

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GAY SQUARE DANCE CLUBS

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September 7, 1989

Life has settled down a bit over the past two months since Peel the Apple. I know I peeled the apple right down to the core and loved every morsel of it! How about you?

Now the work of the year is starting to heat up. It's time to start new classes and new clubs--to bring new members (soon to be new friends) into the activity we all love so much. It's also time to get busy with the work of the Association. Financially the IAGSDC is doing well. Our newly opened bank account stands at around \$3000. We ought to be able to do a lot of advertising, promotions and the like with that much money. If there are major square dance publications in your area that the Association is not advertising in please let Karl Jaeckel know so he can consider increasing our publicity.

The IAGSDC Newsletter is a communication medium, that, if used effectively, can be an instrument to foster an exchange of ideas and promote oneness in diversity--a sense of connection to an organization larger than each of the groups we belong to. I hope the newsletter can be used to enrich our square dancing experience and build our sense of community. It was clear at the Executive Board Meeting in New York that one of the primary things the delegates were looking for from the Association was communication. For my part I will send you all the Association news you'd ever want to read about. But the Newsletter cannot begin and end there! Your input to this newsletter is key to its effectiveness. Let me hear from you. The deadline for articles for the next newsletter is November 1. Thanks.

Marilyn Martinyak

Luis Torres to Capture Our "Ten Years in the Making"

Luis Torres (Chesapeake Squares) has sent the IAGSDC officers a proposal to write a history of gay square dancing for our 10th convention in Seattle. It sounds like an exciting and challenging undertaking. Your Association officers have warmly endorsed the proposal, given Luis verbal backing to begin gathering historical events and stories and, most of all, capture the people involved in our founding years. **You can help make**

this happen! Begin sending him your favorite square dance stories. Anyone who is experienced in publishing or has good contacts in the field please let Luis know as well. Luis believes it would be nice to have several options, so we can chose the most advantageous.

Send stories and contact information to: Luis Torres
9757 Early Spring Way
Columbia, MD 21046

Each submission should include a statement along the following lines:

I, _____, authorize the IAGSDC and/or its representatives to publish this material. I authorize them to use my name in connection with the story if that appears necessary Yes ____/No _____. I prefer to be mentioned only by first name and last initial _____.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

In Search of the IAGSDC Banners

Where are you hiding these days? Three of you exist but only one is "out of the closet" (showing its face in San Francisco, of course). You are desperately needed in far away places where you will be able to welcome hundreds of gay and lesbian dancers to fly-ins and banner dances through out the year. So please come out of hiding and show your rainbow colors to your local member club. They'll let me know where you are so you can start your coast to coast travels.

Marilyn Martinyak

Letter of Thanks from Mama Pearl

(For those of you not at Peel the Apple, Mama Pearl escorted her son, who was a contestant in the Honky Tonk Queen contest, to a standing ovation.)

Hello All!

Thank you, Thank you! *THANK YOU!* for allowing me to be a part of your spectacular IAGSDC Convention. Yes, I "Peeled The Apple" and oh! oh! such a wonderful new way of knowing another side of our Gay family. I shall never forget the happiness and love that I felt throughout the entire event. A positive showing of the true life of Gays and Lesbians was sent out to all people who came in contact with the group along the way. I'm so proud to be a special mother of a special person. Since the world wishes to say there are such a few of you, what can one say except you are special people. The smiles you put on the faces of the people of New York on the fun badge tour made an important statement to the world!

You have touched my life with true love, care, riches and glory far beyond the pain and disappointments that one has in one's life time.

Thank you and keep on dancing!

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Martha Weyand".

Martha Weyand
"Mama Pearl"

Networking by Newsletter

I would like there to be a regular column in every IAGSDC newsletter that would act as a forum to share ideas on a variety of topics of interest to our member organizations. The areas 'discussed' can be related to solving problems that cross club borders; asking for input/ideas from other groups in a particular area; unique successful activities, events or procedures that you think would be helpful to other clubs; summaries of information from special interest groups in the Association (e.g. Woman's Newsletter, Gay Caller's Association Newsletter, etc.) so that we all know what is going on through out the Association; and words of wisdom about square dancing. These are only a few possible topics. I'm sure you can think of others. Several newsletters from Squares Across the Border (and one from Foggy City reiterating their theme) as well as a new publication from Western Star Dancers called Quarterly Selections have proposed specific issues for this forum: replace banner stealing with mascot stealing (an open issue from the 1989 IAGSDC board meeting), dealing with scheduling conflicts with neighboring clubs, how to run a square dance club, what constitutes a good square dancer, and level jumping at conventions. I'm sure other member organizations have other items that would be appropriated as well. I invite all of you to put out your ideas/proposals/words of wisdom/questions for our November 15th newsletter (deadline to reach me is November 1). Send them to:

Marilyn Martinyak
7148 Bark Lane
San Jose, CA 95129

(Articles from past club newsletters are welcome as well as new articles.)

Convention Update

Peel the Apple had about 650 wildly enthusiastic attendees. Many people have asked about the financial results, knowing that the hotel room night count was critical to determining the final bill the Convention Committee would owe the hotel. While the final count of the number of room nights was not sufficient to avoid a substantial bill from the hotel for ballroom rental, fortunately the Convention Committee believes it can meet its financial obligations. Thanks to those of you who decided to attend after hearing about their plight or contributed in some other way to try to reduce the burden on the New York convention.

Well, its on to Vancouver in a short 8 months! I'm excited to think about going to Canada. This is what being international is all about! More information and a registration form are attached.

IAGSDC Meeting Minutes

Thanks, Tom Tripp for preparing the 1989 Executive Board and General Meeting Minutes for this newsletter. They are attached to this newsletter.

Excerpts from an Article Submitted to the Advocate by Luis Torres

I first encountered gay square dancing when I attended the 1982 National Gay Reno Rodeo, where a demonstration by San Francisco's Foggy

City Squares was part of the program. I had been involved in folk dancing for years, but this was the first time I had seen "my people" doing the kind of dancing that I enjoyed....

Earlier this year, I responded to a note I saw in one of the local gay papers telling about a similar group in Baltimore, the Chesapeake Squares (founded with the help of the D.C. group). I got in touch with the group, and picked up on my gay square dancing again by joining their "mainstream" class....

That's how I happened to be in New York over the 4th of July weekend participating in this year's convention of the International Association of Gay Square Dance Clubs. How things had changed in the gay square dance world since my last contact with it! The convention was being held at the Sheraton Center, one of the large hotels in the center of Manhattan.

The four days that followed were, without doubt, the most pleasurable and exciting block of time I've spent in my half a century of life. Here were some 650 gay men and women representing 30 square dance clubs, 27 states, 3 Canadian provinces, and one foreign country (an American living in Mexico City was in attendance!), gathered together to do what they love best: to have fun, dance until exhaustion sets in and revel in each other's company.

The program contained almost continuous dancing from 8 or 9 a.m. until around midnight, with the promise that beyond midnight, as long as there were dancers on the floor ready to dance, there would be callers to call for them.

The polymorphously perverse tastes of our community were catered to alongside. For the drag set, there was the tasteful tastelessness of the "1989 Honky Tonk Queen Contest," hosted by San Francisco's Sybil and Miss Wella Balsam from Vancouver. Sybil, appearing in a Bette Middler-style mermaid dress whose fishtail required her to walk with tiny side-to-side steps, kept the audience in stitches with her bitchy wit. For the leather-and-chains set there was an "Ad-Hoc Leather Tip" (a "tip" is a set of 2 dances), which got the boys so worked up that they ran from one ballroom to the other "invading" the dancing going on in each. Finally for those of us with more sedate tastes, there were special performances by

demonstration teams from various clubs, led-off by a crackerjack performance by the Foggy City Dancers in sharp black and red outfits.

Fun is a great part of the gay square dance world, but it's the people in it that make it special. In an effort to discover what awakens such enthusiasm in our dancers, I talked to many of them about their experiences. There's an old saying that "square dancing is friendship set to music," and, although the saying is a bit corny, gay square dancers generally agree that their clubs provide an arena where gay men and women can meet without the sexual tension, the alcohol, and the cigarette smoke that fills the bars.

There are some very important straight people, both men and women, involved in gay square dancing, namely the callers who call for local groups, for fly-ins, and for conventions. Mike DeSisto from Seattle and John Preston from southern California where without a doubt two of the most popular callers at the New York convention.

Straight callers like these two, aside from overcoming whatever prejudices they may have had originally against gays, put their business on the line where they become involved. Straight groups have been known to tell their callers "if you call for them, you can't call for us." Significantly, however, gay square dancers have been able to attract some of the best callers in the business. These callers' popularity has allowed them to reply: "Sorry you feel that way, but if you don't reconsider, you've just lost me as a caller."

Mike and John agree that gay square dancing separates the average caller from the superior one. For one thing there are a few "technical" differences. In gay square dancing, most visual clues fly out the window. Sex differences are not a big help: your square may be all male, and where there are women in it, they may be dancing the man's part. With a wonder of understatement, John says: "Among gay square dancers the dress code is more relaxed!"

Why do they get involved? John Preston says, "The unbelievable amount of energy, and the unbelievable amount of warmth that I get back from it, makes me feel so good that I am at the point where I'll juggle my schedule if they want me to do something for them." To this Mike adds that he came to gay square dancing at a low point in his life, right after a

divorce. "I was a real bastard," he says. "I didn't like anybody very much. But again, the warmth, love, and energy I got from my gay squares made me a better person than I ever was. I'll cancel any engagement to call for a gay group, and I'll book for them as far in advance as they want it. Not only that, but I'm working on a plan so that when I die, I can send taped calls back from the other side, so I can stay involved!"

It's fun, its enjoyable. And when you see Winston (remember Winston: black, thin, and 6'3+?) dancing the girls part and being partnered with Jessie L., who stands 4'11" when she stretches, you can believe that everything good is possible in gay square dancing.

Luis Torres
Chesapeake Squares

(Excerpts printed with permission from Luis Torres. Unfortunately, Luis' article was not accepted for publication in the Advocate. Thanks, Luis, for your fine article on behalf of gay square dancing.)

CallerLab Accreditation for Bob Bellville, Western Star Dancers and Gay Caller's Association

Before a large gathering of his Western Star Dancers friends, students, and supporters, Bob Bellville was presented with the Certificate of Accreditation from Callerlab on August 9, 1989. WSD's Plus class that evening was dedicated to recognition of his accomplishment.

Bill Hanzel, a caller who is a former president of the Northern California Callers' Association and instructor for about three years for Western Star Dancers, made a surprise appearance just to make the presentation to Bob. Bill explained that the process of accreditation requires the acknowledgment and support of accredited callers who can vouch for a person's ability to teach, hold a class together, produce competent dancers, and conduct hoedowns. He stated that "while some signatures are easy to get," he knew that, in Bob's case, the signatures on

his application were from quality callers. Bill was invited to do a guest tip after the presentation, while Bob danced with his roommate and dear friend, Chris Anderson.

It was just three years earlier, in July, 1986, that Bob was elected into the Northern California Callers' Association as a full caller--moving from an apprentice status. During the presentation ceremony, it was noted that this accomplishment had national significance to the gay community in that Bob's admission marked the first time that an openly gay person had gone through this process. Claire Meisel, who had supported Bob by faithfully attending the caller meetings as his taw, attended the presentation and was acknowledged for her contributions.

The evening's festivities were a surprise to Bob with so many of his long-time WSD fellow members present for the class just to show appreciation for his work. His biggest surprise was Bill Hanzel's presence, as Bill has been a supporter of Bob from the beginning of Bob's application for membership into the Northern California association. Bill and his wife, Janice, have been long-time supporters of the gay community. Janice for many years has worked with the Barbary Coast Cloggers in instruction and choreography.

Much commotion ensued during breaks between tips as members and friends enjoyed punch and cookies. A good time was had by all. (Just had to get that line in there, for all those small-town reporters out there.)

The Certificate of Accreditation from Callerlab is signed by John Kaltenthaler, who has been the organization's executive secretary since 1976. Mr. Kaltenthaler was one of the featured callers for "Peel the Apple," the Sixth Annual Convention of the International Association of Gay Square Dance Clubs, held in New York City in July, 1989.

Freeman Stamper
Western Star Dancers

Calendar of Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Event</u>
September		

9-10	Sequoia Ocean Waves	Drive-in Dance
15-17	Chi Town Squares	Cross Fire Fly-in
October		
13-15	The Wilde Bunch	Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta with Banner Dance
20-22	Western Star Dancers	Camp Cazadero Retreat
November		
11	El Camino Reelers	4th Anniversary Dance

(I know there must be many, many more events out there that you would like advertised in the IAGSDC newsletter. In particular I need information about events east of the Rockies. Please let me know what they are. Next newsletter will cover events from November 15 to February 1. Deadline for information to reach me is November 1. If you send me a copy of your newsletter for November I will search through it for calendar events.)

IGGY Needs Your Financial Support

IGGY is an official publication of the Association. Under the editorship of Scott Carey and the assistance of Freeman Stamper (both of Western Star Dancers) the first sections of the publication were completed earlier this year. The cost of IGGY is a one time fee of \$25.00 per organization. This entitles you to lifetime additions and updates to this living document.

What do I get for my \$25.00 you ask? Primarily it is an information and resource guide. When IGGY is complete it will contain everything from soup to nuts on square dancing. It should be of great benefit to your organization--there is something for everyone in it. If your organization has received its copy of IGGY and you have not sent Scott a check for \$25.00 please do so soon.

Marilyn Martinyak

Working to Form New Clubs

Karl Jaeckel has been talking with a variety of gay square dancers in the Texas cities of Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio. Maybe this will be the year the Lone Star State joins the IAGSDC! More news from Karl will follow shortly.