



July August September 2011 Newsletter

Mike Kelly's Proposal 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- 2011. 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 month's American Callers' Association 'VIEWPOINT' was submitted by caller Mr. Mike Kelly from Richmond, Missouri. Mike in his article "The Proposal" reiterates vintage square dance articles for the past 17 years with the topics of losing square dancers and the watering down of teaching due to the **rush to the plus** and offers a solution called **The All American Dance Program**.

Mike asks "**Why haven't WE addressed this problem?**"

Mike argues that callers are not teaching new dancers to understand and dance the Basics proficiently. Callers are not making the dance fun for new dancers by pushing them thru the Basics too quickly. Callers should have Basic Dances, using just the Basic calls with a variety of combinations and formations not watered down. All of the higher level program calls are built using these basics, sending our new dancers on to a higher level program without good proficiency at basics is like sending our kids to high school without letting them go to elementary school.

Mike continues that if a club or caller tries to have a Basic Dance in their area, hire a marquee name caller, get a great hall, advertise, etc, they might get enough to attend to pay the hall rent. If they hire the same marquis name caller, rent the same hall but advertise a plus dance the hall will be full. If we ask experienced dancers to attend a basic dance with the new dancers you almost always get the same answer,

"We only dance Plus". When you watch these same dancers dance, they either can't or won't execute calls correctly. Some don't do at all (right and left grand, promenade, allemande left and swing). Mike suggests that maybe these calls should be taken off the lists and not taught at all.

Mike is proposes a change in the thinking of callers, club leaders and dancer associations. Take the ACA One-Floor program or the CALLERLAB Basic/Mainstream Program, break it up, the first 50 movements become the entry program for the newer dancer. Let's call it something like "**The Great American Dance Program**". Take the rest of these programs and add it to the Plus Program. The residual calls from the ACA Program or the Mainstream Program and the selected calls from the Plus would equate to 40 or less calls in the new Plus Program.

Mike believes this would slow down the rush to Plus. It would, hopefully, make a lot of callers become more creative and less predictable with their choreography. Mike states that this proposal is not perfect, but it could be a start and leaders in the activity will need to step in and help. Mike addresses the current dancers with a great majority who have already chosen to dance at plus and will not change.

Mike argues that this proposal provides an entry program that is easier to teach and the new recreational dancers will have a place to dance, have fun and thrive. If these new dancers choose to move on to plus it will be their choice, no longer pressure from a club to make them learn plus before they can participate. Callers will have to become more proficient in the basic program calls.

Mike continues that **The All American Dance Program** has better marketability by taking away the basic connotation of being a beginner. Don't have lessons, have **All American Dances**, have fun doing singing calls, lines and easy rounds. Yes callers, we will have to write singing call figures using only the calls our new dancers know.

The American Callers' Association and the square dance community are indebted to Mike Kelly for his well-founded ideas on how to reverse the decline in square dancing and bring happiness and fun to so many people. ACA is willing to work with local 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 mac@americancallers.com or Dr. Patrick Demerath at pdemerath@uwa.edu. If anyone would like to contact Mike Kelly, please email the American Callers' Association.

Report on the National Square Dance Convention

I understand from some ACA members that attended the National Square Dance Convention in Detroit MI in June that they only had about 3700 at the convention. As most of you know from the last newsletter that ACA has been given a One Floor hall for the Oklahoma City Nationals. I am sure that Henry Israel will be asking for ALL ACA MEMBERS to help with that hall.

Dear Henry:

The workshops and clinics are being scheduled for the 10:00a.m. to 12:30p.m. time frame. You might want to consider two workshops during that time since it can be hard to retain the dancers for more than one hour or one and half hours. We will need for you to provide the names of the callers that will be doing the workshops each day Thursday through Saturday. All caller names submitted to do the workshops must be registered for the 62nd National Convention prior to being scheduled.

The hall will be used for "One Level Floor" dancing from 2:00p.m. to 5:00p.m. and again from 7:00p.m. to 10:00p.m. It would help with the scheduling of this hall if you could get us a list of your membership so when we access their profiles we will know how to schedule their calling spots. Also, Gene Morton has informed us that a list of calls to be used in the "One Level Floor" hall will need to be posted at the entrance so dancers will know what movements will be danced if they chose to come in and dance. We thank you for the above information and your cooperation in getting the "One Level Floor" hall set up correctly.

Cecil and Barbara Burton
Vice-Chairman Square Dance Programming

SAD NEWS

We have lost so many good callers this year. It is sadness that we report to you that Ernest Clark of Pooler, GA. passed away, a good caller and a fine man. To Estelle and the family our deepest sympathy.

John Aden of Sevierville, TN. passed away Tuesday, May 10, 2011. John was born in Livingston, TX. Retired from Texaco Inc after 31 years. He and his wife Yvonne moved to Sevierville TN. He was a great square dance caller and will be missed.

Dave Lightly of Waukeet, IA, passed away on April 6, 2011. Dave called for fifty years *in over 40 states and in Europe and was one of the best advance and challenge callers. Dave was a member of American Callers from 1994 through 2008 will be missed. To Ruthie and the family our deepest sympathy.*

Jerry Don Testerman of Rudy, AR. He was a good caller and a good friend. Jerry don did so much for square dancing . He will be missed. Our hearts go out to Otha Dean and the family.

Letters from Members Retiring

Hi Mac,

This is Lowell Noland. I am sending this e-mail to inform you that I will no longer be calling and will not need another license. It has been a good run. I taught my first class in 1976. I have attended several Nationals and almost all of the Ohio conventions until I started to spend my winters in FL. I had the good fortune of working with 'the Columbus Symphony Orchestra for a Western Night some years back and have been a member of the Central Ohio Caller's Assoc. from the beginning until this year. Along the way I had the good fortune to work with a group of wheelchair dancers for several years. However, the time comes you must make changes in your life. I turned 76 in January and my equipment has gained considerable weight in the last couple of years. When it becomes work, it is time to quit. I have always enjoyed both dancing and calling and this was a tough decision for me. Good luck to the American Callers. I agree it should be one dance floor and if a caller does his home work, he can challenge any dancer with the calls available.

Lowell Noland

After 28+ years of calling and teaching Square Dancing, we have decided to retire and learn how to become "couch potatoes". We would like to thank ACA for all the information, encouragement and help that you have provided all these years. It seems pretty nice to sit at home on a night that I would have to travel 50 miles to call a dance and the weatherman says we are going to have six inches of snow. We miss the dancers, the dancing and the fellowship but we enjoy the evenings at home. Thanks again for helping me to be a good caller.

Dick Rees

The last page of this newsletter is from John Saunders. John hit the nail on the head with this page. You can see the decline in everything about square dancing. the clubs are very small, the special dances are so small most of the time they cannot pay a caller much of a fee. I have heard that the number of dancers that attend the National Square Dance Convention is about 10 % of number of dancers in America. If this is the case then, square dancing is in trouble. ACA is trying to get with Callerlab to come up with a way to turn square dancing around. We have gotten several good suggestions from callers and dancers to the ACA office.

Mac Letson

Caller Training Specialist

Don Wood of Lacey, Washington. Has received his Certificate of Accreditation and is now approved by the board of directors as a Training Specialist (callercoach.) his email is don.wood@loumac-records.com

OKLAHOMA CITY



**THE SOONER
THE BETTER**

PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

62nd National Square Dance Convention □

To Be Held In Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

June 26, 27, 28, & 29, 2013

This form and registration rate is void after
March 3, 2012

Register now for the 62nd National Square Dance Convention □ in 2013 come to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Registering early not only helps defray early preparation cost it also gives you free admittance into the Saturday evening dance at our Pre-Convention Feb. 29-March 3, 2012. Please complete the form below and send it along with your check payable to:

62nd National Square Dance Convention □
P. O. Box 1076
Tuttle, Oklahoma 73089

Registration # _____
Fax # (866) 816-4083
Email: vcregistration@62nsdc.com

Please Print Clearly! Thank you for your support

Paid (U.S. CURRENCY ONLY) # Adults _____ Attending @ \$40.00 each \$ _____
Children (8-18) _____ Attending @ \$20.00 each \$ _____ Cash \$ _____
Total Attending _____ Total Amount \$ _____ Check # _____

Credit Card: MasterCard _____ Visa _____ # _____ Expiration Date: / _____

Name on Card: _____ 3 Digit Security Code: _____

Signature: _____ One Last Name Only: _____

First Name: His: _____ Hers: _____

Children: _____

Address: _____ Telephone (____) _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Nation: _____ Email: _____

If you are a caller ___/ cuer/ ___ etc, please circle whichever applies:

Caller: MS ___ Plus ___ Advanced ___ Challenge ___ **Cuer:** Rounds ___ Contra ___ Clogging Country
Line ___

**PROPER SQUARE DANCE ATTIRE IS REQUIRED AT ALL NATIONAL CONVENTIONS
ACTIVITIES!**

Revised 02/2011

Taken By: _____
(Initials)

In this issue of the ACA newsletter, I would like to talk about the state of square dancing today and the reasons for its decline. I was asked recently by a caller from the state of Washington what I thought was the reason for the decline in square dancing and I quickly said Callerlab. He told me he had asked the same question of 4 other recognized national callers and got the same answer from each one. But, on further reflection I don't think this is a fair answer to the question. We, the callers, and the dance leadership are to blame just as much. Why do I say this? Let's look at the situation.

Back in the day when square dancing was really thriving some callers thought that it could be made better if everything was standardized, with the idea that dancers could go from place to place and not be subjected to calls they hadn't heard and didn't know. That was the rationale behind this thought but in fact a lot of the reason was that the traveling caller wanted a guideline as to what they could call to different groups, i.e. should I use the mainstream list or the plus list or what. Now a lot of callers had been traveling successfully up to that point without these guidelines but some others wanted these programs to help them catch up with the top callers. In other words we callers became lazy and wanted someone else to do our thinking and programming for us. We have lost our individual originality.

We all were convinced that this was a better idea. And we all, myself included, tried to change our programs to conform to these guidelines. Callers who were running successful programs and clubs who were successful all started changing to the new programs. This was also at a time that television and computers started to change and all these changes added up and the decline in square dancing was begun.

Many ideas have been put forward and have been tried and some have succeeded. The National Convention and some state conventions have tried dance competitions and these functions continue to decline each and every year. Square Dancing should be, above all else, FUN. There is no room for competition. Someone saw the TV show "Dancing with the Stars" and how popular it was and thought this would work for square dancing, WRONG.

WE are square dancers not TV personalities. We are square dance callers not actors, doctors or lawyers. We need to get back to basics. Square Dancing is a participation activity and people need to dance to really enjoy the activity. Our activity provides physical exercise, social interaction, communication and just plain fun. Some callers in one state that I know have gone back to the old Set in Order 75 basics list and have seen growth in their area. We need the people on local level to become excited about the activity. The dancers are our best recruiters. The growth of the activity depends on what is done at the grass roots local level. There wouldn't be any traveling callers if there weren't any local clubs to dance to them. The local clubs and callers are the MOST IMPORTANT part of our activity. So in your area decide what you want to do and what works and stick to it. If you use only 25 calls and you bring in a guest caller from outside your area tell that caller what the dancers can do and if that caller is worth their salt they will be able to handle it and let the dancers have fun. The only competition should be between the dancers and the caller and the DANCERS should always WIN.

John Saunders