



American Caller's Association

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Newsletter October-December 2023

Mary and I recently returned from a square dance cruise and during the cruise we had the chance to talk to dancers about why they have stayed in dancing, some for a couple of years, some for more than 20. The main reason it seems is the friends they make and the fellowship of being a part of a great group of people. Some like the exercise of both body and brain. You would probably get the same answers from the dancers that dance with you.

I also asked about why some of their friends left the activity. For many it is mostly health related or maybe picked up a different hobby during the Covid shutdown. A few said that part of their class quit after the first dance they attended away from their home club. Either the dancers were not as welcoming as their home folks or the caller attempted to impress them with their vast knowledge of choreography. Maybe we need to remind our clubs to be more welcoming to visitors and as callers, maybe we need to be more attentive to the new dancers. Let's all remember that fun and fellowship is what our activity is about.

It still seems that getting new dancers into the activity is our biggest challenge. We have our best class in years at one club I call for so maybe the stigma of touching is going away. New dancers bring new dancers so hopefully we are seeing a little resurgence in interest of square dancing. I have had more calls from people looking to do square dance parties and one night stands. Maybe a few of those will look for classes in the near future.

Square dance attire continues to be a hot topic among both callers and dancers. Most of the clubs I call for have gone casual. I still love the look on the floor of petticoats, but am much more interested in people coming to the dance. At a recent class one of the ladies brought in clothes from a couple of retired dancers. It was interesting to see the new dancers going through and picking a dress or two out. I think we will see a mix of attire for years to come.

Fall is here and I hope you have huge classes and create dancers that love our activity. I learned from one of my many mentor that if I was not having fun, the dancers were not. I still thank the callers that helped me get started, even though most are gone. Maybe I shall write about them shortly.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the ACA and all callers. Let me know if you have thoughts on anything in my articles. I want to learn from you.

Keep 'em square and in case you forgot, wash your hands.

Bill Chesnut
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Some Things I've Learned in My 51+ Years of Calling

By Gary Shoemake

There seems to be many forms of teaching being taught these days and I have been fortunate enough to have experienced most of these in my 50+ years of calling. We have the crash course, teach it all in one weekend, which I tried this early on in my career and it was quite successful. But, that was in a different era of square dancing than we know today. We only had 50 calls and none of the families as we know them now. So this made it quite easy to accomplish this type of lesson approach. Then we have the other extreme of 40 calls (which actually amount to almost twice that amount when you consider the families) of Callerlab.

What we have tried to do at ACA, is to give you a happy medium and I hope it is working for you. This being said, none of these methods are being received by the general public very enthusiastically. Today's working couples, don't have the time to devote 6 months of lessons to be in an activity that they might not like after all. So to attract these folks and keep them interested, I think we need to approach our teaching in a little different manner.

I'll digress a little bit and tell you about a survey that was taken at the National a few years ago. This survey found that all callers, no matter what the level, were only using about ½ of each list that Callerlab had suggested. My question to that was "then why are we taking our student's valuable time to teach these calls if no one is using them. On one other note, they found that "dive thru" & "pass to the center" were almost NOT used at all. So how do 98% of our callers get the dancers into the center, you say? It was Ferris Wheel!! So why are we still arguing about which of the other two to use?

After these great lists were presented it seems to me that we have progressed ourselves right out of business.

Now, back to the teaching aspect. I believe you could use your local callers association to see which of these calls are actually being used in your area. Then teach these calls and leave the others to be taught/work shopped at the dances. This may not be an easy task because, depending on the number of callers in your area, there will be several opinions as to what to teach and what to leave for the workshops. But, being the level headed adults as we all are :>)) I believe you can accomplish this.

WE would like to THANK GARY for this and all the help he has been to ACA and Square Dancing we need to remember that without DANCERS they do not need CALLERS. Mac Letson

The next approach, I believe we need to take, is to simplify our teaching methods. For instance the age old problem of the confusion, in lessons, of R & L Thru and Square Thru. My solution to this is to not teach R & L Thru until the later classes or at least until the students have accomplished Square Thru completely. Instead, immediately after teaching Courtesy Turn with ladies chain, I start using "Pass Thru & Courtesy Turn, in place of Right & Left Thru. This eliminates the pull by problem that causing the confusion with Square Thru. Then several classes later insert the pull by to R & L Thru and give it the name.

Another tool is to use all facets of "Trades" as early in lessons as possible. Think of all the calls that use trade in some facet within them.

Hinge = $\frac{1}{2}$ trade

Turn thru = extend Trade & extend

Swing thru = trade with right & trade by the left

Alamo swing thru = trade with right & trade with left.

Wheel & Deal = Couples $\frac{1}{2}$ trade & bend in

There are many calls that use trade in their makeup, that a through teach of trades will help with these later calls. So get yourself acquainted with the breakdown of the calls that can be taught with the use of trade & $\frac{1}{2}$ trade. This same approach will also help in work shopping new calls to your veteran dancers.

These are some of the things I have learned to use in my 52 years of calling & teaching. If you can use them, by all means, try them. If I can help I'll be glad to try.

In short, simplify all you can to get the impatient public through these lessons and into your club. Then don't rush them into Plus. Call special Plus tips for the veteran dancers to keep them happy, but not to discourage students. I don't really like calling every other tip Plus. This gives the new dancers only $\frac{1}{2}$ of the dance. I would suggest calling the Plus 1 hour before the regular dance, so the newer dances don't feel cheated and also feel that they need to go through another class so soon after completing beginners class. Be sure to let the veterans know that you need them to help getting these new folks dancing well enough to keep them in the club. You have to be a leader in that aspect.

Hello Everyone,

Here we are at the last issue of 2023. With that in mind I'd like to wish all of you an early Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! We are starting a comeback in the square dance activity. Some areas of the country are getting bigger classes than in the past few years. I hope the clubs you call for have started classes or are starting new classes now or at the beginning of the New Year. I've been to the last three National Square Dance Conventions and have noticed a continual increase in the number of both old and new dancers. The 2024 National Square Dance Convention is on track to beat the last three years attendance! I have also attended the last three Tennessee State Square Dance Conventions where every hall was packed; a steady increase in dancers was seen at the Texas State Square Dance Convention in which I have participated for twenty plus years. Now if we want to keep our activity growing we must take the time to teach by the definitions in its entirety. Let's stop trying to teach new dancers in twelve weeks. Stop putting a completion date on the program. Tell them they will graduate when we finish the Mainstream program. They will thank you for it. Please e-mail your successes to let the Board know you are succeeding. Send us the number of graduates so we can track how we're doing.

Wishing you much success,

John Carlton, ACA Advisor

“ANGELS”

Angels are special people - ever-ready with helping hands to fill in at a mall, one-nighter or a square dance class.

GUIDELINES FOR ANGELS:

1. Class time is vital to the learners. Don't expect special dancing tips for the Angels, make every class moment count for the learners.
2. Learning to listen requires concentration. As Angels we become class members again, all listening to the same Caller; therefore, there is no instructing or small talk in the square.
3. Dance styling that we've adopted is out of place here. Basics must be kept pure in form to insure proper positioning.
4. We're helpers - not pushers. An occasional, gentle guide is fine, but pushing a dancer through an action he doesn't know teaches him nothing and prevents the Caller from seeing a troubled area.
5. We dress for the dance. Wearing comfortable clothing during class night and encourage the men too wear long sleeve shirts.
6. After graduation. When we've welcomed the new dancers into our club, be eager to dance with them. We all began sometime. We were frightened, worked too hard, made dumb mistakes and were sure every error was because of us. It is in the company of the experienced dancer that the beginner will become easy and comfortable in the square dance scene; helping them become good dancers now and better Angels when they do for others what you have done for them.

MAINSTREAM MATERIAL

FEATURING - SPIN THE TOP

Heads or Sides

SQUARE THRU 2
SPIN THE TOP
SWING THRU
SLIDE THRU
PASS THRU
TRADE BY
ALLEMANDE LEFT
PROMENADE *home.*

Heads or Sides

LEAD TO THE RIGHT
SWING THRU
SPIN THE TOP
SWING THRU
SPIN THE TOP
RECYCLE
SQUARE THRU 3
ALLEMANDE LEFT
PROMENADE *home.*

Heads or Sides

TOUCH 1/4
WALK & DODGE
SPIN THE TOP
Boys RUN
Girls TRADE
BEND THE LINE
VEER TO THE LEFT
BEND THE LINE
CIRCLE TO THE LEFT
FORWARD & BACK
ALLEMANDE LEFT
PROMENADE *home.*

Heads or Sides

PASS THE OCEAN
RECYCLE
PASS THRU
PASS THE OCEAN
SWING THRU
SPIN THE TOP
SWING THRU
SQUARE THRU *on the 3rd hand*
RIGHT & LEFT GRAND
PROMENADE *home.*

Heads or Sides

SEPERATE AROUND
ONE TO A LINE
PASS THE OCEAN
SPIN THE TOP
SWING THRU
SLIDE THRU
ALLEMANDE LEFT
RIGHT & LEFT GRAND
PROMENADE *home.*

Heads or Sides

SQUARE THRU 4
TOUCH 1/4
SCOOT BACK
SPIN THE TOP
Center 4
SWING THRU
All SPIN THE TOP
SWING THRU
RIGHT & LEFT GRAND
PROMENADE *home.*

4 LADIES CHAIN 3/4
Heads LEAD TO THE LEFT
VEER TO THE RIGHT
WHEEL & DEAL
EXTEND
RECYCLE
ALLEMANDE LEFT
PROMENADE *home.*

Heads or Sides
LEAD TO THE LEFT
VEER TO THE RIGHT
As COUPLES TRADE
BEND THE LINE
CIRCLE TO THE LEFT
FORWARD & BACK
ALLEMANDE LEFT
PROMENADE *home.*

4 LADIES CHAIN 3/4
Heads LEAD TO THE LEFT
PASS THE OCEAN
Girls TRADE
SLIDE THRU
RIGHT & LEFT THRU
ALLEMANDE LEFT
PROMENADE *home.*

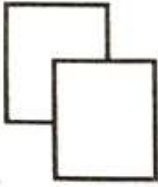
Heads or Sides
LEAD TO THE LEFT
VEER TO THE RIGHT
Boys CROSS RUN
Girls CROSS RUN
COUPLES CIRCULATE 1/2
BEND THE LINE
You're home.

Head LADIES CHAIN
Heads LEAD TO THE LEFT
SQUARE THRU 3
TRADE BY
RIGHT & LEFT THRU
PASS THRU
TRADE BY
ALLEMANDE LEFT
PROMENADE *home.*

All 4 COUPLES
LEAD TO THE RIGHT
PARTNER TRADE
All 4 COUPLES
LEAD TO THE RIGHT
PARTNER TRADE
ALLEMANDE LEFT
PROMENADE *home.*

Heads or Sides
LEAD TO THE LEFT
VEER TO THE RIGHT
BEND THE LINE
SQUARE THRU 2
ALLEMANDE LEFT
PROMENADE *home.*

Heads or Sides
REVERSE FLUTTER WHEEL
LEAD TO THE LEFT
SWING THRU
Boys RUN
WHEEL & DEAL
ALLEMANDE LEFT
PROMENADE *home.*



CTP



CALLERS SCHOOL
AUGUST 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 2024
Gatlinburg, Tennessee

TOM DAVIS, OHIO

Certified Caller Coach

MAC LETSON, ALABAMA

ACA Certified Instructor

RALPH TROUT, NEW JERSEY

ACA Certified Instructor

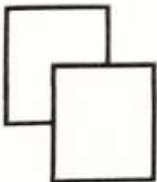
JOHN CARLTON, TEXAS

ACA Certified Instructor

JOHN KEPHART, TEXAS

ACA Certified Instructor

A Callers School open to
all Interested Individuals
to learn the art of
Square Dance Calling.



See Reverse Side for all Information!!!

