiwan, Hawaii and Alabama. One of the American Callers' Association members has "Note Services" that date back to 1960. Many times there were months where more than 10 new calls were introduced, and most of them were not good calls and were never used. Yet this became the rationale to formally classify calls into "levels" or "programs." The program was to be called the "Mainstream" Program. Today, it is hard to find many Mainstream clubs in the country, despite the fact that this is supposed the only Program where a club recruits new dancers. The Plus Program was followed by the Advanced and Challenge Programs further compounding an attrition problem and reality.

In the 1960s & early 1970s the Callers were more interested in the dancer having fun not what "Level or Program" he or she could dance. Although it is true that due to the program concept most dancers know what to expect when they go to a dance, festival or convention, this system worked well for a period of time when there were more dancers coming into square dancing than there were leaving square dancing, Square dancing peaked in the middle 1970s and started a decline in numbers during the late 1970's and has continued a decline in the number of dancers up to today

despite the fact that the dance programs have been relatively stable and somewhat predictable and require long periods of instruction.

The breaking point that American Callers views is that as people's life styles and values have been changing and evolving from those who were long-term joiners of organizations to one of people willing to pay but demanded instant gratification and were not willing to make commitments to long periods of instruction.

In 1992, American Callers was formed to provide an alternate view and return the largest majority of dancers to an international one floor program. The instruction period for the American Callers One-Floor International Program ranges around 12 to 16 weeks. The published American Callers list includes the main dance movements from the fundamentals up to the plus movements. It brings all the dancers to one harmonious group and would be more acceptable to dancers who reject long periods of instruction.

In summary, the life styles for the "Baby Boomer," "Generation X" groups and Generation Y groups rejected long periods of instruction as square dancing was inadvertently increasing the periods of instruction. This was compounded as the Plus Program became the most popular program requiring somewhere in the area of eighteen months to master. The result is that the Senior generation of square dancers still joined but the Baby Boomers, Generation X populations, and Generation Y populations reject square dancing. The result today is a declining number of dancers attempting to dance the Mainstream and Plus Programs. Sooner or later all of square dancing will have to come together to solve the dancing instruction problem or the number of dancers will continue to decline. Perhaps a simplified one-floor International Program could be considered as a "restart" point for the dance programs. The AMERICAN CALLERS' ASSOCIATION stands ready to participate in this effort when it comes and it will come AND BE DRIVEN BY SQUARE DANCERSE for this is the only way Square Dancing can survive as we know.

The American Callers' Association urges each caller and each dancer to make sure that we all take the very best care of our new dancers as they are often very vulnerable and if they are upset or apprehensive they will leave square dancing. The American Callers' Association argues that is time to stop kicking this ball around and get something done.

The American Callers' Association was founded on the concept that square dancing needs to be simplified and refined to 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 is encouraged to contact the American Callers' Association at [Loulet@aol.com](mailto:Loulet@aol.com) or Dr. Patrick Demerath at [pdemerath@uwa.edu](mailto:pdemerath@uwa.edu). Please visit our website and newsletters @American Callers.com/news.

Until Next Time, Happy Dancing.

*To be continued next month.*