



American Caller's Association

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[Newsletter Jan Feb Mar 2019](#)

Subj: Re: Behind The Mike Callers Newsletter

Date: 6/4/2017

From : biwonson@gmail.com

To: dalesue@earthlink.net

CC: Loulet@aol.com

Email exchange between Barry Wonson of Australia and Dale McClary of Florida in June of 2017.

Hello Barry My name Dale McClary. I am a member of ACA and before that for over 20 Years with Callerlab I am in my 53rd year of calling and teaching Square Dancing. The Last 43 years I have lived in Melbourne Florida. I feel and have for sometime that the number of basics to teach and the time it take to teach is far to long. Until we reduce the number of calls and the length of the class our beloved activity called square dancing will keep declining and finally cease to exist.

This can only be done if callers, each and everyone of us work together to attain this we will all fail. Any Caller worth their salt should be able to call an interesting dance loaded with FUN and friendship set to music. One Caller said what I think and have for Years. This will work. People will come and if they have **FUN** and **ENJOY** themselves. (They will bring their friends.)

Squarley

Dale McClary

Barry's Response

Hi Dale

Nice to hear from you.

I believe that a huge number of mistakes have been made over the years by some elements within the leadership of our activity. I also believe that our entry program is too long...very hard to selling point with an introductory teaching period that is this length.

In Australia we are in a slightly different position than in the US, but the same mistakes have been made here, by the "follow the leader mentality" without looking at all the possibilities. I celebrate 50 Years as a caller this year. I have always been regarded by many as a "rebel", In that I am fairly outspoken in regards to anything that I regard as not being in the best Interests of the future of our activity. From 1977 thru 1988 I published a monthly Note Service Figuring we had over 350 subscribers at its peak. I often stated then that we were moving in the wrong direction by creating more and more levels, without strengthening the base itself.

I have been involved in other areas of teaching over the years and one of the main principles

Involved is always teach from simple concepts to complicate concepts. In SD we have movements in MS programs that are simple (single action) thru complex (multiple actions involved). Amazingly the basic teaching principle just does not come into play for quite a few of the calls involved.

I remember out 30 years ago I visited another caller's club during his learners class.

It was night 5 . He attempted to teach the Thar Star concept. First teach & tip was ½ hour lots of explanation, walk thru, dance a bit, then more walk thru , with not good success.

Next tip same thing again. Sue and I visited the following week as well same problem and same amount of time spent again. What a waste of valuable dancing/teaching time. His answer Was "that was when it supposed to be taught in the teaching order." That gave rise to my really looking deeply at the suggested teaching order itself. I realized that the teaching order was (and still is) extremely illogical and is one of the main problems in itself. By simple changes to the teaching order from simple to complex ideas, the teaching time can be cut nearly in half And that is without elimination of some of the dead wood calls!

In Australia the biggest difference to our club structure is that here almost all clubs 100% Caller run. The Caller looks for a hall, advertises, and runs the dance. All clubs are weekly. There is no "just a beginners class weekly" and then on to a monthly club. I call 4 nights a Week, 48 week a year, as do all other callers here. I have the same people at each nights dance each week. My job is to provided variety to the same people each night for that period A hefty task. A full weekend and bring in a guest caller for the weekend. That is what a traveling caller does here. Those who do weekends are still local callers, running their own clubs. In our state of NSW there are around 9 special weekend functions each year. In Queens land only 4, Tasmania, ACT,, South Australia non, West Australia and Victoria only 1 or 2. We have about 150 Callers in Australia not much chance of making a living out of traveling here.

I really believe that many callers have lost sight of what our activity is aimed at providing the dancers with a -----good time, some mental stimulation, good exercise and lots of fun. Unfortunately I also think that the road that has been taken by some leadership has been such that we may be coming to a DEAD END. Callerlab is always providing answers however It seems to me that the answers provided have no relationship to the questions being asked .

Cheers

Barry

Barry on behalf of all callers that share the same feelings that you have expressed in this.

Thank you for telling it like it is.

Mac

Here is one that I always enjoyed playing with and, more importantly always had a good response from the dancers,

CROSS THE OCEAN by Larry Letson

“Larry has a nice little figure that could easily become a workshop Call. I suggest the call for Plus Programs as we have a ‘Pass the Ocean’ at Mainstream, and this one builds upon that.”

STARTING FORMATION: Facing Couples

ACTION: From standard positions – the girls on a diagonal, will Pass Thru and then Face Right to become the ends of a forming wave. The boys on a diagonal will start to Pass Left Shoulders, and as they meet with the left, they will Single Hinge and a bit more to end as the centers of the forming wave.

ENDING FORMATION: Ocean Waves, Right Handed.

NOTE : From lines facing, the resulting waves will be parallel. I found that it is helpful to use a helping word to get the action going, such as “Ladies Lead”...Cross The Ocean. Also the same flow to lead into a Flutter Wheel or Dixie Style to a Wave, helps the entry smoothness. **NICE BUT EASY AND DIFFERENT.** With facing couples half sashayed, the Boys can lead the action.

DANCING CROSS THE OCEAN (standard set-up):

(SS) HEADS STAR THRU & SPREAD, ENDS LOAD THE BOAT, CENTRES (Ladies lead) CROSS THE OCEAN, IN THE WAVE -- EXPLODE AND SLIDE THRU, ALLEMANDE LEFT

Zero Line:

RIGHT & LEFT THRU, (Ladies lead) CROSS THE OCEAN, TURN THRU, ALLEMANDE LEFT.

Zero line: *SQUARE THRU $\frac{3}{4}$, COURTESY TURN, (Ladies lead)*

*CROSS THE OCEAN, SPIN THE TOP, RECYCLE *: zero line*

*Or add *SWEEP $\frac{1}{4}$, SWING THRU, TURN THRU, ALLEMANDE LEFT.*

I Would like to thank Barry Wonson the editor of the finest caller New & Note service EVER. This man does such a fine job of explaining what Square Dancing can and should be that even A blind man could see it.

Barry has been calling and teaching callers and Square Dancers for over fifty years. I enjoy the BEHIND THE MIKE the International Magazine for Callers that Barry is the editor for it.

Barry’s email address bjwonson@gmail.com Thanks Barry

Let's Look Ahead

By
Patrick Demerath

It is with the greatest of enthusiasm and optimism on behalf of the Executive Board of the American Callers Association that we would like to wish ALL square dancers and callers a very happy and prosperous 2019.

(This can only be if all Dancers and Callers put aside how great we are and stop lying to every one and our self and get serious about doing something to turn this activity AROUND.)

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 – 2018.

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.

The American Callers' Association would like to thank many callers, square dance leaders and dancers for their initiatives to reform square dancing and support the American Callers' Association Viewpoints. In the past several years creative programs were promulgated in efforts to attract new dancers. Unfortunately, new dancer

Recruitment appears to be at an all time low as square dance clubs are having difficulty recruiting new students and at the same time, square dancers are leaving square dancing for a variety of reasons, Square dancing appears to be losing 10% of its dancers per year as membership declines. Perhaps we can get the word out more effectively.

Square dancing has been on the decline for at least 30 years. There is no magic cure or silver bullet that can turn the decline in the number of dancers around until we all start looking Ahead. It has been the goal of American Callers Association for the past 23 years to Look Ahead, which is searching for new ways to reduce the time and effort needed to bring new dancers into the activity by changing the activity to better fit the life style changes of the Generation X, and Generation Y and Millennials .

Let us Look Ahead by communicating with Callers, Dancers and Organizations, to gather and share ideas and methods that have worked for them and publishing them in our American Callers' Association Newsletters and in American Square Dance magazine under the American Callers' Viewpoints.

By doing this we hope to help reverse the downward slide and bring square dancing back to being the great activity it should be like we once had.

Unity of goals and applications requires sharing information and encouragement .This is something that cannot be accomplished by any one organization.

All dancers and callers must work together in this effort in order for it to bring the needed change for this activity to recover from this downward trend.

The American Callers' Association is receiving suggestions and anecdotal success stories of square dance recruiting success from the square dance world. I would like to thank the many people who provide us with the "good recruiting" news and encourage any dancer, club, association, or caller to contact us and we will publish it.

Our goal is to get the "success" accomplishments and ideas to you who are the life blood of 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 Loulet@aol.com or Dr. Patrick Demerath at pdemerath17@gmail.com.

A happy and prosperous 2019 to all callers, dancers and friends.

WE CAN TURN IT AROUND

This can only be if all Dancers and Callers put aside how great we are and stop lying to every one and our self and get serious about doing something to turn this activity AROUND. It **cannot** be turned around with all the different levels or programs it ONLY has ONE chance to be turned around and I hope we are not to late. That was what grew it to its largest numbers. One chance is one floor one people. Square Dancing that could be taught in A very short time. That was when we had the greatest number of people world wide in Square Dancing.

Have you every wondered why we have so many levels in square dancing? Looking at the Levels and how many dancers you have in each level makes you wonder if they were started For the dancers or for some a callers Ego? Just a thought not intended to put anyone down.

Mac Letson

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS MONTH

Below is just a sample of what you can expect in one month of Behind The Mike

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS MONTH	2
On the Inside Track	3
Event and Activities Updates	5
ACF Update	5
ACF Conference 2020 – Feature Caller/Presenter – Randy Doherty	5
Special Update – Voice Coach for 2020 Conference – Arden Hopkin	6
BTM Website Update	7
Sound Archive	8
Smooth Dancing – Caller Education Series by Paul Bristow	10
Timing and Body Flow part 3 – Body Flow	10
timing and Body Flow Part 4 – Final Thoughts	13
Disposable Calls – A Commentary by Barry Wonson	17
Cross the Ocean by Larry Letson	18
Movin' Down The Mainstream	20
Scoot Back Once & a Half by Barry Wonson	20
Workshop Teaching – Dixie Style to a Wave / Uusing Left Hand Waves by Gary Dodds ..	22
Ask Dr. Allemander By Glenn Ickler	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Jim’s Jottings: Jim Mayo Speaks Out – Square Dance History	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Walk, Stretch or Dance? Dancing May Be Best for the Brain By Gretchen Reynolds ...	30
BTM Focus Move of the Month - Eight Chain Family	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Showmanship by Paul Bristow	35
POSITIVE PLUS: Rolling Around by Barry Wonson	40
UNDERSTANDING BOXES by Ed Foote	42
WORDS OF WISDOM from Jeffrey Garbutt	44
MOVIN' DOWN THE MAINSTREAM by Barry Wonson	45
Spinning the Top or Spinning Your Wheels? by Mel Wilkerson	46
POETS CORNER - THE POOR BEGINNER (author Unknown)	50
CALLING DUETS by Chris Froggatt	51
Editor's final words ...well at least for now	54
Appendix of Upcoming Events	55
STING PRODUCTIONS – CALLER RESOURCES AND MUSIC OFFER	55
So you want to be a caller – Caller School on-Line by Eddie Powell	55
GCA Caller School July 1-3 Seattle WAm USA	55
Central Sierra “ON-LINE”CALLER SCHOOL. Kip Garvey (instructor)	55
A&S Record Shop – Music downloads and much more.	55
North East USA Caller School 10-14 Oct 2019	55

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR...
FUN, FITNESS and FELLOWSHIP
CHECK OUT SQUARE DANCING!



Yes, You're Invited To
"An Introduction To Square Dancing"
Fun Night!

Come join us for an evening of

FUN, FITNESS & FELLOWSHIP!

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL _____

