

ACA Fair and Balanced

By

Patrick Demerath

The American Callers' Association in its attempt to be of service to all callers, dancers, and associations has provided current, timely, and effective information on new dancer recruitment, winning ways to retain club dancers, and pitfalls that drive square dancers away. ACA really appreciates the positive comments, encouragement to continue, and contributions from callers and dancers all over North America and 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 encourage the dancers to speak out on the cumbersome dance programs.

This article addresses offers a difference of opinion on the April ACA Article Pride in Ownership and Participation by Charlie Holley in Montgomery, Alabama. Charlie encouraged people to take more of an active participation in their square dance associations and clubs.

Charlie believes that there is a very serious decline in the number of people who will serve and /or hold office in clubs and associations. Square dancers are failing to realize that when they belong to a square dance club or association that they also hold an ownership interest in that organization including the building, land, equipment, good will etc.

Recently I was contacted by Ms. Nancy Balogg from Delaware disagreeing with some of Charlie Holley's viewpoints. On the subject of people not wanting to serve square dance clubs and associations, Nancy asks "Who are they?", meaning the ones who are not recognized. She states that she and many others she knows, have done much for square dance groups but most do not expect recognition. Nancy argues that most people who take offices because no one else will, often don't do a

good job. Nancy advocates that the best officers, who do take the job because they get a lot out of dancing and it gives them pleasure to help other people get the same benefit. They do it because they like people and they like dancing. Just getting a name/body to fill a slot doesn't help. Nancy further states that we must remember that the problems in square dancing aren't unique to square dancing as many groups nationwide are having similar problems because our country has become a nation of "nesters" instead of a nation of "doers."

On the dance program saturation point, Nancy agrees that the introduction to dancing needs to be shorter, but disagrees that the national dance program should be shortened considerably with only one program nationally. Nancy states that she and her husband dance on every program through A2, and there are unique advantages to the advanced programs. One advantage as she describes it that at times she comes off a mainstream or plus dance with a sore shoulder or elbow from the vigorous enthusiasm rough dancing and jerking of dancers in Mainstream and Plus Programs. She further states that this never happens in A2, where dancers' brains are challenged as much as their bodies and the jerking. Nancy offers interesting comments that advanced dancers can, dance their partner's role (ladies as left-hand dancers, men as right-hand) for an additional mental challenge. Nevertheless she argues that in most areas of the country, the most reliable way to get an additional mental challenge is to move up a program or two. In addition, Nancy believes that many people will quickly lose interest if they are limited to a minimum number of calls, unless their club has a dynamic social organization in addition to the dancing.

The American Callers' Association is relatively neutral on why some people take offices of management in square dancing and others do not as these are personal decisions made by dancers. On the other hand, the American Callers' Association agrees that rough dancing is caused by bored dancers. The idea that advanced or higher level programs eliminate the rough dancing may not be accurate as much as an accident. It may be more accurate to associate the rough dancing with two separate elements: boredom with the calls as they are presented in the same methodological repetitions which soon become unconsciously memorized and rough and rowdy dancing surfaces. Perhaps, it might be argued that some callers' feed off of rough and rowdy dancing as "enthusiasm" it

rather than discouraging it. The second element may be that dancers associations, club officers do not address this problem and attempt to minimize. This problem of rough dancing may contribute more dancers leaving square dancing. Remember that when dancers quit square dancing, we not only lose them as dancers but we also lose any new people that they might have recruited. The elimination of rough and rowdy dancing might be best addressed by callers, all Callers' Associations, United Square Dancers of America and all state and local square dancing associations.

The American Callers' Association would like to thank Nancy Balogh for taking the time to present her views and is pleased to present them to the square dance community to let them decide. Any individual, club, caller, or association who wishes to communicate his/her opinions on this subject is encouraged to contact the American Callers' Association Loulet@aol.com or Dr. Patrick Demerath at pdemerath@troy.edu. Please visit our website and newsletters @American Callers.com/news. Next time, happy dancing.