

Equality and Retention

By

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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 away for most 2001 to the present the American Callers' Association continues to relish and appreciates the positive comments, encouragement to continue, and contributions from callers and dancers 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.

This month's American Callers' Association Viewpoint discusses the social benefits of square dancers and square dancing in general. These are the benefits that all dancers can and do enjoy. Square dancers often invite people to try square dancing. The square dancer is often asked about the values and the traditions of square dancing. The "new dancer will often ask or think "Why should I become a square dancer?" "What is in it for me?" In my own experience as a dancer and caller for, I can remember many instances in which I had received such questions from friends and acquaintances. I have often strived to answer such questions about the benefits of square dancing.

One great answer is fun, friendship, and fellowship that you will experience and enjoy. We can cite the history of square dancing in what it means to people now and to people two-hundred years ago and one-hundred years ago often mentioning some of the prominent people who square danced. We often attempt to 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 life style.

If we look around at other organizations, all of these benefits are not unique to square dancing. Other social, civic and religious organizations provide many such opportunities for benefits that square dancers enjoy. At this time of the a decline in square dancing participation , I sometimes become disillusioned because I can 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 relatively early in their lesson program. 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. The answer to the question is that student dancers all share “EQUALITY” which is the most vital element in our beloved square dancing as well as is required to ensure continuation and prospering of square dancing.

When a student square dancer 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. What matters is that 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 feeling" of each new dancer having fun in the square.. If this is missing, this may be why so many people drop out of square dance classes, stop dancing right after graduation, and are lost to the square dance community. Perhaps, it is a reason why square dancing is in decline. Perhaps, the various dance programs/levels drive new dancers away because the EQUALITY among square dancers is absent. Perhaps, we have taken EQUALITY away from dancers after they graduate from classes by our more difficult dance programs.

The American Callers' Association recognizes that the long period of current lesson program equate to earning a Masters of Business Administration from a university. The American Callers' Association has an international one-floor program can be taught in as little as 16 weeks Perhaps the American Callers' Association international one-floor could be improved by reducing it to as little as 60 calls. The reason for this is that there appears to be a limit around 60 calls that some student dancers can absorb. After that square dancing becomes too stressful resulting in these good people dropping out of

lessons or leaving right after lessons. Perhaps reducing stress on the new dancers and eliminating the “INEQUALITY” of square dancers might reduce the number of new dancers leaving square dancing if we return to the central uniting bond of square dancing which is “EQUALITY”. The bottom line is that if we as callers, dancers and leaders take away “EQUALITY”, it seriously damages square dancing. All square dancers should be able to feel the “EQUALITY” of square dancing, as “EQUALITY” will help square dancing grow and prosper.

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 Patrick Demerath at dpemerath@troy.edu. Please visit the American Callers’ Association Website and Newsletters at [American Callers.com](http://AmericanCallers.com). Read about the International One-Floor Program.

Until next time, Happy Dancing.