



American Callers' Association

P.O. Box 2406 Muscle Shoals AL. 35662

PH 256-383-7585- Fax 256-383-7583 Email [Mac @americancallers.com](mailto:Mac@americancallers.com) -Web Americancallers.com
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Today there is an uneasy consensus among almost everyone in square dancing that the activity is not doing very well. The clubs that are still holding on are doing so with no hope of new dancer to keep the club alive. I do wish that someone would wake up and see that to attract new people to this activity we have to have a program that we used to call square dancing that treated everyone the same.

We had fewer calls that could be taught in ten lessons that were easy to learn and fun to dance that every one enjoy on the same floor. We had only one levels in square dancing at that time .It was the level of fun that attracted people to the activity and the callers ability to allowed us to dancers and enjoy. (That did not mean how many calls he knew or ways that he could use them to make you look stupid.)

Now days in the new more is better brand of square dancing that we have with some of the I am greater than sliced bread callers that we have today That are more into showing you how great they are, than provide a good dance that your money paid them for.

The one thing that none of us can deny is that we no longer have the once copious flow of new students into our square dance classes that we enjoyed in years past. The flow has shrunk to a trickle or none at all. .

Beyond these areas of accord and mutual commiseration, we began to diverge and quibble. We can agree that something is wrong and in talking to people that have quit square dancing, it's not hard to figure out. We can agree on what is wrong, but not what to do about it. At the moment we are doing relatively little or nothing about it and the downward trend continues.

We are a little late getting this newsletter out we were hoping that we could get the information in for the new web site. You can still pull up old site The new page will be up and running soon. It will still be www.americancallers.com.

What we have tried to do at ACA, is to give you a happy medium that will be received by the general public as something that they can do in a much shorter time than we are offering today. I do not believe that everyone out there is just too busy to learn square dancing. Younger people have children and they both work. By the time they get through with their day and the children They can't devote the amount of time it take for them to become a square dancer. Mac Letson

Square Dancing Is Not Dead It's Only Sleeping
By Gleason H Crumling

I have been calling since 1974 and my philosophy toward Square Dancing boils down to this

Example:

First of all " Life Style" is the "Big Player." In the 70's everyone wanted to be "Folksy"

In 1976 the White Rose Squares (a club in York co. PA) enjoyed a class consisting of 100 people This number continued for the next 4 years, At that time Computers and cell phones came on the scene thus began the decline of Square Dancing.

Second:

We need something BIG to happen to our activity. May I suggest that someone convince President Donald Trump to take a look at Square Dancing. If we could get this to take place our halls would be flooded with people the very next day (of course they would be republicans ...but who cares?)

Answer

Teach these people to Square Dance **First:** Pick a list of calls (any list will do) the only one who has to know what is contained on the list is the Caller. 1. If the dancers enjoy the music. 2.If the dancers enjoy the choreography. 3. If the dancers enjoy the fellowship that a group of people can create. It doesn't matter how- long the list is, they will have fun every step of the way. They will be singing we should be together ,together. Democrats and Republicans

SOME THOUGHTS ON TEACHING

By Gary Shoemake

What we have tried to do at ACA, is to give you a happy medium and I hope it is working for you. This being said, none of these methods are being received by the general public very enthusiastically. Today's working couples, don't have the time to devote 6 months of lessons to be in an activity that they might not like after all. So to attract these folks and keep them interested, I think we need to approach our teaching in a little different manner.

I'll digress a little bit and tell you about a survey that was taken at the National a few years ago. This survey found that all callers, no matter what the level, were only using about ½ of each list that Callerlab had suggested. My question to that was "then why are we taking our student's valuable time to teach these calls if no one is using them. On one other note, they found that "dive thru" & "pass to the center" were almost NOT used at all. So how do 98% of our callers get the dancers into the center, you say? It was Ferris Wheel!! So why are we still arguing about which of the other two to use? After these great lists were presented it seems to me that we have progressed ourselves right out of business.

Now, back to the teaching aspect. I believe you could use your local callers association to see which of these calls are actually being used in your area . Then teach these calls and leave the others to be taught/work shopped at the dances. This may not be an easy task because, depending on the number of callers in your area, there will be several opinions as to what to teach and what to leave for the workshops. But, being the level headed adults as we all are :>)) I believe you can accomplish this.

The next approach, I believe we need to take, is to simplify our teaching methods. For instance the age old problem of the confusion, in lessons, of R & L Thru and Square Thru. My solution to this is to not teach R & L Thru until the later classes or at least until the students have accomplished Square Thru completely.

Instead, immediately after teaching Courtesy Turn with ladies chain, I start using "Pass Thru & Courtesy Turn, in place of Right & Left Thru.

This eliminates the pull by problem that causing the confusion with Square Thru. Then several classes later insert the pull by to R & L Thru and give it the name.

Another tool is to use all facets of "Trades" as early in lessons as possible. Think of all the calls that use trade in some facet within them.

Hinge = $\frac{1}{2}$ trade Turn thru = extend Trade & extend

Swing thru = trade with right & trade by the left Alamo swing thru = trade with right & trade with left. Wheel & Deal = Couples $\frac{1}{2}$ trade & bend in

There are many calls that use trade in their makeup, that a through teach of trades will help with these later calls. So get yourself acquainted with the breakdown of the calls that can be taught with the use of trade & $\frac{1}{2}$ trade. This same approach will also help in work shopping new calls to your veteran dancers.

These are some of the things I have learned to use in my 52 years of calling & teaching. If you can use them, by all means, try them. If I can help I'll be glad to try.

In short, simplify all you can to get the impatient public through these lessons and into your club. Then don't rush them into Plus. Call special Plus tips for the veteran dancers to keep them happy, but not to discourage students. I don't really like calling every other tip Plus. This gives the new dancers only $\frac{1}{2}$ of the dance. I would suggest calling the Plus 1 hour before the regular dance, so the newer dances don't feel cheated and also feel that they need to go through another class so soon after completing beginners class. Be sure to let the veterans know that you need them to help getting these new folks dancing well enough to keep them in the club. You have to be a leader in that aspect.

A Square Dancer's Viewpoint

One response to revitalizing square dancing

My wife and I went to a Demo dance last night and our caller past on a letter he received from the American Caller's Association concerning the state of square dancing,

1) Eliminating calls does not a good dancer make, as for calls that require raised arms, are we looking at just the present dancer (something the caller should do) or are we saying "we'll take away a lot of the calls so that you will dance? We have callers that call to the floor and don't use star thru, California twirl etc., when the dancers are not capable and the dancers we dance with just touch to acknowledge the call, kind of self-policing?

2) My wife and I quit dancing some 25 years ago because we would drive for 1 hour to watch Plus dancers dance for an hour then we would dance a tip then we would sit and watch Plus dancers again then watch Round dancers and finally get to another Mainstream, what brought us back?, my wife had open heart surgery and we wanted to do something we enjoyed that would work both our minds and body.

3) A few days ago we had a dance and like most clubs we have 80 plus year olds, I asked them how they felt about removing the calls listed, the answer, and I quote, "that would take the fun out of it"

4) I do not feel that our problem is the product, it's generation X, do you see any of them doing any other form of dancing? Have you ever seen them playing tag as kids? do kids play baseball anymore? They are real good at texting though!

5) We let our grandson use our car one week-end while he was in our area, we have "I love Square Dancing" plate frames on our car, his friends all laughed at him, "you like square dancing" was the remarks he got.

6) Changing the "product" will not get people in the door, A local caller, well not local, north of the border once said, "you want to get people dancing, call them 3

or 4 days ahead and tell them you'll pick them up, on the evening, got to their house and tell them to get ready cause they didn't even get dressed, take their hand and pulled them to the car and when you are at the dance hall pull them in, you will need to do this 3 or 4 times in a row before they figure out that it's fun and great exercise.

I am going to local colleges and finding out if we can set-up demos using only college students, none dancers, I also want to see if I can get in with the local girl & boy scouts, after all we do buy their cookies, I want to target the younger crowd rather than make easier for the existing dancers.

When you go to a dance hall, does someone tell you, hey you better be ready cause there's about 65 calls you're going to need to know? It did not happen to me 2.5 years ago and we liked it so much that I went to caller school 2 years in a row, so far.

One other issue concerning the twirls etc., I have watched young dancers dance and they twirl, they hop through Grand Square, they square thru 4 in way that they appear not to release hand holds and most of all they are having fun.

This has been the opinion of a fairly new dancer and that of some who have been dancing over 40 years. As a caller, I am donating my time, once a week, to Massena Boys and Girls club to try and get the younger crowd that can do all the calls. Thanks for taking your time to read this.

Ron Roy

This article was sent to the ACA office. Ron I agree with all most everything you said except the part about pull them to the car and pull them for 3 to 4 weeks to the dance.

I know that your right about let's take it to the local college they will enjoy it. I have done that.

This is where we have been missing it, in getting young people in to dancing.

They are not going to come and dance with a bunch of old people, but they let old people show them how to do it.

THANKS Mac Letson