



CHATTER FROM THE CHIEF- Claudia Littlefair

January - a time to reflect. I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on your club's past year. How did you make a difference to your club? Were you involved with set-up/clean-up? Did you serve on a committee or on the executive? Did you encourage new dancers? Promote your club? Show enthusiasm for your club? Come on time, stay to the end? And, finally how can you make a difference in 2017?

WOULD SQUARE DANCING BE YOUR FIRST CHOICE?

Source: cedar.net/articleco-op - by John Fogg

Contrast these 3 situations:

- 1. You walk into a bar where they line dance.** You never line danced before, you don't have a partner. They walk you through one specific line dance that night, and you dance that dance off and on all night. You don't need a partner.
- 2. You walk into the Contra dance.** You never Contra danced before, you don't have a partner. They teach you each Contra dance before they dance it, and they have a half hour walk through on contra dancing basics before the dancing starts. Since the custom is to change partners with every dance, you don't have a problem finding a partner all night long, and you end up dancing with every person in the hall by the time the night is over.
- 3. You walk into a square dance.** You've never square danced before you don't have a partner. Unless you were lucky enough to hit the beginning of a beginners' group, they tell you, you have to wait for a new beginners' group to form, take lessons for several months, you have to arrange your own partner situation and we'll see you in 6 months, 10 months or whatever. You don't dance at all that night.

Now after those 3 experiences, where do you go? Remember that this is the age of instant gratification. You may not like that, but it's true. Can square dancing compete with those other dance scenarios? Or with other entertainment scenarios, of which we have many. Finally, does it have to be this way with square dancing?

I don't think so. It wasn't always that way. **Imagine a fourth scenario.** You walk into the square dance, you don't have a partner, you've never square danced before. There's a half hour with very basic instruction like swing your partner do-si-do, maybe 10 calls maximum. There's other people there without partners and the old time club members try to line you up with a partner, maybe dancing with you themselves if they can't find somebody. Brand new dancers and old timers all dance, and the more experienced help the less experienced.

“... we are attempting to force them into the mold that most of us fit into in the late '40's and early '50's.”

The second dance is announced as mainstream, plus, A2 or whatever, and the people who can and want to dance at a higher level do so. The next dance is back to beginners.

Square dancing, in the present incarnation, started after World War II with married couples looking for fun and socializing without spending much money. Most of that has changed. Many couples aren't even married any more, and there are many, many more singles. There's a lot more money around, and a lot more variety in how to spend it entertaining yourself. Square dancing is still fun and a great way to socialize. We just aren't reaching our potential members. Why we are not is because we are attempting to force them into the mold that most of us fit into in the late '40's and early '50's. We will not be successful in doing that. Unless there is a drastic change, square dancing as we know it will disappear in 10 years or less. If we insist on dancing at rarefied levels that require years of training and insist that beginners be part of a couple, square dancing will die with us.

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Editor's Note: I'd like to add a fifth scenario. It starts off the same way as the fourth scenario. *"You walk into the square dance, you don't have a partner, you've never square danced before. There's a half hour of dancing with very basic instruction ..."*.

Now here's where the scenario changes. There's a short break after the half-hour, where people can have a drink of water or a quick snack from the food table, which is well stocked by all the dancers who want to bring a snack to share. The food table's hidden function is to serve as a meeting place for the new and experienced dancers to mix and mingle.

The next hour the group is broken up into smaller groups based on where they are in the mainstream program. The mainstream list is broken down into two parts: one-and-two-couple calls, and four-couple calls. The new dancers start or pick up wherever they left off at the one-and-two-couple call stations. These stations are manned by narrators who are either callers or square angels that have an aptitude for teaching. The narrators read from a script of patter which indicates when a new move is introduced. At that point, the narrator teaches, demonstrates and walks the new dancers through the new move, then continues on with the patter that incorporates the new move. When a new dancer has completed the one-and-two-couple-call list, they move to the four-couple-call station, which is run by the main caller.

The last half hour is spent dancing together in one big group again. The caller uses the calls at the lowest common denominator, and incorporates them into two or three singers, ending the evening on a high note. Those that want to will stay behind to "finish the lunch".

"... new dancers can join any week throughout the dance season."

This system is called "The Nest" and was designed by Cincinnati square dancer Dale Bennett with the help of callers, such as Bear Miller from Denver, CO. Advantages of "The Nest" program are:

1. **Weekly entry points** - new dancers can join any week throughout the dance season.
2. **It allows for absences.** If new dancers miss a week or two, a month, or even more, they can still come back, and pick up wherever they left off.
3. **It accommodates different learning paces.** A slower learner can repeat the stations as often as needed, and faster learners are not held back.
4. **New dancers can bring their friends at any time** - weeks later or months later.
5. **More people can try out square dancing.** If a hundred people come through the doors, and 30% to 40% stay, that's 4 or 5 new squares.

A club we teach new dancers at in Calgary have been using this system for three years. Prior to using "The Nest", we would typically graduate only a small number of dancers (2 to 5) from a much larger group that started out in the fall. The first year we used The Nest, 11 of the 29 (38%) people who came through the doors graduated; the second year, 13 of the 40 (32.5%) people who tried it graduated; and this year so far 29 people have tried it, 14 come regularly(48%). The retention rate for the second year dancers has also been very good, and instead of dancing one to two squares, we are now dancing 3 to 4 squares in a typical evening. The other difference is the age range. This system seems to appeal to a "younger" crowd. Our dance evenings are multi-generational ranging in ages from 20's to 80's.

Using square angels (narrators) to help in the teaching process is a hard concept for callers to consider. Most believe that they must be the only ones teaching "their dancers", and so The Nest program is given little consideration. However, changing the way we do things is what will keep our activity alive.

As chair, Vernon Jones of CALLERLAB, the International Association of Callers, stated in the Nov/Dec 2016 Direction newsletter, *"New and innovative ways of thinking are in order and there a lot of instances where people are using dance experiences that are different than the norm to produce new people. We should be embracing these ideas and not trying to tear them down and make them fit the same old thinking and ways that have been used for years with the same results."*

GIVE ROUND DANCERS A BREAK

**Source: Washington State Square & Folk Dance Festival Footnotes
- Column By Cuer Mary Parsons, Olympia, WA**

In our area Square Dance lessons have produced a large number of new graduate dancers that have not seen much Round Dancing and think we are there just to fill in the gaps while they take a break. Square dancing and Round dancing go hand in hand.

Originally the round dances were memorized Waltz or Two Step and the Caller just put on a record for the Round Dancing and took a break. It began to change in the 70's when the dances became more complicated and we discovered we had more dancers participating when the Caller cued the dances we could not remember. This meant the Caller lost his break so Cuers were born and began to read the steps to the dancers while the caller got his break. At first they just read the words on the sheets, not always in time to the music. They usually had about 20 or 30 records to choose from for a dance that the dancers had been taught so they were just reminding the dancers how the dance went.

As Cuers became more interested in their job and started writing even more complicated dances the dance count grew. It became more difficult to memorize everything so good cueing became more important. Some people began to like Round Dancing as much if not more than Square Dancing. This made it necessary to learn to cue better to get the message out to the dancers in a timely way so we could dance smoothly.

Roundalab was born in 1976 to teach the Cuers better cueing technique and teaching principles. They also discovered that we could apply the same technique to other rhythms besides Waltz and Two Step, such as Rumba and Cha Cha and eventually Cuers were as important to a dance as the caller.

Today a Cuer must know how to cue multiple rhythms at multiple levels which probably requires as much skill as the Callers. With modern technology we now have thousands of dances to choose from.

Unfortunately Cuers are not as respected as Callers. Round dancing is part of the program not break time for the square dancers. This means the Cuer and round dancers on the floor need to have the respect that is due during their time on the floor. If round dancers were to make as much noise as those sitting out during round dances the caller would not be pleased. Please clear the floor if you are not dancing and move to the seating area or break room. Better yet learn to Round Dance and join us as we dance.



Mary & Scott Parsons started round dancing in 1983. Mary began cueing in 2006 for the Salty Sashayers in Shelton, WA. They moved to Anchorage, Alaska in 2010 where Mary cued for 4 different clubs. After moving back to Olympia in 2015 she has been cueing for the Round-A-Bouts, Flutterwheels, and Rhythm Rounders, and is currently the Washington State Cuer Coordinator writing for Footnotes magazine Washington Round of the Month. Mary & Scott teach Phase II – IV rounds at Lac-A-Do Hall in Olympia, WA.

Three surgeons are discussing who makes the best patients to operate on. The first surgeon said, "Electricians are the best, everything inside is color coded."

The second surgeon says, "No, I think librarians are. Everything inside them is in alphabetical order.

The third surgeon says, "You're all wrong. Politicians are the easiest to operate on. There's no guts, no heart, no balls, no brains, and no spine. Plus, the head and the ass are interchangeable.

* * * *

- Just wondering - how come you never hear father-in-law jokes?
- And why do people keep running over a thread a dozen times with their vacuum cleaner, then reach down, pick it up, examine it, then put it down to give the vacuum one more chance?

TRY TRASH CAN DANCING!

Source: 2014 Cariboo Connection Issue #44, Mary Anne & Nick Turner

American square dance callers, Allan Hurst, reports that he occasionally runs into a situation where there are only 6 people available to make a square. On one such night, the dancers noticed two garbage cans (with lids) on wheels at the back of the hall. After some discussion, it was decided to try and use these trash cans as "dancers" to fill empty spots in the square. After a bit of adjusting and a lot of laughter the dancers were successful. Over time the "Garbage Can Tip" became quite popular and was often requested, even when there was no shortage of dancers.



Such an event sounds like it could be fun and would certainly liven up an evening. Photos of such an activity could make for an interesting press release. If you would like to try the "Garbage Can Tip" below are some of the guidelines that Allan Hurst has developed.

DANCERS

- The dancer who starts interacting with a garbage can at the beginning of a call is responsible for moving the garbage can into place for the next call.
- If the dancer moving the garbage can has to step out of place to do so, wait an extra beat to let them move back into place before saying the next call.
- If the garbage can hasn't needed to move for one or more calls, the dancer nearest to it is responsible for getting it moving when appropriate.
- More than 2 garbage cans in a square is too confusing for all parties concerned.

PERFORMANCE & TIMING

- Call A bit more slowly than usual.
- Expect to cue more frequently than usual. "Don, you need to finish turning thru with your garbage can partner." "Someone needs to help that garbage can boy do his u-turn back."
- Resist the urge to stack calls without warning. If you stack calls "in real time" your 2nd or 3rd call is likely to not be heard by the dancers, who will probably be laughing and shouting as they try to get the garbage can moving.

CHOREO TIPS

Keep choreo simple, and stick to standard applications as often as possible. Everybody has to move. At any level, "8 person" calls work the best with two garbage can dancers. Singing calls are a lot easier if the garbage cans are girls. Dancers will quickly figure out they can just "roll the girls" to the next boy in sequence.



PRACTICAL MATTERS

Only use garbage cans with snug lids and empty the can before dancing with it.

So the next time you only have six or seven people squared up ... search for a garbage can ... or even a chair with wheels.

The Number of Calls in Modern Square Dance

<u>Program</u>	<u>Additional Calls</u>	<u>Total</u>
Mainstream		68
Plus	+30	= 98
Advance:		
- A1	+ 42	= 140
- A2	+ 36	= 176
Challenge		
- C1	+ 91	= 267
- C2	+ 86	= 353
- C3a	+ 82	= 435
- C3b	+ 74	= 509
- C4	+1,179	= 1,688!!

Source: Washington State Square & Folk Dance Festival Footnotes

- Reading while sunbathing will make you well red.
- When two egotists meet, it's an i for an i.
- In democracy your vote counts, in feudalism your count votes.

DANCE YOUR WAY TO A HEALTHIER YOU

Source: <http://www.squaredancespokane.org/articles>

Cha Cha and Tango for Your Health – With a Little Salsa on the Side! Let's face it. Walking in the same spot isn't the most enjoyable activity. If you find that the treadmill is getting boring, the classes at your gym are humdrum and crowded or your workout videos are worn down, it's time to spice up your fitness routine. But don't hit the gym or pop in a new DVD, head to the dance floor!

Heat up the winter months with dancing. Dancing is a fun and exciting way to kick up your fitness routine, and has become one of the most popular ways to get in shape. Whether it's at home or in a studio, alone or with a partner, you'll be taking the right steps to a healthier, more fit you.

Any type of dance and movement is good for you, but how much dancing benefits you depends on the duration, your skill level and how strenuous the dance is. In fact, dancing can burn as many calories as riding a bike, swimming or walking, torching anywhere from 200 to 400 calories in just a half hour. As with most good exercise, dancing offers many potential health benefits: improved strength and flexibility, a sense of well-being, increased endurance and improved cardiovascular fitness.

Don't think dancing is limited to what you see on 'Dancing with the Stars'. There are many types of dance to choose from, each offering its own specific health benefits. Here's a quick breakdown of some popular choices.

Ballroom Dancing

- Build and increase stamina.
- Tone and strengthen legs and body.
- Increase balance and flexibility.
- Condition body.
- Keep heart in shape.
- Help with weight loss.
- Develop circulatory system.

Salsa Dancing

- Relieve stress.
- Help release toxins through sweating.
- Build stamina and endurance.
- Help weight loss.
- Help lower blood pressure.
- Help improve cholesterol levels.
- Lead to reduced heart rate over time.

Belly Dancing

- Maintain flexibility.
- Tone and firm shoulders and arms.
- Build core strength.
- Reduce stress.
- Help with weight loss.
- Improve muscle tone and posture.
- Help prevent lower back problems.

Square Dancing

- Strengthen bones.
- Provide cardiovascular conditioning.
- Lead to slower heart rate and lower blood pressure.
- Help improve cholesterol levels.
- Stretch and tone muscle.

So, now that you know the benefits of dancing and some specific examples, the next step is to get moving! If you're shy or self-conscious of your dancing skills, consider a class for "never-ers," or rent an exercise DVD that covers the basics of dance. Remember to spend a few minutes stretching before you start dancing, to warm up your muscles. If you're starting out with a video, watch it through once to get familiar with the moves before actually dancing to it, so you don't have to constantly stop and rewind during your actual workout. And always be sure to consult your doctor before beginning any new exercise routine.

As you become more confident in yourself and your dance moves, you can invite your family and friends along – dancing is a social activity after all! You, your family and friends can even sign up for classes at a local dance studio or community college. You'll be tearing up the dance floor in no time, looking and feeling good along the way.

Jazz up that fitness routine!

- *Time flies like an arrow, fruit flies like a banana.*
- *A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.*
- *Even calendar's days are numbered.*

SQUAREUP BC - NEW DANCER SURVEY

A survey of 220 new dancers was undertaken by SquareUpBC in the fall of 2015. The purpose of the survey was to learn how advertising and promotion efforts influenced people to join. Of the 220 new dancers, 92 (42%) were solo dancers. 50% of the 220 people were Baby Boomers (ages 51 to 69); 24% Silent Generation/Traditionalists (70 to 80 years), with the remaining 26% split between 20 to 50 years old.

The following are the results of the promotional elements that influenced new dancer session attendance.

- 2 - Advertisement on Facebook
- 6 - Advertisement on Google when searching
- 19 - Own search of internet
- 5 - Promotional brochure or single page flyer
- 19 - Community calendar announcement in media
- 27 - Advertisement in local newspaper
- 12 - Poster on display
- 0 - Twitter message (tweet)
- 21 - Display of dancing in the community
- 124- Friend, relative or other person recommended the dancing (52%).

B.C.'s Westsyde Squares Increase By 29 Dancers in One Year!

Westsyde Squares, central Okanagan, purchased advertising starting late August and sought free media publicity wherever possible. The club purchased display ads in one of their free local newspapers that had wide distribution. The ad was 3 columns across (about 5") by 7" tall. The first night attracted almost three squares, and resulted in 12 paid-up newcomers for 12 sessions in the West Coast Program at \$120/person. The lesson day and time was Wednesday, 6-7:30 pm (the regular club dancers came at 7:30pm).

In January, 2016 the club purchased newspaper ads again and added paid Facebook ads. Apart from the paid strategy, press releases with photos were sent to the media and every opportunity was exercised to place a community calendar event announcement on radio, TV, newspaper and online websites.

As newcomers came through the door on the first free night, some said they saw it in the paper, some said it was advertised on their Facebook page, and one woman went so far as to exclaim that "it was everywhere!"

Results: 17 dancers joined in January, for a total of 29 new dancers during the 2015-16 dance year. Most influential elements given for attending:

- Fun with partner/spouse
- Looking for fun
- Loving dancing & music
- Square danced in earlier years
- Socializing, fun, exercising
- Was away from dancing and missed it
- Social aspect
- To meet people
- No crinolines necessary

- Dijon vu - the same mustard as before.
- Shotgun wedding - a case of wife or death.
- A bicycle can't stand on it's own because it is two tired.
- She was engaged to a boyfriend with a wooden leg but broke it off.
- You feel stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.
- The man who fell into an upholstery machine is fully recovered.

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF DARKNESS - by Dee Jackins



Dee is an avid square and round dancer, and enjoys writing. She shares the lighter side of some of her experiences, challenges and near disasters as a sight impaired person.

One of the most difficult adjustments for me to achieve after I lost my sight was to face the fact that my independence was gone. No more getting behind the wheel of a vehicle, shopping on my own, etc. It was now all history. Access Calgary is a wonderful program for those of us who need or want to get around as normal as possible. After all these years of using this service, one gets to know many of the drivers and all the variations of personalities and preferences.

Some time ago before GPS was in, Access picked me up after a square dance in the north part of Calgary. I was the last one to be picked up and would be the last one to be dropped off. After the other passengers were safely driven home, I could hear the driver shuffling around some papers and seemed to be checking for my address, so I asked if he was looking at a map. After a positive answer, I offered to give him directions but he refused, saying he preferred to look it up. About five or ten minutes later we were finally on the way. We started up a conversation and time went by quickly when all of a sudden he says, "Oh no! I just missed my corner. I'll make a quick u-turn up here." After inquiring what corner he had missed, I told him that it wasn't necessary, just make a right turn at the next corner and I can direct him from there. I don't think he liked it but there was no objection so we got to my destination without any problems. (It sure made me feel good.) I thanked him and he was grateful but they do not like taking directions from passengers, especially blind women. But that's life. I should have told him I was very good at telling people where to go and how to get there, but I don't think he would have taken it the way it was meant.

Another time I flew out to the east for a National Square Dance Convention and met our good friends from the Red Deer area. We were all staying at the same hotel so we hired a van to take us all in one trip. I have a habit of offering to drive and don't really expect any reaction. I was told later that the cab driver was not impressed and he gave me a dirty look not realizing I couldn't see him. That is one perk of being blind – I haven't seen anybody give me a dirty look in over three decades. Do you think he was having a bad day??!

In the last thirty years I have managed to get behind the wheel twice. It was a great feeling, even though we were crawling at a turtles pace. It was later in the evening, in a very quiet residential area- no traffic in sight. The instructions were very simple, "To the right, to the left, left, left....good, to the right now...", and it went on and on. It reminded me of a square dancer - you had better know your right from your left or it's going to cause a problem. The other right doesn't work when you're behind the wheel. I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it and I would do it again. Anybody want to go for a drive? I'll even hang my cane out the window if it helps.

CHATTER CLOSE-UP

Our Dance Community is an interesting mix of people, each with a story to tell. If you know of someone you would like to see featured in this section, email claudia.littlefair@gmail.com and I would be happy to contact them.



Tribute to 50-Year-Dancer OLWYN (BUCK) PRESS, Calgary

Fifty years ago, in 1966, Olwyn started dancing with husband Ken Buck, at the Richmond Revellers Square Dance Club. Later the club name was shortened to Revellers and then became Prairie Winds when Revellers and Gad-A-Bouts amalgamated.

Ken and Olwyn took 3 years off when the babies came. They had two girls, Kathie and Marion, who danced with the Twirling Teens. Olwyn served as club secretary in 1980-81, 1988-89, and 1994-95 and Badge Secretary in 1979-80. She was always willing to help in activities – one being International Night. When the country chosen was Wales she was on the committee, and the only one with a Welsh name.

Ken died of cancer in 1986. She was encouraged to keep dancing at the club and she was a faithful attendee.

Ed Press joined the Revellers. There was a visit to the Cochrane club and he asked Olwyn to go with him. They found out they had grown up in the same neighborhood and had attended the same schools (only in different grades). Ed's wife had died of cancer. WELL, in 1995 they were married and have now been married for 21 years. They are still enjoying square dancing. Thanks for your contributions and company, Olwyn.

ALBERTA DANCE CONVENTION, EDMONTON September 1 - 4, 2017
Comments From The Chair - GARY & EILEEN SMITH



WOW! Alberta Convention 2017

Community Dance Capital District Association (CDCDA) and the Convention 2017 committee have plans for you! In this issue of the Alberta Chatter Newsletter, we discuss two items we believe will 'wow' you!

First: During break times in the regular dance schedule, we will be inviting the general public to come in and dance for free, and be introduced to our different dance forms. We are planning introductory sessions for square dancing, round dancing, clogging, line dance, and the many forms of community dance. Experienced dancers are welcome to join with the general public and serve as angels, good will ambassadors, or to try out dance forms that might be new to them. We will encourage clubs throughout the Province to bring brochures highlighting what they have to offer in their geographic area.

Second: The Central Lions Facility near Kingsway Mall is spacious and offers us a large number of dance venues. Our plan is to take full advantage of the facility. We will be able to provide rooms dedicated to Basic, Mainstream, Plus, A1, Singing calls, Rounds, Lines & Clogging, and Community Dance (reels, contra, etc.). Other features will be a visit to Fort Edmonton for dancing, a silent auction, theme nights, and evening snacks and entertainment for the closing ceremony Sunday night.

Mark your calendar Sept 1 – 4, 2017, for Convention 2017!! Register on line at www.communitydance.org ! More information will be coming in the next issue of Alberta Chatter Newsletter! We look forward to seeing you on the dance floor.

REGISTER FOR THE ALBERTA CONVENTION, EDMONTON, SEPTEMBER 1 -4, 2017
AT www.communitydance.org.



CONVENTION
2018



20th Canadian National
Square & Round Dance Convention
London, ON Canada
July 19, 20, 21, 2018

Square Dancing - Basic to C2, all under one roof.
Also available – Round Dancing Phase II to VI,
Contras, Lines, Seminars, and more.

Registration Information

Convention 2018
c/o Lee Cox
12 Anne Marie Cres.
Kincardine, ON N2Z 2M9
Phone – 519-396-7228

Email :
convention2018@squaredance.ca
Website :
www.squaredance.ca/2018

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