



P.O. Box 2406 Muscle Shoals AL. 35662

PH 256-383-7585- Fax 256-383-7583 Email Loulet@Aol.com -Web Americancallers.com

July, Aug, Sept 2017 Newsletter

WE MUST CHANGE

The clock is ticking as we stand by and watch our activity fade away, getting smaller and smaller. When my wife and I started in a square dance class over fifty years ago dancer ran the activity.

We all danced together we did not have any levels dancers in the activity back then. "Just Square Dancing" The only level we had was the level of FUN the Caller could generate.

The only trouble we had back then was having a hall large enough to hold all the people. I remember a dance that I called on a night In KY. The hall would only hold forty squares we could not get them all in the hall. Could square dancing ever be like that again? Not with all the programs that people are trying push that we do not need.

92 per cent of the people that come into square dance will never dance Advance or Challenge. There would be more people for Advance & Challenge if we Just grew that 92 per cent.

For years I have ask dancers after they have completed a class and become a dancer what attracted them to square dance.

The answer in most cases is music, fun and fellowship

My opinion, I believe that we could attract more people to square dancing .

The first thing that we should do is come up with three programs

1. To take the most used calls of Basic & Mainstream and call it what it is Square Dancing that could be taught in 10-12 weeks.

2. Program would be the best and still used Plus calls that could be taught In 10 weeks. # 3. Advance they seem to have their program worked out.

Only the callers in Advance & Challenge should have the say on that.

From JULY 1998 ACA Newsletter

Editors Note:

The following article has been submitted by Mike Sikorsky. These are Mike's comments that he wishes to share with the ACA membership. The ACA board Differs with Mike in that in that those of us who like the ACA program have implemented it without fear and it is working well for those of us who have had the courage to do so. We feel that part of the solution is the realization that if the activity Keeps doing what it has been doing, it will keep getting what it has been getting. Mike is right that some mainstream clubs do not want to learn any plus, because there are no mainstream clubs left in the U.S. dance activity; if dancing these clubs are doing 6-8 Plus calls. There are some good points to Mike's article that should be considered. Let us know you thoughts.

Before I start I'd would like to say that I support the ACA concept of one level of dancing for Our current "club " level. It appears that most of the country, if not the world is not dancing true Mainstream or true Plus. They are dancing a shortened Mainstream list (shortened by the local callers either by omission or reduced usage) that includes 5 or 6 Plus calls. So the ACA system would not be a major change, it would only reflect reality. Right? Wrong. The all-important word in the above paragraph is "most." (*This May have been twenty years ago. Not true today reality has caught up with the activity.*) Even those of us who like the ACA idea are afraid to fully implement it. Our beginner classes would not be able to attend other classes. (**After twenty years of be afraid to do anything. Look at the date when this article was written. Today! what beginner classes?*) Well let's talk about the cause of the problem. Because many areas are modifying the Callerlab programs, it seems to me that the Callerlab programs are not reflecting our current need to please our dancers.

IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE

Twenty Years down the road and we are still talking about CHANGE. I think the time for change has passed us by and even to change now so many people are saying that we cannot change everything all at once. It must be slow. WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO BE SLOW. When the change was made from the 75 call list that was Square Dancing back then, it was done all at once we went from one program called Square Dancing. Now we have ten levels that are not working for the betterment of our activity.

The 75 calls that was Square Dancing were for EVERYBODY. When we busted that up we started to destroy our activity. Since Basic ,Mainstream and plus covers 92 per cent of all Square Dancing the other levels are going to do what they want to anyway, It's time to start doing what we have to do to save this great activity. Since all , come from the foundation of Square Dancing that is Basic and Mainstream. It time to start rebuilding that core level so we will have more dancers for all levels.

This is just my opinion based on 55 years of teaching and calling Square Dancing And I am sure you have your own opinion. Some way we MUST come together and Save this activity . If not we are all wrong and time has proven that.IT'S UP TO US.

Mac Letson

"Live simply, Love generously, Care deeply, Speak kindly. Leave the rest to God"

Gary Shoemake, 1060 Alpine Dr. Sevierville, TN 37876 - 865/548-0584

Check out my web-site for dances near you and special events. www.garyshoemake.com

My thoughts on recruiting: We should concentrate our efforts on the people who are able to give the time and desire to join us in our activity. I know a group that did this and were very successful in getting a large group to join their classes.

They concentrated on the "empty nesters" by going to the newspapers and TV stations to get interviewed about our activity and it's benefits.

They were able to get interviews on the noon news section and in the Sunday community section of the newspapers. Their message wasn't centered on the fun as we know can be a big part of our activity, but they stated that they knew there were many "empty nesters" out there looking for something to bring them together with others of this same state of their life. They stated that they would meet other folks in this same situation and they would be the kind of people you would invite to church with you. They also stated that it is an activity that the couples could share in easy exercise and that it is a lot more fun than a "treadmill".

They didn't concentrate on the dress, but did say it wasn't a requirement, but that many after being involved for a while enjoyed the "costumes".

They were able to get 75 people to join their class and they enjoyed it very much, with a retention of 90% during the first class. All this was very good until the present club members insisted that the caller/teacher immediately start them in a "Plus" class. So they could dance in the club at that level. When that happened they lost 1/3 of this new group of potential members, who didn't sign up for continual classes and just wanted enjoy what they had learned.

The good news is that the remaining group of this large class brought in 35 new dancers for the next beginners class. In the meantime, there was a continual exodus from the "Plus" class.

After all of these efforts and success of recruiting this great amount of people to our activity, it was ruined by the insistence of the club to bring them up to plus level.

Which brings us to the problem all clubs are having by coping with this outdated level system we are locked into using. The question being, how do we bring new people into our club that is enjoying dancing at the "Plus" level? There is no real good answer in how to survive with this problem.

In my experience, 99% of the Plus callers and therefore dancers, are only calling/dancing about 1/3 to 1/2 of this list. But this also goes for the mainstream list also. My question? If we're *not* going to use them, why must we teach them. The answer is because someone will call one of these "not used" calls at someplace your dancers might be. Then you will be chastised for not teaching all of the list. The answer?

I suggest that a survey be made at all of the dances, festivals, of all callers, and what calls they are actually using. Then combine the list to include the calls that made the top 50% of both lists.

This would be a major undertaking, so therefore I'm suggesting that we make a survey of our callers to see what calls on the M/S & Plus levels that they could "live without" and come up with a revised, combined list to use only the calls that made the top 50%. I know there will be a few purest, who want to retain all of these calls for some reason or another, but we cannot and I repeat CANNOT sustain our activity with what we are now working with.

When we were at our healthiest, we had one entry level, easily taught and all else was advance or challenge. In my opinion, we need to revise our entry level to reflect this. I've been in this business for over 50 years and have enjoyed the best and now endured the worst of this problem. I know I will get a lot of flack from the purest, but history proves my point. We can progress ourselves out of business!!

This is merely my point of view. This and 50 cents might get you a cup of coffee, but it's time we corrected this problem.before we die on the vine.

Sincerely, Gary Shoemake

My Trip to Ohio

Yes I did make it to the Nationals in Ohio got a far as Richwood KY Thursday nite. After driving for 10 hours in one of the worse rain storms I have every driven in. Got a room at the Econo Lodge. I had a room for the convention but when I did not make it Thursday they gave the room to someone else. Now I have to go find a room. As I start cross the street a car came through the red light and as I tried to get out of the way I fell and messed up my left knee and foot. Some very kind people helped me. At this point there was no need to try to find a room they helped me to my car and was Alabama bound.

Mac Letson

There will be a "Celebration of Life" for John Saunders , from 2pm to 4 pm, on July 22 at the Prince of Peace Catholic Church. Located at 600 S. Ormond Rd, Ormond, Florida. To Linda and the family we extend our love and very much share your loss. Dancers all over the world will miss this big man and his great smile. John was a friend to everyone. A kind and gentle man and every one that meet him loved him. Bill Claywell said he just made you feel good to be around him.

American Callers Association Viewpoint Creative Contributing Changes

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 for most of the years 2000 – 2017. The American Callers Association appreciates the positive comments, encouragement to continue, and contributions from callers all over the country and from abroad to continue these initiatives. The American Callers Association 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' Viewpoints discusses the inception of creative dancing programs to help attract new dancers. New dancer recruitment appears to be at an all time low as both square dance clubs are having difficulty recruiting new students. Square dancing appears to be losing 10% of its dancers per year as membership declines.

ACA supports his opinion, on promulgating a “new way of thinking,” which is thinking beyond the tired traditional and mechanical ways. He recognizes that different clubs in different parts of the world will apply square dance calling and teaching differently. Square dance calling and teaching, with its traditionally based programs, lists, and levels may be based upon economic, human, and logistics factors such as hall cost, availability, and club (people) preferences. It can be argued that callers and teachers should attempt to hang on to the principles of standardization when possible, but this is not the only **end** in itself. Rather than the traditional set of weeks for lessons, clubs and callers can try ten to twelve week programs using the ACA one-floor program. One night stand activities are also a promising way to attract new dancers. The American Callers' Association International One-Floor 10 – 12 week programs fits into these ideas of creative thinking categories. Each of these items when applied by a club or caller may offer the caller and club opportunities to increase its number of new dancer graduates as it may offer many unique methods to present the art of square dancing.

It can be argued that for square dancing to grow, we need to embrace a thinking that invites ideas and innovations and one that is not bound by the baggage of the past.

Perhaps, a complete overhaul of the square dance product such as new lists of movements; no requirement for dress codes, ten to twelve week lesson programs, and competition would be positive contributions.

ACA further challenges all callers to change his/her thinking. The ACA challenge is that change is not necessarily a bad thing, and that we as callers and dancers should be open to change. In fact, the American Callers' Association was founded because a large percentage of the existing callers wanted to have a one-floor program not segregated levels or programs.

ACA encourages all callers and square leaders to help get the wheels moving. ACA concludes that the solutions to the serious and critical decline in the number of dancers, are not easy to find, but they are out there for the taking. ACA further encourages experimentation with any phase of square dancing and report back about experiments they are trying and their degree of success. ACA is encouraging callers and square dance leaders to use a new and creative mindset to look for solutions. Despite the serious decline in the number of dancers being recruited, ACA argues that changes in attitudes with more talk of changing square dancing to repopulate the activity and to stop the decline in the number of dancers are surfacing and will not go away.

The American Callers' Association is willing to work with square leaders and organizations to further square dancing and to help test some of the initiatives to search for those changes, which would reverse the decline of square dancing. ACA will also serve as a venue to receive any communications and to publish the results with credit to the contributor.

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 . Please visit our website and newsletters [@AmericanCallers.com/news](http://AmericanCallers.com/news).

Until next time, Happy Dancing.