



# American Caller's Association

P.O. Box 2406

Muscle Shoals AL. 35662

PH 256-383-7585- Fax 256-383-7583 Email Mac @americancallers.com

## April 2006 Newsletter

### Program Problems and Dancer Solutions

By

Patrick J. Demerath

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 of 2001- 2005. WE really appreciate the positive comments, encouragement to continue, and contributions from callers and dancers all over the country and from abroad to continue these initiatives. American Callers will continue to provide information that will help the square dance community recruit, retain and retrieve square dancers as well as encourage dancers to speak out on the cumbersome dance programs.

This month's Viewpoint discusses the thoughts of caller Ben Goldberg on the decline of square dancing. Ben believes that the decline in the number of square dancers is due to the existence of segregating programs and too many calls for the new dancers to learn, which results in new dancers leaving the activity. Another result is that "potential" new dancers decline invitations to attend a student open house, or they attend one open house and have a good time, then learn of the requirements and never return. This bombshell hits the students square in the teeth. Lessons last almost a full year! The one year commitment is too much for a potential new dancer to continue, and they drop out of the square dance lessons.

Ben further states that the formal dance programs have caused square dancing to create splinter groups, which segregate the dancers and shrink the size of dances. Ben states that he believes that the American Callers International One-Floor program may wake up the square dancing community and unite the vast majority of dancers into dancing together. He sums it up in a very interesting way by looking at how square dancing existed 30 years ago: "FEW CALLS/LOTS OF DANCERS; MANY CALLS/FEWER DANCERS AND FINALLY MANY PROGRAMS/TOO FEW DANCERS IN ANY ONE PROGRAM. TODAY THE VAST MAJORITY OF DANCERS WILL ENJOY THE INTERNATIONAL"ONE-FLOOR PROGRAM."

Ben argues that the shorter the lesson and dance program and the shorter the learning curve the sooner the new dancers are assimilated willingly into square dancing “THE MORE DANCERS, THE LARGER THE ACTIVITY. THE LARGER THE ACTIVITY, THE MORE FUN WHICH LEADS TO MORE DANCERS ALL OVER AGAIN.” Ben also argues that callers themselves and national, state, and local callers’ associations must simplify and shorten the number of calls and the number of lessons

Marketing research on demographic age groups clearly show that members of the younger Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y will not commit to square dance lessons much past three to four months of one night a week. In higher education, colleges and universities are learning that adult students will commit to a college degree if they are presented shorter terms than the typical 16 week classes. They prefer courses that are 7-8 weeks and are one night a week. Colleges and universities who offer accelerated courses are prospering in revenues and the number of students.

When the programs are cut and paired down to as few as three to four months of lessons, callers will have to also adapt by taking off their blinders and become more skilled and creative in their calling because the more calls the less creative are the callers’ dances. This is the same in marketing theory when one looks at the differences between Market Skimming and Market Penetration. Ben continues and states that still today it is argued that the current programs are fine. Ben argues that they are about as useful and contributory to the success of square dancing as the Great Pyramids of Egypt are useful for low rent housing for the poor in Egypt.

The American Callers’ Association is currently working on reducing its program to allow for more dancers to successfully complete the lessons and stay in square dancing after graduation. The American Caller’s Association is willing to work with all national, state and local caller associations to develop a simplified one-floor dance program.

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 [mac@americancallers.com](mailto:mac@americancallers.com)  
Or Dr. Patrick Demerath at [pdemerath@troy.edu](mailto:pdemerath@troy.edu).

### **Work Committee**

Paul Marcum & Tom Davis have not completed their work committee on the “One Floor Program” Their suggested changes will be in the next newsletter. I spoke with Tom Davis a few days ago he and Paul are working to come up with changes that everyone can agree on. I think we must realize that if we expect to get people to become a part of square dancing today. We will have to offer something besides what we are trying to sell now. They don’t have time for long programs.

## **Certified Caller/Instructor**

This program was developed by Henry Israel of American Callers so that a caller that wanted to be certified could be.

American Callers Association does not require its members to be certified however, certification is provided for those who meet the criteria. Many school systems require certification to teach in their system and it certainly is an important entry in your resume when trying to book caller/teacher seminars. This certification will remain in effect as long as caller/instructor is a member in good standing of American Callers. There is a one time fee of \$25.00 for certification.

We have a number of callers that have become certified and are carrying membership cards showing that they are certified. When your membership cards were mailed back to you with this years renewal we included a copy of the application for the (cci) program. Should you have questions about this program, please call the office.

### **Letter to the Editor**

Conrad Lloyd of Utah suggested that we have this in every newsletter so that members could write and ask for answers to questions and get help with problems that they are not sure how to resolve. I know that we have members that can offer help and have experienced the same problem.

The problem we will deal with this time is one that we have all experienced at one time or the other. We have a new class member that is slow and has trouble remembering the calls from one week to the next and has a problem of being able to keep up.

We should remind the dancers that are helping with the class that someone had to help us when we started. Now, it's our time to return that help. That's why we are called ANGELS

So many times dancers will avoid slow dancers to the point that they will drop out of a class or out of square dancing. Had we the caller and the dancer been a little more concerned and tried to help we may have kept them.

Finally, we must realize that square dancing is NOT FOR EVERYONE. There are some people that just cannot learn to square dance. When we have done everything we can to help then we must say to them, "before someone else hurts your feeling please let me be the one to tell you that we do not think you will be able to complete this class." This is not a easy thing to do but, it must be done for the good of all. If you try to keep the ones that cannot learn you will loose all of the class.

### **NEW ON THE WEB PAGE**

We are going to post each month on the web page choreography written by members of American Callers on the ONE FLOOR PROGRAM. This choreography will be FREE to anyone that wants to download it. That means any caller members or non-members FREE.

Since there are no longer caller note services available that I know of this will give a caller a place to go for choreography. Caller members that do not have internet service we will mail to only if they request the notes.

The thinking behind this is that those callers that have been bad mouthing the ONE FLOOR PROGRAM and have not tried it will have a chance to see that this is what they have been calling all along and didn't know what the program was.

If you would like to write a couple pages to post on the web page, it must be done with calls from the ONE FLOOR PROGRAM and emailed or hard mailed to the American Callers office. We are only going to post two pages a month. Your name will be listed on the web page with your choreography.

### **Special Thanks**

To John & Linda Saunders for all the hard work time and effort they put in to John's Note service that they provided for so many years. To all note services that have been there for the callers for so many years. None of them made any money at this, but they enjoyed helping other callers. To all we say THANKS. I think what I will miss the most is John's Comments each month.

### **REMEMBERING**

We have lost so many good men since the last newsletter. All of the men listed below did so much for the square dance activity and will be missed. On behalf of all the members of American Callers and the many dancers from all over America that have danced with these great callers we extend to the familys our deepest sympathy.

Sonny Cook	La Grange, GA.
Joe Fioretti	Homosassa, FL
Danny Robinson	Winter Park, FL
Paul Johnston	South Park, PA

Please remember these familys in your prayers .We also have members that are battling cancer that need our prayers. Remember our TROOPS.

**Zero Lines:**

PASS THRU--TAG the LINE RIGHT  
COUPLES CIRCULATE--BOYS TRADE  
COUPLES CIRCULATE--GIRLS TRADE  
CENTERS TRADE-- BEND the LINE  
STAR THRU--DOUBLE PASS THRU  
CLOVERLEAF-- CENTERS PASS THRU  
SWING THRU--TURN THRU-- ALLEMANDE LEFT

**Zero Lines:**

PASS THRU--1/2 TAG the LINE--GIRLS TRADE  
BOYS TRADE--CENTERS TRADE--WALK & DODGE  
PARTNER TRADE--(zero lines) RIGHT & LEFT THRU  
PASS THRU--TAG the LINE-- CENTERS IN  
CAST OFF 3/4--STAR THRU--ALLEMANDE LEFT

**Zero Lines:**

PASS THRU--TAG the LINE-- BOYS RUN  
CENTERS WALK & DODGE--ALL BOYS PASS THRU  
CENTERS TRADE & U TURN BACK then WALK & DODGE  
All CLOVERLEAF-- CENTERS SWING THRU & TURN THRU  
ALLEMANDE LEFT

**Zero Line:**

PASS THRU--WHEEL & DEAL--DOUBLE PASS THRU  
CENTERS IN--CAST OFF 3/4--PASS THRU  
WHEEL & DEAL--ZOOM--BOYS PARTNER TRADE  
STAR THRU--BOYS CIRCULATE--GIRLS TRADE  
FERRIS WHEEL--ZOOM--CENTERS PARTNER TRADE  
PASS TO THE CENTER--TOUCH 1/4-- BOX CIRCULATE  
TWICE--ALLEMANDE LEFT

**Zero Lines:**

RIGHT & LEFT THRU--PASS THE OCEAN  
ALL 8 CIRCULATE--GIRLS RUN--BEND LINE  
SQUARE THRU--TRADE BY--RIGHT & LEFT GRAND

**Zero Lines:**

CENTERS SQUARE THRU--ENDS TOUCH 1/4  
GIRLS RUN-- RIGHT & LEFT GRAND

**Zero Box**

SWING THRU--BOYS RUN  
TAG the LINE LEFT  
COUPLES CIRCULATE  
BEND the LINE--PASS THRU  
WHEEL & DEAL--SQ THRU 3/4  
LEFT ALLEMANDE

**Zero Box**

SWING THRU-- BOYS RUN  
TAG the LINE LEFT--  
COUPLES CIRCULATE--BOYS TRADE  
BEND LINE--STAR THRU,,PASS THRU  
TRADE BY--ALLEMANDE LEFT

**Zero Box**

SWING THRU--BOYS RUN  
TAG the LINE LEFT  
BOYS CIRCULATE--BOYS TRADE  
FERRIS WHEEL--RIGHT & LEFT THRU  
PASS THRU--STEP TO A WAVE  
GIRLS RUN--WHEEL & DEAL  
RIGHT & LEFT GRAND

**Zero Line:**

PASS THE OCEAN--GIRLS TRADE  
RECYCLE--VEER LEFT  
COUPLES CIRCULATE  
TAG THE LINE LEFT  
COUPLES CIRCULATE  
WHEEL & DEAL--SQ THRU 3/4  
ALLEMANDE LEFT

**Zero Lines:**

PASS THE OCEAN--BOYS CIRCULATE  
GIRLS TRADE--GIRLS RUN  
TAG THE LINE RIGHT  
COUPLES CIRCULATE  
TAG LINE LEFT--BOYS CIRCULATE  
COUPLES CIRCULATE--BOYS TRADE  
WHEEL & DEAL SWEP 1/4  
STAR THRU--PASS THRU--ALLE LEFT

**Contra Page:** Keeping in mind that you can get into a raucous struggle over who, in history, "really" did what, and when, I will venture the following. The ancestors of contra dancing are the English longways dances of the 18th Century. The ancestors of square dancing are the French quadrilles of the same general period. Then I will add the obvious, that over time, things change - and - they stay the same - and - they get all mixed up together. That said, I want to use this April issue to look at today's *quadrille*, and do so through a lens that sees the quadrille as **"a square dance with contra timing"**.

Don't sell the quadrille short. Don't give up on it too quickly. If nothing else, it is a way to re-enter the world of traditional and history making dancing that exploded into a nationwide square dance movement after World War II. Here is a strange bit of truth. If you wanted to get a square dance movement going in the thirties you read books! New Englanders Beth Tolman & Ralph Page put together The Country Dance Book. The authors don't get to dances until chapter IV but when they do it is titled "Some Ouedrilles & Other Squares". Then, of course, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford gave us "Good Morning", and woke up a whole nation of interested dancers. The first figure in their book is the "Standard Club Ouedrille". My copy of Lloyd Shaw's remarkable "Cowboy Dances" is the 13th Edition and dated 1952 but the 1st edition is 1939. In discussing the probable sources of American square dancing he starts with... you guessed it ... the New England Quadrille.

Even so, here is an interesting point. Looking at the quadrille and its history is not the same thing as looking at the American square dance. Not quite. In looking for the roots of square dancing Shaw bows respectfully to the quadrille but he puts his real money, not on the French or the British, but on an indigenous American dance, the Kentucky Running Set. This is exciting news, and a good tale for another day.

Square dancing is a uniquely American invention.

#### QUEEN'S QUADRILLE Four couples in a square

- \* hd cpls rt & lft thru
  - \* same ladies chain
  - \* sd cpls rt & lft thru
  - \* same ladies chain
  - \* all circle 1ft, half
  - \* swmgcorners
  - \*\* promenade full (16)
- If a quadrille is a square that behaves like a contra, then the key to the dance is not in the figure, it is in the timing. The trick is to let yourself be bound by, limited by, the restraints of the music. Oddly enough, this can mean that the number of counts to complete a figure can vary. For this dance I use an "alamo" break (below) in which the allemande left and the hand turns are not "precise". There is a small bit of smooth fudging going on to fit the choreo into the phrasing.

About the break. The dance is finished when you have completed four repeats of the figure. Now, you can dance it that way if you want to, but for me that is too short. I add breaks: beginning, middle, end. That raises 4 x 64 counts to 7 x 64 counts and, of course, it fits a lot of music that way.

In my choreo mind, a "rectangular" figure should have a "circular" break. An "old fashioned" alamo-style balance is interesting. All the hand turns and balances are hands up for everyone, all the time. Use a full 8-count (floating) allemande left to get into the wave. This puts the first balance at the top, or start, of a phrase (1,2,3,4) and puts the hand-turn on the back half (cnts 5,6,7,8). The balance itself really ought to be a two-step balance in 8 half-counts (fwd, change-wt, nold/ back, change-wt, hold) rather than a step-touch. Then, turn ptrn rt, 3/4 (6?), al lft cnr (6?), *prom* ptrn (8), all blended nicely.

Music? I like what happens with Stony Creek, Crown CRC-131. It's the "Western" in me. Be experimental about tempo. *Try* 43 rpm. Be careful at the start. There is an 8-count lead in. And don't forget the nice 8-count tag at the end, "Everybody go forward and back!"