

The New - Start Saga Moves Advances in Square Dancing

By Patrick Demerath

In this the month of July, the American Callers' Association wishes that all callers and dancers stay healthy and avoid Corona Virus by following the guide lines of staying home and avoiding crowds, especially keeping a safe distance from others, wearing masks to protect others, and washing hands. Keep vigilant and stay healthy.

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, winning ways to retain club dancers, and pitfalls to drive square dancers 2000 to 2020. 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 Pandemic passes.

Last month's ACA discussed and encouraged a new start for square dancing. The Viewpoint discussed the common bond of square dancers that all dancers hold. It is especially relevant as square dancing gets it a new start after the Corona Virus passes. Whenever, a person is identified as a square dancer, he or she often attempts to invite people to try square dancing. The square dancer is often asked about the values and the traditions of square dancing. The prospect might ask or think: "Why should I become a square dancer?" "What would I gain from square dancing?" We have often strived to answer such questions about the benefits of square dancing. It is truer today in view of the situation. The traditional response was "fun, friendship, and fellowship" of square dancing. Truly we can draw attention to the many new friendship opportunities of square dancing and cite the many wonderful friends that we all made. Even the non-dancing social gatherings enjoyed by square dancers and their families are a significant part of the square dancing equation.

At this time of the a temporary cease and possible further decline in square dancing, we may become disillusioned because we may never provide a convincing statement that would explain the one quality benefit most central to square dancing. "What is it that sets square dancing apart from other groups?"

The answer to this question is not evident unless one looks into a square of new student dancers. If we look at them in lessons, we see laughing, fun and a beaming sense of accomplishment. Still, these are not the elements that set square dancing apart from other activities. Upon looking at the square of new dancers for several times, I finally found the answer to my question. Student dancers all share "EQUALITY" which is the

most vital element in our beloved square dancing and is required to ensure continuation and prospering of square dancing.

When a person enters the hall for a square dance lesson, all the cares and woes that accompany life in the outside world disappear from his/her memory. Each square dance student dances with seven others in a square in full and complete harmony. It matters little what is their business, education, wealth, or profession. At this point, the person is a square dancer and all else disappears, as the dancers are united in the square following the patten by the caller.

It can be argued that the sum of the history and the social benefits of square dancing, powerful as they are, pale in importance to the "EQUALITY" of each new student dancer having fun in the square. Perhaps, this is why so many people drop out of square dance classes, stop dancing right after graduation, and are lost to our beloved activity. Perhaps, it is a reason why square dancing is in decline. The EQUALITY among square dancers is the one element that unites all square dancers is compromised by the different level dance programs.

The ACA one floor program can be taught in as little as 16 weeks, reduces the stress on the dancers and callers alike and encourages dancing associations to reject the so= advanced programs of stress and segregation of dancers and return square dancing to EQUALITY. The bottom line is that if we as callers, dancers and leaders take away EQUALITY, it will seriously damage square dancing. All square dancers should be able to feel the EQUALITY of square dancing, and EQUALITY will help square dancing grow and prosper.

This month's ACA Viewpoint offers ten positive actions to help preserve square dancing. The idea came while I was teaching courses in adult graduate level Marketing. The experienced adult graduate students were asked what ten items would continue to encourage them to continue their arduous and difficult graduate education. The results were passionate and practical. I later asked the same question to a group of square dance friends. The dancers passionately responded with almost the same replies as the graduate students.

The square dancers named this article: TEN WAYS FOR DANCERS AND CALLERS TO KEEP DANCERS IN SQUARE DANCING. HERE THEY ARE:

These ten items can be applied to national callers, local club callers, associations and experienced dancers as well.

1. Keep refreshing your sensitivity with new dancers by enthusiastically teaching or supporting square dance lessons.
2. Demonstrate a friendly and polite attitude to the new dancers.
3. Help and Praise new dancers as they struggle to learn.
4. Show friendship and appreciation to the needs of the dancers by getting them in squares with experienced dancers not in the back of the hall with new dancers.
5. Demonstrate courtesy and friendship on the microphone toward dancers.
6. Praise and complement all dancers and visitors.
7. Praise and complement dancers between the tips.
8. Praise other square dance clubs and associations.
9. Support the dress code of a particular club or group.
10. Communicate a "we need and want you" attitude with the dancers.

ACA's pledges to support these TEN WAYS by stating these virtuous commitments that uplift and encourage all dancers. Callers, experienced dancers and leaders will take these things seriously and actively communicating them to all dancers. ACA would also like to encourage that all callers, dancers and association leaders to publish the TEN WAYS positive items and hopes that this article reaches all dancers, callers and square dance leaders and convince them to stay in square dancing. ACA believes that the TEN WAYS FOR CALLERS, DANCERS, AND SQUARE DANCE LEADERS TO KEEP SQUARE DANCERS IN SQUARE DANCING can help reduce the tragic decline in the number of square dancers. The bottom line is that we as callers, dancers and square dance leaders can do something to keep square dancers in square dancing. Let's do it as the square dancing's saga continues

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.

Normally we like to end the ACA articles with the following with:

"Until Next Time, Happy Dancing".

In lieu of the tragic Corona Virus and temporary cessation of Square Dancing:

"WAIT WITH PATIENCE FOR THE NEXT TIME WE DANCE AND HAVE TEN TIMES AS MUCH FUN."

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