A Message from the Board

Hi everybody! We had a couple of fun dances in July, with Phil Farmer filling in for Andy Alemao who was unable to call for us, and then with Rod Shuping calling for our “Novelty T-Shirts” dance – and for that one, some fun shirts showed up on the dance floor:

Coming up: we have Larry Davenport and Don Schadt calling for us in August. With our class on hiatus, you’ll want to be sure to come out for those dances, and you also might want to check out what other clubs are doing over the summer, at wheresthedance.com.

And finally, our country is celebrating its 250th birthday, and we’re hearing a lot about our nation’s history, so for my turn at writing the monthly newsletter message I thought it might be interesting to revisit a little about the history of square dancing. There are lots of ideas about where square dancing came from and what it is, but for me, personally, I found the most helpful explanations at a couple of websites, and am sharing their information on page two…

Cheers, ‘happy summer, and see you in a square soon,

Susan Collins
Club secretary

The following quote is from The Optimist Daily https://www.optimistdaily.com/2022/08/the-history-of-square-dancing-in-america-part-i-of-true-american/ :

> "Observing today's headlines, the current state of the United States of America feels especially divided. However, this is not the first time the nation has struggled with questions of identity. In the late 1800s…a surge in immigrants of Irish, Italian, Slavic, Polish, and Jewish heritage (not to mention the Chinese who arrived to help build the Western US) rushed to the American continent to seek their fortunes. Earlier immigrants … whose heritage could be traced to Britain, Scandinavia and Germany saw these newcomers as different and pushed back against their presence. In the rhetoric of the day, there was simply no way these newbies were 'American' enough (whatever that means)….This divide sparked a national conversation about who was really 'American'."

'Sound familiar? So what does this have to do with square dancing?
Well, historically, it turns out that square dancing was used as a mechanism for cultural erasure and assimilation. In the early 20th century, there were some people, including prominent figures like industrialist Henry Ford and music educator Cecil Sharp, who felt threatened by what they thought were "un-American" cultural influences (in Ford's case, he was particularly suspicious of Jazz music, which to Ford was some sort of "Jewish conspiracy.") They saw square dancing as quintessentially Anglo-(i.e., white)-American – never mind that it grew out of various European dance forms. Promoters were either ignorant of such things, or chose to ignore them, as they vigorously advertised square dancing through books and events, and eventually introduced it in schools throughout the country. After multiple attempts, square dancing was declared by Congress to be the *national* dance.
But there was considerable push-back.

> "Dance historians, music historians, and folklorists argued in front of Congress that the square dance fails to capture the fullness of our nation's dance traditions for a country made up of diverse immigrants.
> That the square dance, a tradition that prioritized and elevated the dances that hail from certain Northern European regions, was commemorated as the national folk dance of the entire country was seen as denigrating to other traditions that were arguably as essential to the American experience."

The congressional designation was allowed to expire in 1983. And the square dance boom has been dwindling ever since. "In short, the overall feeling around square dancing in the 80s was that it was a divisive tradition that excluded many Americans from the American Identity and symbolizes a painful history in America."

So what's next?
Dancers love square dancing, regardless of its challenging history. That it has been mis-used in the past is beyond dispute. But the dance community can choose to move forward while still honestly acknowledging the past. Today, people who love square dancing choose instead to promote it *because it is a way to bring people together*.

From https://www.optimistdaily.com/2022/08/the-square-dancers-of-today-part-ii-of-true-american-a-mini-series/ :

> "Now, square dancers aren't concerned with enshrining square dancing as a national symbol of white culture—instead, they are working to make square dancing an inclusive activity that invites everyone…."
> "According to Dana Schirmer, the former president of Caller Lab, square dancing is about being open and working as a team, no matter who you're dancing with.
> 'What makes it unique to us, when you hear the music, the first time you step in there and touch hands, the magic just goes right through your hands and you just feel the warmth and the friendliness of all the people in the group with you.' "

As Maya Angelou so aptly put it: "You can't really know where you're going until you know where you have been."

(p.s.: I highly recommend reading the referenced webpages in their entirety.)

Social event: a trip to the art museum!

A group of Sets in Step & friends went on another fun adventure on July 14th, traveling via the LA Metro's "B" and "D" lines to spend the morning at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), followed by lunch at the Myers Manx restaurant.

attendees: Yukie and Gary Shirtcliff, Ileana and Will Shaw, Leasa and Russ Sugimura, Joann LeMay, Lakshmi deSilva, and Susan Collins

Upcoming Dances

Date	Caller	Theme (for party dances)	Refreshments (party dances)
AUG 7	Larry Davenport (note change in caller: this was originally Dale Hoppers)		
AUG 21	Don Schadt	Aloha Night	sweet: Yukie salty: Gary fruit: Jinger
SEPT 4	Bill Gipson		
SEPT 18	Phil Farmer	Baseball Fever	sweet: Bob salty: Carol fruit: Sandy

OCT 2	Paul Waters		
OCT 16	Rick Manning	Guys N Ghouls	sweet: Susan salty: Stam fruit: Marie
NOV 6	Mike Seastrom		
NOV 20	Mike Haworth	Turkey Trot	sweet: Connie salty: Karyn fruit: Don
DEC 4	Shauna Kaaria		
DEC 18	Michael Kellogg	Holiday Joy	Food will be provided by club members. Our party chair will have signups ahead of time.

Class is on vacation in July and August…

…but it's not too soon to start spreading the word about our upcoming classes in the Fall!

We will again be hosting two classes every Tuesday night, **starting on September 8th**. The first 45 minutes of each night will be for people who graduated previous SSD classes, and want to learn the Plus calls. Then from 7:45 – 9:30 we'll have a class for brand new dancers! So if you know anyone might be interested, tell them this September is their chance… and to encourage newcomers, the first two classes (9/8 and 9/15) are FREE for new students.

A reminder that starting in September, we will no longer be using the acronym "SSD" (Social Square Dance) – instead, Callerlab has suggested that all clubs and classes return to using **"Mainstream"** (which now includes most of the calls that used to be SSD, and a few more), and **"Plus"** which includes all the former Plus calls, and a few that formerly were A1 calls. Note that all the calls in the Callerlab Mainstream and Plus programs are listed in your 2026-27 Sets in Step club directories.

You'll definitely want to come to the Plus class that starts on September 8th, to get more practice with these new calls. And then stay to be an Angel!

to Al and Molly York
on August 6th

Reminder: The August Board Meeting will be on Wednesday, Aug. 5th, 7:00 PM via Zoom. The minutes of the July meeting, along with the Zoom info, will be emailed ahead of time.

A correction to the Sets in Step 2026-27 directory:

Under the “Former Members” section, on page 8, Connie Yeseta’s address was incorrectly listed. Please make the following correction in your copy of the directory:

Connie Yeseta
Astoria Park Senior Living, Apt. 161
925 E. Villa Street
Pasadena, CA 91106