



# American Caller's 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](http://Americancallers.com)  
Newsletter Oct Nov Dec 2018

## *Random thoughts from a caller*

Bill Chesnut ACA Board Member

Do you ever reflect back on how you got into this world of square dancing? Think about what made you decide to be a caller? Reflect back on the people that helped turn you into the caller you are? Maybe think on how you have picked up your leadership skills? Have you got a plan to make yourself a better caller and leader? Do you search for feedback on how you are doing now?

There are many opportunities in the square dance world for callers, and all are dependent on your God-given talents and your desire to pursue them. Do you have the desire to be a full-time national traveling caller, or just want to fill in occasionally? Are “one night stands” and parties, introducing non dancers to our activity, things you want to do? The backbone of the calling business and the most important position in calling is the club caller and class teacher. Do you have the skill set and abilities to provide a group of dancers a varied program every night at the level they dance? Are you able to define and explain the movements to the new dancer?

Hopefully we all reflect on these questions from time to time. I am almost constantly thinking of my mentors that helped me get started in this business. My first club caller that helped me get started with a couple of 78's was Scotty Thomas. And I try to learn something new at every dance over 50 years later. A late night critique from Jon Jones years ago made a substantial difference in my calling. Regular calling dates with John Saunders and Dick Barker showed me how to call and react to the floor.

Many years ago Dick Barker from Waycross, GA, gave me some excellent advice, and I have passed it on to many callers. “Each person that came in tonight paid ‘X’ dollars for the dance. We owe that person that much entertainment. It does not matter if it is one square or 100 squares, we owe that person that much value in return.” It's easy to get excited for the big nights, but remember that thought at a dance with just a few folks.

Are you a great singer with a fantastic voice? Or is your voice average? Callers don't have to be great singers to be good entertainers and great callers. Be careful with the music you select for singing calls. If you hear a caller do a song and it is fantastic, evaluate if you can do that song as well or better. If you can't do the song justice, save a few bucks and buy one better suited for your voice and range. It is great that a couple of the labels are producing music more keyed for our lady callers.

Callers used to have to belong to a review service in order to listen to a record and see if it fit. Now most of the labels and record suppliers have previews on the web so you can decide before you order. Choose your music carefully and give your best impression through the presentation of that singing call or use of a hoedown.

Many of our callers are or have been school teachers. They are well trained to present an idea to a class, and subsequently usually make good square dance teachers. Have you worked on your teaching and presentation skills? Many years ago Jack Lasry was the clinician for the FL Callers and the Rural Callers talking about how to teach and the use of words to explain the calls for the new dancer. Jack was of the opinion you had to have at least 3 ways to explain every call, and many times needed 4 or 5. He was a big believer in using in or out for turns, not right and left. John Saunders always pushed in his clinics to learn the definition, both the actual and the way a call was danced. If you think you can use some help in teaching better, look for a good teacher in your area or attend a clinic on teaching.

Do you ever record a dance and then listen to how you sound? How was your timing, how was the body flow? Did you take into consideration the ladies when looking at body flow? So many calls work so well for the man but are jerky for the ladies. Be aware of what the other side is going through. With the ability to shoot videos on most phones, have someone tape your presentation and see what the dancers are seeing. Is the stage and equipment neat? Is my posture and presentation good? Am I looking around the floor to see all the squares?

The most discussed subject in the square dance world is how and where to get new dancers. That area has been the real focus, but not much change has happened. Maybe we just need to work on the ones that are choosing to come into our world. If we ask the dancers coming into the activity what brought you through the door, we have a better chance of finding similar couples to join them. Some people came looking for that barn dance and some expect a challenge. Figure out the group you are working with and there is a great opportunity to be successful.

As a final thought, I want to mention a song by George Jones. A few years back, as so many of his contemporaries were passing on, George asked, "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes?" What are we doing to find the next generation of callers as so many pass on or retire? Do you see someone in your class or club that might want to step forward? Encourage them to take that step, and then help them all you can.

Bill Chesnut

# **Recognition and Thanks to Many People**

By  
Patrick Demerath

The American Callers' Association in its attempt to be of service to all callers, dancers, and associations has provided current, timely, and effective information on new dancer recruitment, winning ways to retain club dancers, and pitfalls that drive square dancers away from 1999 to the present. ACA really appreciates the positive comments, encouragement to continue, and contributions from callers and dancers all over North America and abroad to continue these ACA 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 ACA Viewpoints addresses and examines whether square dance active supporters wish recognition for their unselfish participation serving square dancing or serve wishing no recognition. With or without recognition square dancers should be encouraged to take an active participating role in their square dance associations and clubs. It could be argued that there is a serious decline in the number of people who will serve and /or hold office in clubs and associations. Square dancers are may be failing to realize that when they belong to a square dance club or association that they also hold an ownership interest in that organization including the building, land, equipment, good will etc.

On the other hand, there are many people who wish to serve with or without recognition. In square dancing there are many who have done much for square dance groups seeking no recognition. The sad reality is that people may hold offices because no one else will and may not do a good job. Then what is the reason that many square dancers take leadership jobs It may be because they get appreciate that there many benefits from square dancing, and it gives them pleasure to help other people get the similar benefits.

Another way to say it square dancers do it because they like people and they like dancing. Perhaps it is fair to say that we must remember that the problems in square dancing aren't unique to square dancing as many groups nationwide are having similar problems because our country has become a nation of "nesters" instead of a nation of "doers."

As a nation of nesters, square dancers may have a dance program saturation point. Perhaps the square dance program needs to be shorter, with one national dance program. Perhaps more nesters may participate and stay in square dancing with a simple entrance program and a one floor national dance program. Although there may be an additional mental challenge in level of dancers, it may work against the nester generations do not come or drop out of lessons. One additional idea is for a club to create and activate a dynamic social organization welcoming all dancers.

The American Callers' Association encourages square dancers to take offices of management in square dancing. Remember that when dancers quit square dancing, we not only lose them as dancers but we also lose any new people that they might have recruited. The creation of a less stressful dance program with seeming the endless series of lessons has been the primary goal of the American Callers' Association since it was founded in the mid 1990's and has been supported by callers and dancers alike

The American Callers' Association will work to create a simple one floor national dance program with the positive conjunction of smooth dancing and the elimination of rough dancing and is pleased to present ACA's views and mission to the square dance community to let them decide.

Any individual, club, caller, or association who wishes to communicate his/her opinions on this subject is encouraged to contact the American Callers' Association [Loulet@aol.com](mailto:Loulet@aol.com) or Dr. Patrick Demerath at [pdemerath17@gmail.com](mailto:pdemerath17@gmail.com). Please visit our website and newsletters @American Callers.com/news.  
Until next time, happy dancing.

## *Can Do Commitment Versus Defeatism Syndrome*

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 2018. ACA really appreciates the positive comments, encouragement to continue, and contributions from 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 to speak out on the cumbersome dance programs.

**Problem:** Square Dance clubs have difficulties in recruiting new square dancing students. What clubs and callers do when they get down to the bottom with red ink and empty squares all around them? Close the club and dancers exit square dancing.

This month's ACA Viewpoints offers suggestions to clubs and callers for use to recruit new dancers to join square dancing. Recruiting new dancers has become and is a never-ending task year round task. With an estimated 10% a year decline in the number of dancers, clubs and callers, the recruiting of new dancers is more critical today than ever before. One might suggest that there is a certain element of defeatism in the minds of many square dancers. The defeatism might be interpreted as follows: "If the problem of decline in the number of square dancers is everywhere, what can I do to help?" "I am just one person; I have already asked everyone I know." Why not invite people you meet year around.

ACA recognizes that many of today's dancers in the baby boom, generation X, generation Y and generation Z desire a more instant gratification for their time and money spent. Unlike the senior's category, these newer groups want a simple way to start having fun. They appear to state that they do not want a long-term set of instruction. This apparent contradiction between the needs and wants of potential future square dancers and that the square dance product appears to complicate and denigrate new dancer recruiting.

Nevertheless, successful new dancer recruiting is working in parts of the square dance world. Specific new dancer-based activities can attract new dancers. ACA has been conducting marketing research on successful recruiting activities throughout the country and has published success stories for the past eighteen years. There are two successful underlying "success foundations" that continue to surface each time.

**Market Planning Part 1:** There is an expression in marketing that sums some of the problem up. “Prior Positive Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance.” ACA encourages square dance clubs to create and work a plans to recruit new dancers year around by inviting potential dancers to the dances and making them feel welcome and dancing a tip or two..

**Marketing Plan Part 2:** The second one is for square dance clubs to refuse to accept the fact they were victims of an overgrown and overdeveloped dance program and that people are too busy with multiple jobs, the Internet, and cable television. Square dance clubs must accept was the fact that there are many people who would like to give square dancing a try if they are invited. .

The Marketing Plan contains an aspect that square dance clubs to boil it down to one thing and that is a belief that “**If we ask people to come, some of them will come to learn square dancing.**” This “**Can Do Commitment**” underlies the Marketing Plan’s foundation and permeates every successful recruiting program that ACA has been able to spotlight. The “**Can Do Commitment**” is the critical difference. The “**Can Do Commitment**” rejects the “**Victim Syndrome**” of cable TV, life style changes and the overgrown stressful dance program.

If square dance clubs are to be successful reversing its own decline in the number of dancers, it critical to create a Marketing Plan and reject the “**Victim Syndrome**” and accept the “**Can Do Commitment**”.

In addition, **ACA** will continue its marketing research to learn and present square dance clubs’ successes in new dancer recruiting. Try them. Let us know so we can let other clubs that they work. Nevertheless the underlying action is the strong belief and action t to the “**Can Do Commitment**” to recruit the new dancers, teach and retain them as new club members.

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 at **American Callers.com/news**

Until next time, Happy Dancing. Page 6

Remember if you ask someone to join a square dance class some will if you ask them.