



American Caller's Association

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WEB PAGE - AMERICANCALLERS.COM

JULY, AUGUST, SEPT -- 2018 NEWSLETTER

As we start this newsletter I believe the one thing that's on most caller's mind is will we have a good class this fall. For many that will determine if they will have a club this time next year. For the traveling callers that will mean fewer dancers for their dance when they come to town. I sure do hate to see this great activity come to that. The only hope is that we can get ever one to except the reality we must provide a shorter entry level program that will allow more people to be in Square Dancing and enjoy it long enough to be a part of it.

I believe that we can do this since we were the ones that caused it with all the levels and some callers want to keep holding on to the same old thing that time has proven will not work. Yet they keep pushing this activity in the wrong direction. This is just my opinion and I don't care if you agree with me or not. Time will show you.

Welcome our New Board Member

Now to the result of the election of our new board member. We would like to thank Bill & Mary Chesnut also a big thank you to Jim & Jan Steele for running for the board of American Callers Inc. Bill will be our next ACA board member. We would like to thank Jim & Jan they just missed by a few votes. Thanks to all members for your response in this election. ACA is your association and we thank you for your support.

BEHIND THE MIKE

A Magazine for Callers & Cuers from the great Country of Australia. The question was asked by Wade Driver. The singing call and patter call each take up 50% of our dance. What in your opinion would be the breakdown

Of the work and study that go into each? And what again in your opinion, would be the reason.

[Remarks on next Page](#)

From Jim Mayo USA

It's an interesting question. Unfortunately, I think the question of how much work is sort of irrelevant. Years ago, singing calls used the same routine 4 times and the design of that figure was a matter of pride and ingenuity. Today it appears that many - actually, most-callers treat the singing call much like the patter with the figure changing for each chorus.

I believe that the primary difference between patter and singing is the length of the routine. In the singing call it is limited to 64 beats while the patter may go on much longer. Wade's question assumes that some advance planning goes into one or the other. Today I believe few callers do much advance planning for either patter or singing. The concept of planning a program in advance was never very widespread and I doubt that it receives much attention at all these days. A couple of years ago I gave the University of NH library more than 50 years of written-out programs for the dances I have called. I had a plan, in writing, for nearly every dance I called but I think I am virtually unique in that regard.

As another data point, in response to your question, I check the recording I have of the past Chairmen's dance called at the 2009 CALLERLAB Convention. I used a circle contra for my singing call with the figure the same for each of the 7 choruses. The other 5 callers each 4 different routines for their singing call figures. For the breaks most used the same routine for each of the 3 with a couple of exceptions. The break was a grand square routine for 2 of the callers.

I'm quite sure that the singing call choreography for most callers used a fairly standard set of routines that take little study or advance thought. The patter routines are longer but, I suspect tend to repeat in pretty standard ways for most callers. For many sight calling means they set up a mess and the wander through the routine until they find something they recognize with a lot of sloppy timing while they try to work out the exit.

I'm guessing there's a lot of difference between callers with more than 30-year experience and those with less. The newer caller never experienced planned, innovative choreography in their own programs and they may not even recognize it when dancing to the more experienced caller.

Sorry for the pessimism. I'm on an active campaign to encourage MWSD to recognize that its past success was based more on sociability than choreography. That's a comfortable thought for most (including me until the last few years) but I am increasingly sure that we have caused a large share of our trouble with complicated choreography that has little dancing included.

Cheers

Jim

I think what Wade is asking is why do we spend so much time working on our patter and not much on singing calls. This includes almost 90 per cent + of all caller education seminars.

Barry Wonson - Editor

From Paul Bristow in UK

Barry, Wades question is one of great interest to me. I agree with all you have written. As I see it, the primary function of any Caller is to "entertain the Dancers) and the principal place where that can happen is during the Singing Call.

The first thing I would say is that I'm not entirely sure that I agree with Wades suggestion that the Singing Call takes up 50 % of the Dance - the patter tends to be at least twice as long as the singing call proportionately it takes up closer to 60% (maybe 70%) of each tip, that may or may not be relevant.

What is relevant-I feel-is the history of Singing Calls

Originally it was the primary device for any Caller (in fact you go back far enough we only had "Singing Calls". I have read a lot the period just prior to the point when I started to dance (and Call) and allocation of the current favorite Singing Calls was based on the Caller's ability-the top Caller had first choice, of course, at that time there were very few patter callers of any great ability, as this was a whole new world.

When I first started dancing (in 1975) the Singing Call was a lot more than the "cherry on top of the cake"-it was the primary element of Square dancing. At my regular Club the evening would start and finish with two Singing Calls-and there would be at least one more tip during the evening in which there were two Singing Calls presented.

The number of patter calls was a lot less than 50% of the evening and often felt to me to be the workshop/practice part of the evening a "necessary evil" rather than a requirement.

Of course, everything has changed and these days many people are looking for elements of "challenge" and -as you move up through the programmers you will reach the point where Singing Calls are considered by many to be a waste of time.

I Still insist upon using a Singing Call on every tip at an Advance Dance (and workshop)-but I had to give in to the pressures and stop using Singing Calls at Advance Dance (and Workshop) but I have had to give in to the pressures and stop using Singing Calls at a C1 (there was one occasion when I tried to finish a C1 tip with a Singing Call (at an "all levels" Convention) and two squares sat down") that is one of the main reasons that I do not call very much in the C1 programs.

I feel in this day and age -Callers are not making good a use of the Singing Call as they could do quite often they just use it to show off their "singing ability" in a type of Karaoke format. I feel that we should be making a lot of Singing Calls and that we should restore them to their proper place not just the "cheery on top of the cake" but the cherry the colorful icing and everything else that is good" on the other side of the patter.

Regards Paul

Paul the colorful-icing and the cherry is just what we need to turn this activity around.

Mac Letson

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More by Paul Bristow

I've had a few more thoughts about this subject that I would like to share with you.

First is the amount of time that Callers spend on deciding which Singing Call they will be using. I quite often see a caller look at his list to choose a Singing Call as he is finishing his patter- Quite Clearly a last-minute Selection. My personal feeling is that this is wrong.

We now have the opportunity to make use of a much larger quantity of music in the olden days with vinyl- there was a limit to how much you could carry there was a limit to how much of a choice you had available and perhaps a last- minute selection that might work- but with the modern computer-based music libraries we are able to carry our entire repertoire of music, which makes selecting a tune towards the end of a patter an impossible task. I know that most of the successful Callers take the time to program their Singing Calls, now more than ever before - we need to take the time (perhaps even make the time) to program our Singing Calls more effectively.

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There are so many personal favorites that I've have heard callers use Your "around world" routine My Seven Spanish Angles (with the hop skip and jump routine) and Brian Hotchkiss infinite number of tunes (many of which seem to provide him with the opportunity to remove most of his clothes while he is calling - and makes everybody laugh rather than scream in horror an excellent entertainer.

If we go back a few years, I remember very clearly that there were certain singing calls that were vogue - it was often a case of who got there first or who laid claim to a particular title in order to assure that no one else would use the track. I remember very clearly many dance situations when there would be a list of Singing Calls that have been used that you could check to ensure you didn't duplicate, this happened quite often at major conventions and also from time to time in multi Hall situations (in the early days of split level programming).

I am very much of the opinion that a lot of time should be being spent by Callers on choosing Singing Calls and preparing to give the very best possible presentation.

In my own personal situation, I now write out the complete music program for any event where I am calling prior to working at the event this includes both Singing Calls and the patter records. I have found that this is the only safe way to proceed, the alternative would be to try and read through a list of almost 1000 or more tunes and try to select my Program from the computer database, while the dancers are standing on the floor waiting for you to call.

Apart from anything else, it is one aspect of stress that I can control and I don't need any more stress than I get as a consequence of the adrenaline rush when I am Calling. I feel that a lot more time should be spent in preparation of the patter section- but that my own opinion.

Regards Paul

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Winning Ways in Square Dance Recruiting

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 from 2000 to the present

ACA really appreciates the positive comments, encouragement to continue, and contributions from callers 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 to speak out on the cumbersome dance programs.

This month's ACA Viewpoint is dedicated to winning ways that square dance clubs use to help recruit new dancers for their clubs. There are several effective programs, which have worked for various clubs throughout the world on succeeding occasions.

All of them are proven methods, but they have **ONE SINGLE THREAD IN COMMON. THE CLUB MEMBERS AND CALLERS WANTED TO BRING IN NEW DANCERS.** Without this intense desire, these are merely mechanisms or motions of trying to start a new class.

Clubs in several states pooled their resources and put signs in their cars, put signs on their front lawns brochure invitations in doctors' waiting rooms and on church bulletin boards. They merely said "Square Dance telephone number 932-6743. Other clubs placed the brochure invitations on line and Face book. The person answering the telephone explained the new square dance lessons and gave them directions to the dances. The results were growing enthusiastic classes.

Clubs in another state asked their members and friends if a club representative or even a square of dancers could visit Sunday school classes of the various churches. They explained square dancing invitations and left flyers / brochures. These efforts by several clubs led to over 50 new dancers signed up for classes.

Clubs in several states began the use of a "Who Do You Know Invitation Form." Club members invited people to visit their club and attend the free open houses for new dancers.

The club members supplied the club recruiting officer with information on each person.

The club president put each person's name on a database in his computer and contacted him or her by both telephone and written invitations. The Club president continued to follow up prior to and throughout the year resulting in new dancers to the club over several years.

Clubs in the United States and other countries started a very innovative dancing club. The club dance in the professional buildings. They dance one hour per day over the lunch hour several days a week. ACA would suggest that in the USA we could have clubs like this in our business districts over lunch hours. The results of the lunch hour clubs in several locations both in and out of the US have produced an almost endless supply of new dancers who want to join the fun.

Lest We Forget: If you ask potential new dancers, they will come. If you bond with them, you will enjoy them for a little while. If you bond with someone's heart and enjoy them for a lifetime. If we want to recruit and retain square dancers, bond with them in friendship and make them feel wanted and welcome.

ACA's international one floor program is fun and bonds new dancers and is an excellent method for teaching new dancers. It can be taught in as little as 12 to 14 weeks, reduces the stress on the dancers and callers alike and returns square dancing to fun. The purpose of the ACA International One-Floor program is to **KISS** square dancing (Keep It Sweet and Simple) by simplifying the dance program and accentuating the fun, friendship, fellowship, and good health through exercise. Any individual, club, caller, or association who wishes to communicate his/her opinions on this subject is encouraged to contact the American Callers' Association at Loulet@aol.com or Dr. Patrick Demerath at pdemerath17@gmail.com

If you have any success in recruiting new dancers or retaining current dancers that you wish to share with the square dance clubs, please contact the ACA and we will publish your experiences and successes and give you credit for the idea. Please visit our website and newsletters at AmericanCallers.com/news.

Until next time, Happy Dancing.

Sorry to be so late with the newsletter.

Computer Trouble, one crashed with the newsletter on it and I did not have it saved.

I had to get a new one and start all over.

I have decided that if I ever shoot anything with a gun it will be a computer.