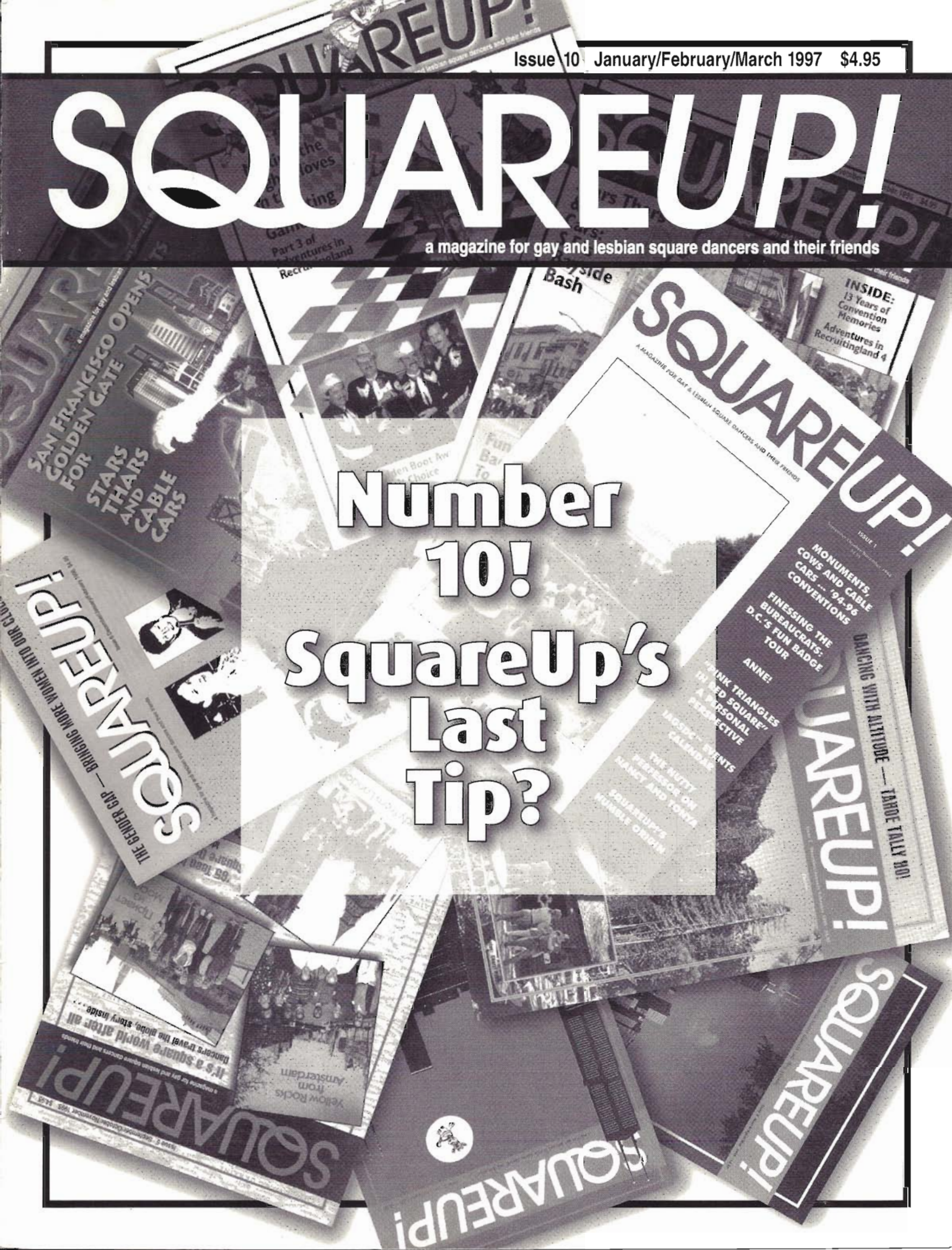


Issue 10 January/February/March 1997 \$4.95

# SQUAREUP!

a magazine for gay and lesbian square dancers and their friends

Number  
10!  
SquareUp's  
Last  
Tip?





# Letter to the Editor

in response to Issue 8's Gay/Straight Interface

MORIA MERRIWEATHER

I love your magazine! I bought my first copy at Stars, Thars & Cable Cars, and I appear to be "hooked!" The recent issue on dancing at "straight clubs" (Issue 8) was full of fascinating material. I'd like to use it as an opportunity to put in my two cents worth.

I'd like to comment on the terms "gay square dancing" and "straight square dancing." Being a bisexual who is obsessed with language, I've given these terms much thought. "Gay" and "straight" are generally used to describe PEOPLE. There is also a meaning where they describe behavior or feelings (as in "lesbian sex" = sex between two women), but this seems to me to be a less common usage.



Applying the first meaning, we could interpret "gay square dancing" to be square dancing done by gay people and "straight square dancing" to be square dancing done by straight people. My dance Club ("El Camino Reelers") has no requirements about sexual orientation, although I believe the membership is

overwhelmingly gay. In effect the membership is essentially gay, but not necessarily entirely gay. I believe this is true of most other gay dance clubs. So "gay square dancing" is mostly (but not necessarily entirely) correct, applying this meaning.

I doubt that any "straight" dance club requires any specific orientation. I have a personal goal of not assuming anyone's sexual orientation, so I do not assume that the members of so-called "straight" clubs are straight. Calling these clubs "straight clubs" could give the impression that the speaker is assuming the orientation of everyone involved, which seems unkind as well as inaccurate. In addition, these clubs do not label themselves in this way. As a result, I am uncomfortable with the term "straight square dancing."

Applying the second usage, we would interpret "gay square dancing" to be square dancing done in same-sex arrangements, and "straight square dancing" to be square dancing done in "male/female" arrangements. In practice, "gay" square dancing includes all possible configurations (same gender and male/female), and therefore is not entirely "gay." In terms of the dance configurations used, it is more accurately "bisexual square dancing."

"Straight" square dancing seems to fit as a description of dance configurations: overwhelmingly male/female couples, with prescribed positions (boys on the left).

Perhaps "gay square dancing" is meant to refer to the  
**continued, page 23**

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## 14th Annual IAGSDC Convention Wheel & Deal '97

JULY 11, 12 AND 13, 1997

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

**D**id you know — the most powerful beam of light in the world shines from the top of the Luxor Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada?

Did you know — Las Vegas, Nevada has 13 of the 20 largest hotels in the world?

Did you know — Las Vegas has the least precipitation and the lowest relative humidity of any metropolitan area in the country?

Did you know — that the International Association of Gay Square Dance Clubs 14th Annual Convention will be held in Las Vegas, Nevada on July 11, 12, and 13, 1997?

Well, now you do! The Planning Committee of this convention, entitled Wheel & Deal '97, has been hard at work over the past two years to ensure that this convention will be the best ever. Our committee chairs have painstakingly gone over details again and again (with a lot more work to come) to help make your stay in Las Vegas enjoyable.

The convention site will be the Sands Expo and Convention Center located right smack dab in the middle of the famous Las Vegas Strip. For those of you who have read your local papers or seen it on television, the Sands Hotel and Casino did close its doors on June 30, 1996 and was im-

ploded last month. Please be assured that this will in no way affect Wheel & Deal '97. The Sands Expo and Convention Center is a separate entity and will continue to operate and host this convention. The Planning Committee has reserved almost 500,000 square feet for your dancing pleasure with separate areas for whatever level you wish to dance. There will also be separate vendor areas and lounge areas for you to enjoy in your spare time — if you find any spare time.

The following callers will all be in Las Vegas for Wheel & Deal '97 to insure you have a fun time: Sandra Bryant, Mike Desisto, Bill Eyler, Todd Felleggy, Ed Foote, Deborah Parnell, Anne Uebelacker, Vern Weese, Don Wood and Las Vegas' own Andy Finch. With the above list of callers, we can guarantee a fun square dancing time will be had by all.

To add to all the fun, there will be the Annual Honky Tonk Queen Contest on Saturday, and the Fun Badge Tour on Sunday. Just think of all the possibilities of this tour!





*Wheel and Deal Board of Directors (left to right) Gary L'Abbe, President; Jim Moff, Chair; Kip Kippla, Publicity; Dan Miller, Treasurer; Larry Cormier, Vice-President*

The Planning Committee of Wheel & Deal '97 has signed the following hotels as host hotels for July:

**Harrah's Hotel and Casino**

\$74.00 - Double  
\$89.00 - Triple  
\$104.00 - Quad

**Stardust Hotel and Casino**

\$80.00 - Double  
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**Alexis Park Suite Hotel**

\$99.00 - Double  
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\$125.00 - Quad

All these hotels are conveniently located near the Sands Expo and Convention Center and puts you right in the middle of the excitement that Las Vegas is all about.

After the dancing is done, there are still plenty of things for all attendees to see and experience. Las Vegas operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This is a city that never closes down. Las Vegas is a city that is forever changing, adding and improving. By just traveling down the Las Vegas Strip, you can visit the Statue of Liberty, the Brooklyn Bridge, the streets of New York, the Sphinx, a Pyramid, a medieval castle, the French Riviera, and coming soon, the Italian Riviera and the Eiffel Tower. Where else in the world can you see fantastic laser shows, pirate ships sinking before your very eyes, volcanoes erupting and world famous entertainment? Where

else in the world can you ride a roller coaster through the skyline of New York City or ride one over 1,000 feet above the ground, or ride a sling shot even higher than that, or be flung horizontally and vertically on one of the newest rides in town? Trust me, the excitement is all here for you to enjoy.

After trying your luck at the casino,

there are plenty of places for you to "chow down." Almost all the hotels offer buffets with hundreds of items to choose from. Plus, Las Vegas is host to many of the restaurants that you have read about. Already open are the Hard Rock Cafe, Planet Hollywood, and the Country Star Grill, and opening soon is the All Star Cafe. You will not be bored in this town.

So plan on coming down to Las Vegas this summer to have the time of your life. The Wheel & Deal '97 Convention Committee of Gary, Jimmy, Larry, Danny, Gary, Dale, Kip, Jerry, Glen, Suzy, and Bill continue to work hard to ensure that the convention will be a memorable one. Should you need to obtain a registration booklet, please write to:

Wheel & Deal '97  
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Till Next July — "Happy Squares to You!"

# CANCELLED

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# Gay Styling

—STEVE VAN KEUREN

A few months ago, the caller for a new gay club in Calgary posted a request on the gay square dance mailing list on the Internet for information on how gay square dancing differs from hetero square dancing. The request developed into a thread of discussion that many people contributed to.

In gay clubs, we teach standard square dancing first. But do we leave it there? Not a chance! We whoop, we holler, we stamp, we shout. Over the years these extras have developed into what we call “gay styling.” Some is used in just a few clubs; other styling, like that for Weave the Ring, has become universal.

Where did gay styling come from? Some moves were adopted from hetero clubs, some used to be called “teenage styling”; other things we made up ourselves. Here is a primer of items that have come into use in one place or another. No pretense is made that this list is complete—gay styling changes constantly.

Also, I have not tried to include styling that is widely used in the hetero community. Got more items? Something left out? Send any additional items in and we’ll add them to the list. See below for an address.

## General Ideas

All dancers should be able to dance the standard calls, and know what is standard and what is styling. Learning standard moves first ensures that all dancers can dance with all clubs, both gay and hetero.

Dancers should be prepared for and cooperate with those who do not use the styling, for whatever reason,

and to drop the styling if need be.

Styling varies from one place and time to another. At one time, on Right and Left Grand, some dancers clapped hands and some girls twirled under. Result: most dancers now do both.

“Boy” and “Girl” refer to dance position, not anatomical sex or how one is dressed. Most gay dancers (70% or more) eventually dance both parts. Almost no clubs use any special identifying clothing, badges, etc., to indicate part danced. Some have tried and then dropped them.

---

In gay clubs, we teach standard square dancing first. But do we leave it there? Not a chance! We whoop, we holler, we stamp, we shout. Over the years these extras have developed into what we call “gay styling.”

**Squaring up.** Dancers do not need a partner to square up. Just get in a square. Hold your right hand up if you need someone to dance girl, left hand if you need someone to dance boy, and both hands if you can dance either way. However, it is also okay to ask a partner to dance with you.

Couples generally do not dance together the whole evening. They may dance a few tips together, but mix with others the rest of the time. There is no rule; this is just how it usually happens. Clubs may have to ask new couples to do this, or suggest this is

the way we usually do it. Mixing also avoids the possibility of a weak couple always dancing together and dragging down a square.

**Dress Code.** We have no dress code, even for party dances and big events.

## The Moves

**Acey Deucey.** Say “quack.” Comes from Deucey—Ducky. Also said if just cued, even if the move isn’t named (i.e., “Centers Trade, Ends Circulate”).

**Alamo Ring Swing Thru.** Sound effect “Huh!” at the balance.

**Allemande Left.** Clap before doing it.

**All 4 Couples Right and Left Thru.** Say “We LOVE this call!”

**Bend the Line.** Occasionally hear “It’s bent!” or “Get bent!”

**Boys/Girls Trade.** Traders stick up a hand and identify themselves with “Boy” or “Girl”. Sometimes to be funny they continue identifying for Centers Trade (“Center”), Ends Trade (“End”), Hinge a Quarter (“Quarter”).

**Chase Right/Left.** Chaser says “Chase you” three times. Chasee says “Chase me” three times. Individual variations on styling. Chasee may do the whole move Stable (backing up, without turning away from the wall she was originally facing).

**Circle to a Line.** Some areas preserve the earlier Circle where the girl who breaks walks under the next boy’s arm, instead of sliding to a line.

**Coordinate.** Say “No, no, yes!”, pointing to each dancer as you come to them.

**Couples Circulate.** “Circles copulate!”

**Couples Promenade.** Girl puts right hand up and boy holds it with his right over her shoulder (“Varsuvian style”). Girl usually twirls out at the

end.

**Check Your Diamonds.** All hold an arm up and inspect their rings.

**Cut the Diamond.** Outsides chop down with a large cutting motion and say “Hi-yah!”

**Diamond Circulate.** Clap before doing it.

**Dos a Dos.** Standard move is replaced by Highland Fling—put right arm around your partner’s waist and extend your left arm out with your hand straight up.

The Highland Fling is sometimes done with outside hands touching above heads. Curiously, gay dancers do not mind doing a Highland Fling with someone of the same sex — some are even said to enjoy it!

In southern California, all the hetero clubs also use the Highland Fling for Dos a Dos — even though their callers all teach the standard version first.

Callers may want to emphasize that the standard move ends facing the person you did the move with, not in a mini-wave.

**Explode <anything>.** Say “Bang!” or “Boom!”

**Flutterwheel.** Any kind of sound effects that sound like fluttering, or “Flutter, flutter, peanut butter”. Or for the less rhyming type, just “Flut, flut.”

**Fan the Top.** Those Casting  $\frac{3}{4}$  say “The big left hand,” others fan themselves

**Ferris Wheel.** Right hand dancer (usually girl) twirls under left hand dancer’s arm. All say “Wheel!” Avoid forcing the issue — boys may not twirl. Less common to reverse twirl from left-handed two-faced lines.

**Flip the Diamond.** Flippers flip hands up and whoop.

**Grand Square.** Unlike hetero groups, gay clubs ALWAYS dance this in the correct timing, 32 beats. At Basic and Mainstream level, we do the standard

Grand Square, sometimes with a little hop on the fourth beat at the turn. Sometimes everyone yells “Hey!” or “Turn!” on the fourth beat.

At Plus level, many clubs fancy up Grand Square by adding combinations of Single Circle Halfway, Star Thru, and California Twirl. When two dancers come together at the outside, they do a Highland Fling, where hetero dancers often do a Swing Your Partner. Different areas vary.

Callers may want to ensure that dancers can still do a standard Grand Square when needed.

**Handhold.** There is a movement to use the Callerlab recommended handhold, which is left hand palm down, right hand palm up, ALL THE TIME, regardless of whether you dance boy or girl. This movement is not very widespread at Basic, Mainstream or Plus, but is more common at Advanced, and widely used at Challenge. A few dancers even apply it to Weave the Ring and Single Circle to a Wave.

We generally use hands up handholds thru Plus; hands down at Advanced and beyond.

**Horseshoe Turn.** Say “Ah, shit!” or “Horseshit!”

**Ladies Chain.** Ladies sometimes add a left twirl or two while chaining across. Also sometimes a whoop.

**Ladies In, Men Sashay.** Ladies flip skirts up (or pretend to) and whoop a lot (“Make an appropriate ethnic remark”, in the words of one notable GCA caller).

**Linear Cycle.** Say “Hinge, fold, pass (or: follow), peel”. Some say “Hinge, fold, staple, mutilate”. Some add “blah, blah, blah...” after the other words. Also heard: “Hinge, fold, fondle, feel” or “cop a feel”.

**Lines and Waves.** Gay dancers ALWAYS hold hands in the middle of a line or wave.

**Lines Forward and Back.** From a line, center dancers do NOT pat hands with opposite dancers, because they are

holding hands with the people next to them (as they are supposed to!).

**Pass the Ocean.** Sound effect “Splash” in some areas, clap hands before in other areas. Some areas do a circular motion with the hands. (Pass the Sea: “Whee!”)

**Ping Pong Circulate.** Most areas clap once when starting. Some areas clap twice.

**Promenade Halfway.** The non-designated dancers move into the center of the square and do a Highland Fling and back out. Sometimes to parody the hetero clubs, and especially with newer dancers who don’t know the Highland Fling version, we move into the center, do a double hip bump and say “Woo, woo!” Usually gets a laugh from those not expecting it.

**Relay the Deucey.** Lots of whooping. Done by hetero groups, too. Sound effect: “Boy on, girl off (repeat)...” Once used as a cue, now used regardless of whoever is coming off and on the end of the wave.

**Remake the Thar.** Some say “First Right, First Left.” Others say the definition: “Quarter, Half, Three Quarters.”

**Right and Left Grand.** Replace the right pull-by with the two dancers clapping left hands; then the girl twirls under the boy’s arm. On Wrong-Way Grand, the boys occasionally do the twirl.

**Right and Left Thru.** Say “Thank you!” Occasionally then hear “You’re welcome.”

**Scoot Back.** In-facing dancers, make fist with outside hand, pound it down, make a sound. Boys doing this go “Uhh!”, girls make higher pitched sound.

**Slide Thru.** Sweeping motion with arms and hands from center of body out toward sides.

**Spin Chain and Exchange the Gears.** After the initial chain across the very

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center, as we get the stars set up to rotate 3/4 and follow the leader, everyone does a little jump at the same time. This starts off the Follow the Leader across to the other side of the square.

**Slide Thru.** Sweeping motion with arms and hands from center of body out toward sides. Sound effect: "Swish!" or "Whoosh!"

**Spin the Top.** Various sound effects: "Spin the Top? Who's a Top?" or "He's no top!" followed by "Yes, I am!" Older version: "Spin the Top?" in a surprised voice.

**Square Thru.** Individual dancers may add reverse spins in the middle, as long as they end up in the correct place when other dancers need them. Some groups do a continuous handhold in the center, which some hetero groups use too.

**Stack the Wood/Yellowrocks.** Hug the designated person or the one you're facing. Unlike hetero groups, gay square dancers curiously have no problem hugging another dancer of the same sex.

**Sweep a Quarter.** Sweeping motion with

turning 180 degrees around to the right to face out. In southern California, the custom is spreading of then hugging everyone who was in the square.

**Track 2.** Say some or all of "Toot, toot, Whoopie, Whoopie, Bang, Bang, Shoot the Caller." Those who use "Toot" on Load the Boat may use "Woo, woo" on Track 2.

**Trade the Wave.** Sound effect: "Same wave!" or "the wave" or just "Wave" (versus Advanced Trade Circulate). Alternate sound effect: "Peek!" if the caller does not say "Take a peek" first. Or "Peeking ... Trading."

**Triple Scoot.** "Rooty-toot-toot!" Done by hetero groups also.

**Veer Left/Right.** SF Bay Area sound effect "Vera!"

**Walk Around Your Corner.** Individual dancers may add reverse spins. This can be confusing for new dancers trying to learn the standard move.

**Weave the Ring.** With your partner

free hand, with whisking sound.

**Teacup Chain.** Ladies do lots of whooping and hollering. Callers give up on calling and just crank up the music.

**Thank Your Square.** After a tip, dancers form a ring and join hands with right hand crossed over left hand. All say "Tha-a-ank you-u-u!" while raising arms and

and the third person you meet, slap thighs, claps hands, join hands, kick inside leg, girl twirls under boy's arm, and each continues on in the same direction as before.

Weave the Ring with gay styling takes 16 beats. When called to start properly on beat 1 of a section, dancers can count down "5, 6, 7, 8" so that the slap thighs happens on the first beat of a measure (33<sup>rd</sup> beat of the singing call figure). Callers should avoid singing for a full 30 beats and then calling a hurried Allemande Left and Weave. Also, avoid after Teacup Chain and Grand Square, because these tend to take a full 32 beats.

**Wheel and Deal.** "Wheeling" then "Dealing."

## Is It Gay or Hetero?

There is much cross-fertilization between the gay and hetero communities, so sometimes it is impossible to categorize items as just one or the other. Often a move or phrase considered gay is also used somewhere in the hetero dancing community.

## Credits

Thanks to Ben Fabian, Andy Chong, Barry Leiba, Paul Asente, Paul Waters, Bill Eyler, Rob French, and many others for their contributions toward the content of this article.

See also Paul Asente's page on sound effects at:

<http://suif.stanford.edu/~rfrench/wsd/articles/soundeffects.txt>

## Got More Items?

Send them in to Steve at [rsvk@adnc.com](mailto:rsvk@adnc.com). We will publish them on the Internet, and when we have enough, try for a sequel here in SquareUp Magazine.

# How Did it Play on Hollywood Boulevard?

Henzel Plan Implementation in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area

PAUL WATERS

**T**he four previous issues of SquareUp! have included a series of articles by Ian Henzel about recruiting. However, awareness of the "Henzel Plan"

amongst IAGSDC® clubs goes back a little further. Ian first made us aware of his intention to implement a new style promotion program during Winter and Spring of 1994 by solicited input via the "lgcwsd" Internet newsgroup. It was easily apparent that he was onto something, but the fact that he had developed a system that would dramatically increase the viability of his club did not become apparent until September 1994 when the Chi-Town Squares found

themselves with a beginners class triple the size of any class the club had ever sponsored.

On the basis of this success, Ian agreed to conduct a seminar at the Track II Chicago 1995 IAGSDC® Convention to show the rest of us how he managed to pull off such a feat. It was attended by upwards of 50 people, but beyond this seminar there has been little activity outside Chicago — except for now in Los Angeles — and with a twist.

The Chi-Town Squares is the only club in their immediate vicinity, 80 miles from their nearest IAGSDC® neighbor. In Los Angeles, however, there are four clubs in the same metro-

politan area (Tinseltown Squares in Los Angeles, Golden State Squares in Orange County, Royalty Squares in Pomona and See-Me Squares in Simi Valley). Given that many of the local gay events and festivals are attended by people from the entire region, it simply made more sense to conduct the program on a regional basis rather than have each club run a parallel program on its own. And so, a regional program was born (see sidebars, pages 9-10).

The local feeling was that each individual club would be perceived as stronger if presented as one in a region of many rather than as a single club in isolation. At all events, no club was promoted more than any other and all the cities where classes would be held were prominently displayed in the booth. The only thing being promoted was square dancing. It turned into a wonderful way to talk to people.

Club member: "Hi there, are you interested in getting information about square dancing?"

Prospect: "Oh, I'm not from around here."

Club member: "That's okay, there

## "Henzel Plan" Features

The basics of a successful recruiting plan

### 1. Build a prospect mailing list of "hand raisers."

It is important to note that this is not just a list for unsolicited mailings. Rather these are people who have taken an active role in having their names added to the list. (*In Los Angeles and San Diego (LA and SD), Microsoft Access was used as the database manager.*)

### 2. Mail the prospects promotional materials.

This will maintain the interest of the prospect or to pique the interest of those who were ambivalent about being added to the list.

2A. Each prospect receives

a "Welcome" letter within ten days of their name being added to the list. (*In LA and SD, Microsoft WinWord 95 mail-merged with the Access database and formatted for mailing in a double window envelope.*)

2B. Each prospect receives three "Square Dealer" newsletters approximately 2½ months, 1½ months, and 2 weeks before class begins. Aside from contact names and numbers, and the days and locations of the classes, the objective of the newsletters is to convey one message, and one message only: "Gay square dancing is the most fun you can have with

your clothes on, and you'd be crazy not to want to be a part of it." (*In LA and SD, Microsoft Publisher 97 was used for the Newsletter with mailing labels generated from the Access database.*)

### 3. Phone the prospects.

A week before class begins, contact prospects with a "Looking forward to see you" phone call from a current club member.

### 4. Follow up with the prospects.

This can be done by phone the week after class begins, with either a "So nice to see you, are there any questions I can answer," or "We missed you, where were you?" phone call. This continues until the class enrollment closes on week three.

Over the course of the program, each prospect is contacted eight times: once when their name is added to the list, four times by mail, and then three times by phone.

The objective of the program is to build a list of qualified prospects, then convert as many of them as possible to class members. Based on the experience from Chicago, the six Los Angeles clubs, and San Diego, this program yields about a 10-20% conversion rate and a 60-70% initial retention rate, i.e., for every 100 prospect names on the list, anticipate 10 to 20 people will come to class at least once, and 6 to 14 of them will take the class (these figures include the additions due to the non-list attendees).



are classes being held all over southern California."

Prospect: "But I don't live in the state."

Club member: "Well then, where do you live?"

Prospect: "Santa Fe New Mexico."

Club member: "Ah yes, the High Desert Stars. They're a delightful club and their caller, Kris Jensen, is simply charming. I'm sure they'll be starting a class soon. Can I have your name, address and phone number now?" (And after this litany of objections was satisfied, how could anyone resist!)

Once the names were gathered, a personalized welcome letter was sent and followed by three "Square Dealer" newsletters. All of these mailings focused on the activity as a whole, and each of the clubs was featured as part of a consortium with contact names, dance nights and locations. The objective of these mailings was to convey one message and one message only, "Gay square dancing is the most fun you can have with your clothes on (and sometimes not), and you'd be crazy not to want to be a part of it." Since this message is the same for all clubs, the mailings were identical, and it was only when the final phone calls were made that the program went "regional."

The over 1,000 addresses were divided into 35 local calling regions starting in the north at Santa Maria (north of Santa Barbara), and ending in the south at San Clemente (on the San Diego County line) — almost 200 miles from north to south and 100 miles inland from the coast. This was the first and only time that a single club was featured rather than the entire consortium. Even so, the phoning script called for the phoners to talk about their club as well as an adjacent one so they could end their sales pitch by saying, "And if Tuesday in Los Angeles is not convenient, perhaps Thursday in Simi Valley would be." Under most circumstances the prospective class member would probably find the class offered by the closest club to be the most convenient. But this is not always the case, so the, "And if Tuesday in Los Angeles is not convenient . . ." provision was used to accommodate this possibility.

Given the regional nature of this program, a natural extension was to

## Conversion Rate by Type and Event

Event	List Names	Conversion*	Percentage
<b>Self Select</b>	22	8	36%
<b>Friends of Friends</b>	131	20	15%
<b>Festival</b>			
UC Riverside	9	0	0%
Los Angeles Gay Rodeo	142	10	7%
Long Beach Pride	291	35	12%
Orange County Cultural Pride ('95)	22	1	4%
Orange County Cultural Pride	73	10	14%
Santa Barbara Pride	95	9	9%
San Diego Pride	1	0	0%
Sunset Junction Street Festival	14	0	0%
Christopher Street West	190	14	7%
<b>Subtotal Festival</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Square Dance Party</b>			
CMG, South	195	10	5%
CMG, North	13	5	39%
CMG, Summer Camp	26	2	8%
APG/F	13	1	8%
<b>Subtotal Square Dance Party</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Late Additions</b>			
Claremont Pride	1	1	100%
Friends of Friends, List	52	52	100%
Friends of Friends, Club Members	22	22	100%
<b>Subtotal Late Additions</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,315</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>15.4%</b>

\* "Conversion" is the number of people who attended at least one class. Of these, the initial retention rate was about 70%.

Total conversions via the program: 149 (Total of "Festival," "Party" and "Friends of Friends, List." This number represents the people that otherwise would not be participating in gay square dancing).

use it as a vehicle for providing dancing opportunities in areas that were not being adequately serviced by any of the existing clubs. As a consequence, two new clubs were added to the existing four in the metropolitan area: the Shoreline Squares of Long Beach and the Mission Squares of Santa Barbara.

As start-ups, it is extremely unlikely that these clubs would have had the resources in terms of money or personnel to be able to field such an ambitious promotion program. However, the additional addresses for these two areas did not appreciably increase the work load of conducting the overall

program. So these two new clubs were able to reap the benefits of a slick, top-notch program right from the start. And as such, both clubs were able to get off to a strong start from the first night of class — the Shoreline Squares of Long Beach starting out with four squares!

So after all this, did it work?

In a word. Yes.

In three words. Yes — big time.

Two hundred and three people came by to give us a try. Of these, about 2/3 chose to stay and take class. There is certain to be additional attrition before the end of class, but this

still represents upwards of 130 to 140 people between the six locations that are giving us the opportunity to prove just how much fun square dancing can be. And this regional spin has provided the ability to do some other things too.

Five of the six classes have standardized on a common teaching order which is programmed to complete teaching the Basic and Mainstream lists in forty lessons — a very measured pace. Given that the teaching orders are the same and the instructors are being careful to insure that the classes remain within a week of each other, this allows the attendees more than one opportunity to take any given lesson — and many are doing just that. Some gung-ho students are attending more than one class each week. Others use the multiple class locations to be able to make up for a missed class, i.e., if they know they are going to have to miss Tuesday in Los Angeles, they can pick up the same class in Pomona on Wednesday. Beyond having a wealth of dancing opportunities each week, there is the ability to get all of the classes together for a great big hoedown.

The first of the joint New Dancer Hoedowns was held in November, '96, with all of the six classes and clubs invited to participate. It was a two session afternoon and evening dance with a potluck in between. Some chose to attend one session or the other, but the majority opted to attend both. Over 130 attended the dance with nine squares in the afternoon and eleven in the evening. And this made for a real EVENT. Although there was only a single Plus tip over the entire day, several people who dance advanced said it

was one of the best dances they had ever attended. And all but four tips were at the joint class level — which didn't even include Right and Left Thru (talk about a stretch for the callers). For the Tinseltown Squares class, which normally dances six squares, this was a fun and exciting day with all of these new people to dance with. But for the brand new Mission Squares of Santa Barbara, who only dance a single square, they were able to attend a major event after only ten weeks of classes. Contrast this with the situation for the vast majority of the

IAGSDC® clubs where the first opportunity to dance at a big event is sometimes a year after someone has started dancing.

So did the Henzel Plan play in the Windy City? Yes.

And did it play on Hollywood Boulevard? Yes.

And did it play in America's Finest City? Yes. (see adjoining article)

So can it play in your city too? Absolutely! All it takes is a single person that decides that it's time for their club to become a major success story — and then make it happen. ■

## 1996 Los Angeles Metropolitan Recruitment Expenses

Mailings	\$1,963	50%
Booth Fees (includes table, chair rental)	1,280	33%
Booth Decor	148	4%
Supplies	173	4%
Graphic Design Fee	200	5%
Miscellaneous	175	4%
<b>Total Expended on Recruitment '96</b>	<b>\$3,939</b>	<b>100%</b>
 Number of people who came to a class via the program at least once	 149	
 Cost per person for people who came to class via the program	 \$26.44	

## Conversion Rate by Club

Club Location	List Names Only			Including Late Additions		
	Total Names	Conversion	%	Total Names	Conversion	%
Los Angeles	630	49	8%	647	66	10%
Long Beach	202	26	13%	220	44	20%
Orange County	169	17	10%	180	28	16%
Pomona	74	11	15%	82	19	23%
Santa Barbara	79	8	10%	91	20	22%
Santa Clarita	9	0	0%	9	0	0%
Simi Valley	74	14	19%	86	26	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,237</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>1315</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>15%</b>



# The Sincerest Form of Flattery

Recruiting Efforts at San Diego's Finest City Squares

STEVE VAN KEUREN

For the last couple of years, Finest City Squares in San Diego has been starting a new beginners' class every three months, running Basic/Mainstream/Plus classes back to back on Sunday afternoons. The schedule works well, but last year as we watched new classes dwindle from eight to six to five to zero, it became apparent that our recruiting methods were not working.

We had heard of the Henzel method, so we turned to that as we formed a new recruiting committee. As point man (but not chairman) for the new committee, I was not able to convince the board to implement the full plan in 1996, but we used as much of it as we could. We learned that the Los Angeles and Orange County clubs were mounting a drive together, and I started pumping (pardon the expression) Paul Waters to find out as much about it as possible.

As a folk singer told me years ago, "I'm not terribly creative, but I steal well." Using e-mail extensively, I quizzed Paul about the techniques the drive was using and implemented them in San Diego. Paul mentioned that they were assembling a mailing list, so I created one in Microsoft Access. Paul told me later that he was also using Access, so we started developing the databases in parallel—oops, make that "In Tandem!"

Paul also e-mailed copies of the welcome letter, the recruiting sign-up forms, and the notes to the recruiting committee. MS Word was handy for modifying and working with these.

A professional writer produced three newsletters to send to the mailing list prospects, and Paul formatted and printed the newsletters in MS Publisher (see next page). After seeing the originals, I asked Paul to e-mail copies of the source files to me, which he

obligingly did. However, I didn't have a copy of MS Publisher so I ran out to our local Egghead Software, bought a copy of Publisher 97, edited the newsletters to add San Diego and Palm Springs information, and mailed the "San Diego Edition" to our prospects. My boss at work even paid for the copy of MS Publisher after I started using it for company fliers! MS Publisher was also useful for producing fliers for the new Ocean Squares group that resulted from the San Diego drive, as well as creating the web page for Ocean Squares (<http://www.lanz.com/finestcity/ocean/index.html>).

During the actual recruiting, at festivals and elsewhere, we used the techniques from the Henzel plan and shared names with the Los Angeles and Orange County clubs, as well as forwarding names to other clubs from Palm Springs to as far away as the Bay Area and New York.

As the new classes started (a bumper crop of 25 new attendees total here in San Diego), we used the recruiting databases "in tandem" to track the results of the drives. Just as the drive in LA/OC resulted in two new clubs, twenty names in north San Diego County led to an effort to start a new group in Carlsbad — Ocean Squares. To prepare for the meetings to analyze

the drives and draw lessons to learn, Paul e-mailed the LA/OC database itself to me in San Diego, and we developed reports and charts to bring up to Los Angeles.

Now that classes are underway, we plan to continue the effort by tracking class attendance and preparing for the next recruiting drives. We will do a rewrite of the database and use the same structure for both drives.

Members of FCS have driven up for the New Dancer Hoedown in Hollywood. Because of the distances, San Diego will again run separate drives in '97 — classes every six months this year — but we plan a full implementation of the Henzel plan and close cooperation with the other clubs (nine groups now!).

The new board at FCS is very committed to the recruiting drive and mutual cooperation. We are delighted with the results and are grateful to Paul Waters and the regional drive in allowing us to "steal well" and adapt their materials and techniques for San Diego.

And, hey! — visit our new web page on gay clubs in southern California at <http://www.lanz.com/golden/gaysd.htm>. ■

**Now available, by Ian Henzel**

## *Creating Marketing and Recruiting Plans for Square Dance Clubs*

**It will lead you step by step, concept by concept through the process of designing and executing a recruiting plan that works!**

**This expanded guide is full of ideas, tips and samples to help you effectively recruit new members for your square dance club.**

**Price is \$15.50 plus postage. To order, write to Ian Henzel, 2224 W. Eastwood, Chicago, IL 60625, or send e-mail to [IanKH@aol.com](mailto:IanKH@aol.com).**

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## Recruitment Newsletter

# The Square Dealer

June, 1996

Golden State  
Squares

Magic  
Squares

Mission  
Squares

Royalty  
Squares

See-Me  
Squares

Shoreline  
Squares

Tinseltown  
Squares

### Ask. Tell. Pursue.

Yes, we do recruit—as you probably realized when one of us pounced on you at Pride or some other event—because we want you to join the international family of gay and lesbian square dancing. So we thank you for letting us send you this information.

Whether you're already all gung-ho to join a beginning class or just wanted to find out a little more about square dancing, we hope this newsletter will answer your questions on the subject.



### Before You Say Yes: Our Top 10 List of Square Dancing Questions

#### #10: Who the heck are you?

We are a coalition of seven Southern California square dance clubs: Tinseltown Squares (Los Angeles), Golden State Squares (Orange County), Royalty Squares (Pomona), See-Me Squares (Simi Valley), Shoreline Squares (Long Beach), Magic Squares (Santa Clarita), and Mission Squares (Santa Barbara). All seven clubs will be offering new weekly classes in September.

#### #9: How do I know which club to join?

People usually join whichever club is most geographically desirable. If you live halfway between two clubs, you might choose the one that holds classes on the most convenient night for you. Lots of people belong to more than one club, or attend classes and events held by other clubs.

#### #8: What if I can't set aside the same night every week?

Don't worry about missing a class

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

once in a while. Each class starts with a review of square dance calls that were taught the week before. Another option is attending more than one class. Say you have to miss a Tuesday night in L.A., you can always pop over to Long Beach that Thursday.

#### #7: How long does this take?

That depends on you. There are five levels in square dancing: Basic, Mainstream, Plus, Advanced and Challenge. You can pause at any time and just have fun dancing at your own level, or you can plunge ahead to the next level.

#### #6: Where do I do this dancing?

Lots of gay places: at your own club, at other local clubs, at fly-ins, at Convention. There are also countless square dance events held by straight clubs, many of which welcome gay and lesbian dancers.

#### #5: What are "fly-ins"?

There are over 65 gay and lesbian square dance clubs worldwide, from Tampa to Toronto and San Francisco to Sydney. Many of these clubs hold a fly-in once or twice a year, where 50 or 100 or 150 people "fly in" to their city and spend the weekend dancing (and their free time seeing the sights—or sometimes being the sights).

#### #4: How much do fly-ins cost?

Registration fees are usually very low, and it is typical to offer housing with club members. This makes fly-ins an inexpensive way to get away from it all, dance up a storm, and travel to nearly every corner of North America.

## "From Tampa to Toronto and San Francisco to Sydney"

#### #3: What is Convention?

Every year, over 1,100 lesbians and gay men take over a hotel like the Hyatt Regency in San Francisco or the Fountainbleau Hilton in Miami for a long weekend of dancing and related festivities. Don't miss the Fun Badge Tour, the Moonshine Tip, and the Honky Tonk Queen Contest!

#### #2: What are the Fun Badge Tour, the Moonshine Tip, and the Honky Tonk Queen Contest?

They're all absolutely fabulous—and we'll give you the details in our next newsletter.

#### #1: Why should I become a square dancer?

It's fun. It's easy to learn. It's good physical and mental exercise. It's a great way to meet people away from smoke- and attitude-filled bars. It's a fantastic excuse to travel. And it's a chance to join a large and loving family that won't ask you why you haven't produced grandchildren every time you see them.



## "This is not your father's square dancing Oldsmobile"

### Before You Say No: Our Top 10 List of Square Dancing Objections

#### #10: I can't dance.

You don't have to be Fred Astaire to square dance. Nobody grades you on style here. Ultimately, you'll need to be able to tell your right foot from your left foot, but we can work with you on that.

#### #9: I don't have a partner.

You don't need one. Square dancing welcomes singles and couples, as well as couples who like to partner up with other people once in a while.

#### #8: I don't have the time.

Count up how much time you spend watching TV each week, or stending around in a bar somewhere, and then see how easy it is to find two hours a week.

#### #7: I don't have the right clothes.

Really? Are you sure you're gay? Never mind. While some people like to have fun with the traditional square-dance "look," there is no special uniform required. Just wear something comfortable.

#### #6: I don't like country music.

There's a lot of crossover between the gay square dance and gay country-western worlds, but square dance callers use all kinds of music—and some of their choices may surprise you. Meanwhile, the person dancing next to you is just as likely to prefer Gustav to Garth or Melissa to Merle.

#### #5: I can't afford it.

Short of a few individuals we can think of, square dancing is the cheapest good time you can find. Spend a few hours less on AOL each month or cut out two beers each week, and you can pay for it.

#### #4: It's not enough exercise.

Dance 10 hours a day at a fly-in or other special event, and get back to us on that one.

#### #3: It's too much exercise.

Square dancing can accommodate people with very different levels of stamina. You can dance non-stop, or take as many breaks as you like.

#### #2: I square danced in the fourth grade and I didn't like it.

Try it again. This is not your father's square dancing Oldsmobile.

#### #1: I already get too much exercise, meet too many terrific people, travel more than enough, and in general have too much fun for one lifetime.

Wow! We didn't know we had Madonna on our mailing list!

See you  
in  
September!

## Recruitment Newsletter

# The Square Dealer

July 1996

Golden State  
Squares

Magic  
Squares

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Royalty  
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See-Me  
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Shoreline  
Squares

Tinseltown  
Squares

### How We Spent Our Summer Vacation

We came! We saw! We conquered!  
We danced! We snuggled! We broke the elevators!

Trailing in (dancing) on Wednesday night and trailing out (still dancing) on Sunday afternoon, twelve hundred lesbians and gay men descended upon the Hyatt Regency Embarcadero in San Francisco July 2-6 for "Stars, Thars & Cable Cars," the 13th Annual Convention of the International Association of Gay Square Dance Clubs. (FYI: "Stars" and "Thars" are square dance moves; "Cable Cars" are a form of public transportation both charming and popular, a concept that may be difficult for Southern Californians to grasp.) "ST&CC" was co-hosted by seven Bay Area gay clubs.

Convention is officially launched each year with the Grand March, an event that sounds dreary and a little claustrophobic on paper—all the clubs marching into one big room—but seeing all those dancers in their uniforms (occasionally avec props) moving in a seemingly endless spiral as applause and laughter climaxes into 1200 people singing the U.S. and Canadian national anthems, then breaking into squares for one giant dance is an experience you have to have at least once. (Or more than once: "10-Year Vel-





# Watch Out for that Pothole!

What We Learned in Southern California

PAUL WATERS AND STEVE VAN KEUREN

**A**lthough the Los Angeles and San Diego '96 promotion program efforts were very successful and have produced a bumper crop of new dancers, there is little doubt that improvement can and will be made for next year's program. The Los Angeles area program borrowed wholesale from the Chicago program, and was far better than it would have been had it been developed from scratch. And the San Diego effort was in many ways an exact duplicate of the Los Angeles program, taking advantage of the experience from both Chicago and Los Angeles.

Rather than have the next area that chooses to implement the Henzel Plan make some of the same mistakes that we did, the following is a synopsis of what we learned from this year's efforts and a guide to what we are planning on doing in next year to improve the effectiveness of the program.

## Importance of Names, Addresses and Phone Numbers

A very important feature of the program is getting both the address and phone number. Without both, the name is of little value. This has been demonstrated repeatedly in Chicago, Los Angeles and San Diego. In order to reduce the number of names gathered for which no phone number was given, the Los Angeles data collection forms were redesigned twice to improve this aspect of the program.

The first time, yellow pads of paper were used that had "Name, Address, Phone Number" written along the top of the page. This resulted in a "loss rate" (no phone numbers) of better than 20-25%.

The first redesign was an actual form with places listed for Name (first, last), Spouse (first, last), Address, Apt. #, etc. The box for the phone number

was just one of the items asked for on the last line against the right hand margin. Although there was a specific location for the phone number, this only reduced the "loss rate" to about 15%.

The final design moved the "PHONE NUMBER" box to the top left hand corner, printed in all capitals in 18 point type. This version reduced the loss rate to only 5%.

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The overall conversion rate for the Henzel Plan averages 15% (for every 100 names on the list, 15 people came to at least one class). Of the 70 names for which there were no phone numbers on the Los Angeles list, the conversion rate was 0%.

## Importance of Mailings and Phoning

Due to a variety of circumstances, the Chicago, Los Angeles and San Diego areas have inadvertently tested three different scenarios in terms of the mailings and the phoning, i.e., mailings and phoning, mailings only, and phoning only. In order to get the best return for the time, money and effort expended on the Henzel Plan, it is clear that a double-barreled approach is needed. In other words, both the mailings and the phoning are required.

The overall conversion rate for the Henzel Plan averages 15% (for every 100 names on the list, 15 people came to at least one class). Of the 70 names for which there were no phone numbers on the Los Angeles list, the conversion rate was 0%. Even though these people received all four of the mailings, not one person came to even a single

class. At this point, a decision has not been made to delete these names from the program in order to save on the cost of the mailings. A case, however, could easily be made for saving the money on postage and printing given the expected return.

At one of the festivals in San Diego, a decision was made to get names and phone numbers only, with the intent of following up later to get addresses. Of the 31 names gathered in this way, only a few were willing to provide their addresses when subsequently called, and of those, only one person came to class. This represents a conversion rate of only 3%, well below the average festival conversion rate of 9.5%.

## Watchers

It is very common for non-dancers to come with friends to watch classes and dances. These people, more than any other, are prime prospects as they have actually seen how much fun it is to be a part of gay square dancing. As part of the recruitment effort, it is more than worth the effort to get names, addresses and phone numbers from these people for inclusion in the program. The experience of San Diego has been that this is extremely fertile ground for securing new recruits. The Finest City Squares have an advantage as their beginner's class is conducted in the local combination restaurant and country western bar. For them, "watchers" are not only friends of club members, but also the patrons of the bar and restaurant.

But just being in the right place and having watchers is not enough; a mechanism for securing their names, addresses and phone numbers is as important, if not more important than having them there. In San Diego, one club member has taken it upon himself to keep an eye on the sidelines, watching for watchers. When he spots someone that appears to be taking an interest in what is going on, he makes a point of approaching them, talking to them, and securing a name, address and phone number. In Los Angeles, the person who handles the door has a set of preprinted forms in order to make it easier to get the information. At every club event, someone is charged with the responsibility of watching for watchers, and approaching them.

## Friends of Friends

Friends of current club members yields one of the best conversion rates of the entire program (15%). Therefore devising ways to increase the size of this list is a very worthwhile thing to do. In Chicago, they use a weekly raffle to recognize and reward people who have submitted names. The Chi-Town Squares are known for their campy antics and so the contest is referred to as "Friends of Friends — NO CIRCLES!" and the prizes are all gag gifts such as T-shirts from past fly-ins that never sold and left over items from club garage sales. The point being that these activities bring attention to the effort, and the number of "FOF" names jumped from about ten the first year to more than ninety the second.

## Holdover Names

At the end of the program, 15% of

the names have converted leaving 85% that have not, which begs the question as to what to do with these names. A common axiom from basic salesmanship is that it takes an average of five sales calls to make a sale. If after five calls have been made the person has not bought, it is more productive to develop a new prospect than to continue to make sales calls on someone that has not bought. In terms of the Henzel Plan, these prospects have been contacted eight times by the time the promotion program is over: once when they initially had their name added to the mailing list, four times by mail, and then three times by phone. If, after being contacted eight times, they haven't bought, they more than likely won't. Based on this, the decision was made to discard the names and start the next year fresh. However, an exception is being made for two special conditions.

First, if the prospect tells the phoner that they cannot participate this year but would like to be kept on the list for next, then their name is held over. The other is for people in areas that are too far from one of this year's classes. In Los Angeles, it is likely that a new club effort will be spearheaded in Pasadena. People who live in the San Gabriel Valley were up to 45 minutes away from the closest class during the '96 season, but will all be less than 20 minutes from a class in Pasadena. Therefore, the names in this area are being held and worked a second time as part of the new club effort for Pasadena.

## Square Dance Parties

Trying to describe just how much fun gay square dancing is to a non-dancer can be a tricky thing to do. But if someone has been given the opportunity to participate in a session of dancing,

## Popcorn! Peanuts! Square Dance Lessons!

Effective Booth Management

STEVE VAN KEUREN

**T**he initial goal of the Henzel Plan is to build a mailing list of hand raisers, i.e., people who have taken an active role in placing their names on the mailing list. A major opportunity for doing this is to rent a booth at the local gay pride festival and gay rodeo. But maximizing the return from an investment of up to \$500 doesn't just happen — it needs to be managed. In the Los Angeles and San Diego areas, there were a number of things that were done right, some that were done wrong, but all in all the results were reasonable given that this was a first year effort. Nonetheless, we know we can do better next year, and would like to provide the opportunity for others to benefit from our experience in order to get the best possible return on their first time out.

Purchasing a booth often includes a small number of passes to the festival

(if there is an admission fee), usually far fewer than will be needed to properly staff the booth. Often, these same festivals have areas for demos, and will provide a sufficient number of passes for the entire performance team. Offering to be part of the demonstration program can provide a way to dramatically increase the number of festival passes which can legitimately be used to get more than enough people into the festival to do the demo and, more importantly, staff the booth.

If a demo is done, it is important to

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**The main focus must be on getting accurate names, addresses, and phone numbers for the mailing list.**

keep in mind the goal of the program, i.e., new members for a social club. The demo needs to reflect this. The emphasis needs to be on a group of friends getting together and having a wonderful time. Flashy matching costumes and precision routines are certainly impressive, but do not accurately reflect the primary mission of a gay square dance

club. The best of all possibilities is the opportunity to be able to allow new people to join in and dance while learning a few calls. But it is important to stay focused on the goal of getting qualified names, addresses and phone numbers entered into the database.

It is also important to insure the information is correct and legible. The experience in Los Angeles was that if the prospect will not provide their phone number, they will not come to class. Of the over 1,000 names on the Los Angeles metropolitan mailing list, 70 did not have phone numbers. Overall, 15% of the people from the mailing list came to at least one class. Of these 70 non-phone people, not one person came to a single class, even though they had received all four mailings.

Make an effort to insure the booth is attractive and has pictures, displays, and videos for people to look at, i.e., bait the trap. The booth, however, can only do so much. The key to a successful recruitment effort is the personnel and their effectiveness.

Keep tables at the sides of the booth, so visitors can walk in and look at the pictures and exhibits. This also prevents personnel from sitting passively behind the tables where they are doing little or



well, now they really know just how fun gay square dancing is. Given this, a very worthwhile endeavor is to hold a square dance party for other organizations. The organization is responsible for providing the people, and the square dance club is responsible for providing the party — and oh what a party we can provide. Part way through the affair, just have a couple of square dancers walk around with a clipboard and a pen approaching people. It's much easier than doing it at a festival — these people can't walk away.

Interestingly enough, even though in effect we are raiding their membership, this is not a problem provided the groups are selected appropriately. There are two reasons for this. First, most gay square dance clubs sponsor weekly classes as their primary event and then sponsor occasional special weekend events. Church groups, for

example, meet on Sundays as their primary event, and then host other events on an auxiliary basis. This means that for the most part, the two groups do not compete for attendees on the same days.

The same is true for a skiing club that sponsors four to eight skiing trips a year. These are primarily weekend events that only rarely include weeknights as part of the trip. In addition, these groups are interested in building their membership too. Having six to twelve square dancers come to one of their functions allows them the opportunity to show what they have to offer

**GLACD/SC**  
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**ANNE UEBELACKER**

**Friday, May 30, 1997**

**Long Beach, California**

**full-level advanced dance at 7 pm**

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(818) 454-3276 or [glacd@quick.net](mailto:glacd@quick.net)**

to a group of people that may not have had any contact with their organization.

As an extra added bonus, the cost of generating these names is zero, and might even be negative if the group is willing to pay for the services of the caller. As discussed above under the heading "Don't Sell Yourself Short," the

no good.

A sign-up sheet on the table can be helpful, too. A few will take the time to come into the booth and sign up. This frees the booth personnel to approach other people.

Booth personnel must be trained. Club members talking with each other or sitting behind the table doesn't achieve any goal — people must be trained to aggressively ask for the order, i.e., a name, address and phone number. A good way to accomplish this is to have a single sheet explaining what is expected of booth personnel for the people staffing the booth to read prior to starting their shift.

Given that booth personnel have to be trained, it is extremely helpful to have a supervisor present at all times to make sure booth personnel are doing what they should.

Booth personnel need to actively go up to people and talk to them. They need to stop people who walk by and offer information. Sitting passively behind the table waiting for people to walk up results in very few names.

Booth personnel must understand that only 1 out of 10 or 20 will say "Yes" and not to get discouraged by this low return rate. This is a percentage game

— it is important to approach as many people as possible to get the greatest number of "Yes's." Talk to everyone who comes close to the booth. Anyone who walks by is a potential recruit.

Place recruiters in front of the booths, in the traffic path. Have them stop people as they go by. Have them ask people if they'd like information on gay square dancing. Most will say no, but it's the percentage we're after. Recruiters have obtained thirty or more names per day this way, even at festivals where there was no booth.

The more people who recruit, the more prospects will result. A successful booth requires help from all club members.

The booth is only to legitimize the presence of the recruiters. At some festivals, the organizers do not object to roving recruiters. In these cases, consider saving the cost of having a booth and just have people roam the fairgrounds asking people if they're interested in getting information about gay square dancing. Also, since the reason for purchasing a booth is to legitimize approaching people, it is well worth considering joining with another organization such as a church or an unrelated type of social club to reduce costs.

It, however, can be important that the other group is also of a nonprofit nature. Festivals often have a nonprofit rate that can be half the cost of the commercial rate.

Fliers and handouts are of limited use. San Diego has used a half-size flier for several years with space to fill in a name and address, but not one student resulted from filling out the form. Furthermore, fliers and handouts visible in the booth tend to distract booth personnel from their primary goal of asking for names, addresses and phone numbers.

There are some people who insist on having something to take with them. For these people, it's a good idea to have business cards or small flyers available. But having them visible tends to detract from the primary goal, so it is best to keep them out of sight.

Refrain from holding a raffle drawing. It produces lots of names, but few of value. The Henzel Plan is a numbers game. The average return from "hand raisers" is about 10-15%. The return rate from unsolicited mailings to non-hand raisers is 1% or less, and the cost in terms of time, money and effort to "convert" these people is simply not justified by the return. ■

perception of the value received is directly tied to the price paid. Ask to have the caller be paid for their services, and more often than not, these organizations will have an entertainment budget set aside for exactly this purpose, and will be happy to do so.

### **Welcome Letter and "Square Dealer" Newsletters**

The welcome letter and "Square Dealer" newsletters provide a way to keep in contact with the prospects to maintain and, hopefully, build their interest in gay square dancing. The idea is to have attractive, easy to read pieces that convey one message and one message only: "Gay square dancing is the most fun you can have with your clothes on, and you'd be crazy not to want to be a part of it." Short of contact names and numbers and the day and month the class will begin, anything beyond this only muddles the message, and is better off left out.

In Los Angeles, the welcome letter was created with Microsoft Word mail-merged with the Microsoft Access database. Each letter was individually signed and were sent out within ten days of the name being submitted. They were mailed in double window envelopes (one for the prospects address and the other for the return address), which allowed being able to use a different return address for Santa Barbara, which is outside the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area. It was felt that for the first mailing, it was best to give these prospects the impression that this was a local Santa Barbara event, rather than an extension of an activity from Los Angeles.

But once all is said and done, the objective of the mailings is one thing and one thing only: to insure that the prospect will be receptive to the follow-up phone call. Cold calling is a brutal thing to do, and since the people who will be doing this are volunteers, leaving them in a position where nine out of ten people will be hanging up on them is just not workable. With the mailings, the number of people who are not at least cordial when being called by a club member are reduced to a bare minimum.

### **Follow Up Phone Calls**

The final phase of the program is the

follow up phone call. Since the people who will be making the phone calls are volunteers, it is important to keep the task something that they feel is doable. If too much is asked of them, the result is that little or nothing will get done. Based on the experience in Los Angeles, 20 names appears to be about the right number. Any more and the task becomes a bit daunting, any less and the phoner doesn't have enough names to be able to get into the flow of making calls. Certainly there will be gung-ho members that will want to call more than just 20 people. No problem, give them as many as they want.

In terms of making the calls, although talking to people directly is preferable, leaving a message is a perfectly acceptable thing to do (taking care not to use the "G" or the "L" word — best not to inadvertently out someone). In Los Angeles, the conversion rate for those who were actually spoken to versus those who only received messages did not appear to be dramatically different.

But it is very important to let the phoners know that the conversion rate is expected to be 10-15%, and not to be discouraged by this low rate. This is expected, and provided enough names are on the list to begin with, this is not a problem. The "buy" rate from typical blind telephone solicitation is about 1%. By comparison, the Henzel Plan conversion rate of 10-15% is a phenomenal return. Even so, this low rate can be very discouraging for the phoners as they discover that better than half of the people they are talking to are lying to them.

### **Follow Up Phone Calls: Specialty Lists**

Once the mailing list has been created, it often includes a number of names that all came from a single organization, for example a square dance party for a church group as described above. In terms of the follow-up phone calls, the likelihood of converting these prospects into class members is greater if the person calling is also a member of the same group. Because the phoner and the prospect already have something in common, it is much easier to strike up a conversation, and improves the conversion rate.

One of the most obvious specialty lists is the women on the list, and an obvious decision could be that it is better to have women call women. In the Los Angeles and San Diego areas, segregating out the women would have added an extra layer of complication in terms of matching up phoners with lists. Since there were already 35 splits to allow phoners to make local calls as much as possible, separating the women into separate lists was not done. In the Southern California area, the men's and women's communities get along quite well and anti-men or anti-women sentiments are the exception rather than the rule. It was felt that there wouldn't be enough of a benefit to justify handling this added complication. This, however was not the decision made in Chicago.

As a rule, the women's community in Chicago is far more separatist than is the case in most areas of the country. As to why this is true no one really knows for sure. But it is a reality, and as such it has to be accommodated in order to run a successful program, and the Chi-Town Squares opted to have their women members contact the women prospects. Although this was not done in Los Angeles, next year's promotion program will test the same premise. The two largest local calling areas (Los Angeles and Long Beach) will have a list of women to see if handling these names in this way makes a difference. In terms of implementing the Henzel Plan in other areas, a decision has to be made based on local conditions.

### **Don't Sell Yourself Short**

In the Los Angeles area, fees are charged on a week-by-week basis, either \$5 or \$6 per class depending on the club rather than an up-front tuition fee paid in advance as is done in some areas. So another feature of the program that differs from many areas is that the clubs charged from the first night of class rather than offering any "free nights." Although all of the clubs held three or four "open nights," where first time attendees were welcome, attendees paid for these nights. And it appears that this was not a deterrent that kept anyone from attending. Furthermore, it provided an additional source of revenue to help defray the cost of conducting classes and paying for the promotion



program. For the Los Angeles area, by charging for the first night rather than offering the first three nights free, this policy generated an additional \$1,000 of revenue. In addition, a rule of good business is to refrain from over-dis-

counting or undervaluing a product. An axiom of the free-market system is that the customer's perception of the value of the product or service they are purchasing is directly proportional to the price they are paying for it. There-

fore, paying nothing for a dance class implies that it is worth exactly that — nothing — not the impression we are trying to convey. It is, however, very important that this information be conveyed to the prospects so they will not

# Who Did You Say You Were?

DANIEL HOWELL

**T**he Henzel Plan focuses heavily on personal contact — from the first time someone's name is added to the mailing list right through the final follow-up phone call. But there is another piece of the recruitment puzzle that can make a huge difference in terms of our initial recruitment activities — community awareness of our activity.

On the fateful day of the pride festival, prospects are inundated with all sorts of groups vying for their attention. The experience can be overwhelming. From experience we know that for every twenty people that are asked if they would like to get more information about gay square dancing, only one will say, "Yes." If, however, the prospect has recently seen something that piqued their interest in the activity, perhaps the number that say "Yes" might be one in ten, or (we can always hope) one in five. So this begs the question, how to get the word out?

Well, there is the possibility of fielding a square dance contingent in the pride parade, or a doing a demo of gay square dancing at a festival, maybe even taking out an ad in the local gay rag. All of these are certainly worthwhile things to do, but in terms of the publications, there is another option that is far more effective than taking out an ad — and far cheaper. Namely, articles, with pictures, on gay square dancing. Consider how much more receptive a prospect is likely to be to volunteer their name, address and phone number if they've recently read a full page article describing some high-spirited aspect of our favorite pastime.

There are hundreds of gay and lesbian publications — local, regional, national, special interest magazines, newsletters, tabloids and newspapers. For the most part, they make their money not from subscription fees, but from ads. Typically these are hand-to-mouth operations that are understaffed and have editors that are totally overworked. It is always a struggle for them to get enough copy, and frankly, many of them will print anything just to keep from having nothing but ads from front to back. Their problem is our opportunity. When presented with well written, informative and interesting articles, many will print them "as is" without even batting a mascara encrusted eyelash. Considering that purchasing the equivalent amount of ad space is likely to cost hundreds if not thousands of dollars, a printed article is an absolute steal. There are many books available on the subject

of getting free publicity. *Do-It-Yourself Publicity* by David F. Ramacitti is one of them.

More and more often, publications are quite willing to print photos. In some cases, they are not even interested in printing a submission unless it is accompanied by attractive pix. But they have to be clear, crisp photos of interesting subjects, not just mug shots and fuzzy Polaroids. Take group shots of dancers in front of well known city locations. Pictures of seas of dancers from a recent fly-in or the annual convention are always nice. Club shots with everyone dressed in their club outfits and close-ups of dance scenes can be attractive too. But a word of caution about close-ups.

Modern Western Square Dancing in its present form is a participation sport rather than a spectator sport. It's great fun to do, but not terrible fun to watch in terms of a visually pleasing experience. In order to get good close up shots, they need to be staged. Set a square in Promenade position, insure that everybody is visible and smiling — click. Go up on a ladder and look down on a couple and have them spin out like they would do at the end of a Promenade — click. Set a full square and call Weave the Ring, 5, 6, 7, 8, 1, 2, 3 — click. There is no end to interesting photos that can be taken, but remember, although the closet may be receding, it still does exist. Be sure that anyone who is recognizable in the photo is agreeable to have their likeness appear in print.

Take into account how the photos are going to be used. Will they be black and white or in color (take the proper type)? In what type of publication will it be used? If it is a women's publication, then be sure that women are easily visible rather than submitting a photo showing nothing but men. By the same token, our activity attracts a wide variety of individuals, and photos of nothing but "A-gays" are likely to leave the impression that "A-minus gays" need not apply. Consider having some shots that will appeal to the widest possible community — have several different "types" in each photo — cowboy/girl, drag, leather, hunk, flab, butch/fem, T/S, etc. Reason: "If I see 'someone like me' having fun square dancing, maybe I could try that and have fun too!"

Take lots of pix and then submit only the best, since editors like to have several to choose from. Be sure that no matter which ones they choose, your club will be presented in a good light. Use strobes (key, fill and back light) if possible. Sharp, clear and slightly contrasty photos reproduce the best.

—Editor. Daniel Howell is a member of the Tinseltown Squares and handles publicity for the club. He is actively seeking articles, news releases and publicity photos that other gay square dance clubs have used for the purpose of making them available to other IAGSDC® clubs. Submissions can be sent to Daniel Howell, c/o Tinseltown Squares, PO Box 69174, West Hollywood, CA 90069-1764. ■

be surprised at the door. In the Los Angeles area, there were several people who came to classes expecting that the first nights would be "open nights," i.e., free. In the interest of keeping a situation from developing that would create hard feelings, a few people were let in free.

### Club Enthusiasm

Another positive consequence of conducting such an ambitious promotion program is the effect it has on the rest of the club membership. The Los Angeles program involved upwards of 50 people in one aspect or another of program implementation. This included staffing a booth at one of a half dozen different festivals, lending a hand to get the mailings out, or volunteering to call prospective class members during the telephone campaign. This was over and above club members who solicited their friends as well as talked up the activity with strangers whose names ultimately were included in the database. This high level of involvement spilled over into all club activities — not just the beginner's class. Current club members were certainly energized to redouble their efforts to find new prospects. In addition, the dance attendance increased, the membership renewals have shown a positive effect, and the greater willingness of club members to take on and follow through with a special project is unmistakable. In short, the promotion program has revitalized the entire club.

### Overall Cost Effectiveness

There is little doubt that these programs are expensive to run. Between the festival booth and mailing expenses, the cost can be substantial (\$1,600 in the case of Chicago and \$4,000 in the case of Los Angeles). But the cost of *not* implementing the program is far greater. For every person that comes to class and stays through graduation, the revenue to the club from class attendance alone is about \$200 (\$6/week x 40 weeks). In the case of the Los Angeles program, this means that if the program brought an additional 20 people into the area classes, the program would have paid for itself. If fact, the program did far more than that (program conversions totaled 149) — paying for itself many times over. ■

# Go Forth and Multiply

A challenge to recruit

PAUL WATERS

**G**o forth and multiply, said Noah to the animals, and the same could be said to gay square dance clubs. There is little doubt that the greater the number of participants in the activity the better the activity is for everyone. And whether these additional participants come from membership in existing clubs or new clubs, it really doesn't matter. More is more, no matter where they are. But how to make it happen? Well, this is the proverbial Chinese puzzle. Certainly solvable, but daunting nonetheless.

Whenever a new plateau of gay square dancing is reached, invariably the reason can be traced to the activities of an evangelist. In the early days of our activity, it was people like Art Smith, Carol Roberts, and Scott Cary who simply set out with little in the way of assistance, determined in their vision that there were going to be gay square dance clubs in their cities. Now the evangelists are people like J. Bear, Richard Kitterman and Larry White, who find themselves in a new city and decide that a gay square dance club is just the thing their new home needs to be complete. The difference is that now there are a wealth of resources available to help them get started.

A new wrinkle on the gay square dance scene is the emergence of multiple entry level clubs in the same metropolitan area. Although no studies have been done, it appears that a city needs to have a population of about 150,000 to support a small gay square dance club (the Rainbow Wranglers of Eugene, Oregon), and 500,000 to support a reasonably sized club (the Wilde Bunch of Albuquerque, New Mexico). But in the larger metropolitan areas such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston, in many cases, these cities are really multiple Albuquerques that just happened to be in close proximity to each other — particularly in the case of cities

that came of age during the era of the automobile.

Scale it up. Albuquerque, 500,000: one club. Los Angeles, 13,000,000: twenty-six clubs (gasp!), or at the very least far more than one. In the case of Los Angeles, this is precisely what is developing. Currently there are five entry level clubs in the metropolitan area with hopes of adding two more in September '97. But this situation is almost unique in terms of gay square dancing, with the only other examples of multiple entry level clubs in the same metropolitan area being the San Francisco Bay area with four and New York with two. So what's going on here? Why is it that there isn't an Oak Park club in the Chicago area, a Long Island club in the New York area, a Tacoma club in the greater Seattle area and a sister club to the Rosetown Ramblers in the outlying northern Portland suburbs? For the most part, there is a two-fold answer.

The first is the need for an evangelist to spearhead the effort. And the desire to have a club near to home is less emphatic when there is one a half-hour's drive away than when a square dance addict finds themselves relocated to a city 300 miles from the closest gay square dance club. But these evangelists do crop up, and every one of the additional metropolitan area clubs has been the result of someone who wanted a club a bit closer to home. Another factor in terms of multiple metropolitan area clubs is the willingness of the existing club(s) to either want, or at least not actively discourage the formation of another club.

The vast majority of existing gay square dance clubs seem to hold the opinion that they have an exclusive franchise on all gay square dance activities within a 300 mile radius, and take it as a major affront if anyone suggests that a sister club on the other side of the city might be a good idea. This mindset is a



major stumbling block to the formation of new clubs. Certainly some of this stems from the valid concern of not wanting to spread resources so thin that none of the clubs are viable. There are fixed costs associated with conducting beginning square dance classes, and while it is possible to make ends meet with a 1½ square class, it is far easier to do so with 3 or 4. But it is a little hard to convince someone who is brand new to the activity that it is worth traveling 45 minutes each way once a week to participate. And herein lies the reason why this 300 mile radius mindset is hindering the growth of our activity.

Brand new dancers are most likely to come from the immediate surrounding area. Although some brave souls are willing to travel great distances to participate, the vast majority will consider the time investment to be just too much to bother with. So if Mohammed won't go to the mountain, the best solution is to bring the mountain to Mohammed, i.e., a class in a nearby neighborhood. Provided the clubs are sufficiently geographically separated, they really are not competing for membership. In the Los Angeles metropolitan area, 20 to 30 minutes apart seems to be sufficient. In

other areas, the distance could easily be less depending on how the local residents feel. The key is what the local people think is a reasonable distance to travel. Sometimes nothing more than a small mountain range and a two lane highway are enough to keep areas separated in the minds of the local residents.

The thing to remember is that an additional club servicing a population that is not being adequately being serviced by the existing club(s), is a net benefit to everyone. First, there is simply the issue of bringing a beginners class to the doorstep of people who are much more likely to give the activity a try if it doesn't require a fortnight commute. This brings more people into the activity than would be possible if there were only one game in town. Next, if the class teaching orders are synchronized and the classes are on different nights (as they have been in the Los Angeles area), someone who is interested in an extra night of dancing has the option of attending one of the other classes. Also, an additional club can provide regular calling opportunities for up and coming gay callers that are ready to strike out on their own (something that is difficult to do with an established club program).

And finally, there is the ability to hold joint functions where it is possible to field an event that is much larger and more exciting than any of the clubs could do on their own.

Remember, we are EVERYWHERE!!! And it's likely that those who live there would probably like to dance. An area may not seem able to support a gay square dance club, but provided there is sufficient population, there will be enough gay people there to start and maintain a viable club. Case in point: the See-Me Squares in Simi Valley, is a small, but healthy club. The closest gay *anything* is 30 miles away. That, in a way, is a blessing. If someone lives in or near Simi Valley and wants to socialize in a gay setting that's close to home, there is only one game in town — the gay square dance club.

So . . .

Oak Park, Illinois — where are you?

Fremont, California — is that a rumbling we're hearing?

Long Island, New York — we're waiting!

North Portland, Oregon — we're looking forward to dancing with you.

Pasadena, California — already in the planning stages for September '97. ■

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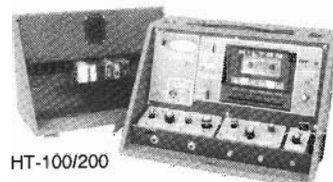
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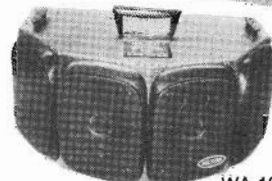
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# Our Annual Family Reunion – Part II

A few articles on our annual conventions came in after the deadline for Issue 9, so we're happy to present them now. Doug Sewell writes about the LGCWSD mailing list and its influence on conventions, and JoAnn Fial shares some of her experiences as a veteran vendor.

A few corrections also came in. Conventions are near and dear to the hearts of many, so we received quick notices of the historical errors present in Issue 9's "Family Reunion."

First the typos and omissions. In our write-up of Stars, Thars and Cable Cars, we omitted two Medallion Dancers who received their awards in San Francisco: **Jim Baily** of Denver, and **Edward Sherman** of New York City.

We also listed Con Breer and Adam Conovan as members of the ST&CC convention committee. Replace every "c" with a "d" and the names should have read **Don Breer** and **Adam Donovan**.

And Freeman Stamper submitted the following corrections to his *Little-Known Convention Moments* article.

"I stand corrected by Rick Hawes. He informs me that Portland 1987 had C&W dancing at the hotel with a live band. It's not a part of my memories, but Rick wouldn't lie to me; so I concede that NY was not the first convention with on-site C&W dancing. (While Portland 1987 may have been the first to provide C&W dancing at the hotel, it was for one night only. New York 1989 was the first to provide C&W dancing every night as a part of ongoing convention activity.)"

"Hellina Handbag informed me that the final loss for New York 1989 was about \$300. They were anticipating about a \$25,000 additional cost due to underbooked rooms. At the final accounting of room nights, they made the minimum by about 3 room nights to avert the substantial loss."

"So, my memories are correct; they may not be correct in every detail. But, life is a broad-brush stroke of eternity. We do see the forests without counting the trees."

## Conventions and the LGCWSD mailing list

DOUG SEWELL

When I created the LGCWSD (lesbian and country-western and gay square dance) mailing list in early 1993, I had no idea what I was getting into ... nor did I have a feel for just how big the IAGSDC® was, as I'd only started classes the previous fall. Four years later, I have learned a lot about dancing, about dancers and the IAGSDC®, and about the role a simple e-mail list can play.

I remember Kevin, who upon subscribing to the list, said "there are mailing lists for everything!" He made it to the Seattle convention and the GCA school, where he took a crash course in gay square dance styling and made many new friends.

Remake the Circle in Seattle was overwhelming for both Kevin and me. Besides experiencing all the first-time convention euphoria, I found out how many people knew my name because of lgcwsd. I still didn't think the list was any big thing, even though it was announced.

Between the Seattle convention and Stars and Squares Forever in Washington DC, the list's membership increased tremendously. During that time, most of the country-western non-square dancers left the list. They now have their own list, IAGLCWDC@sotrbbbs.com.

Immediately after Stars and Squares Forever, the Track II Chicago committee posted a letter regarding their convention highlights presentation. The Track II Chicago committee actively participated on the list the entire year between the DC and Chicago conventions.

The Stars, Thars and Cable Cars committee has been active on the lgcwsd mailing list from beginning to end. Paul Asente was one of the initial subscribers to the list, Randy Clark was an early subscriber, and many of the list members are in the Bay Area. Prior to the convention, members raised concerns about C3-C4 dance time and the lack of day passes.

When the amount of time for C3 and C4 dancing at STCC was brought up, Rob French, Ett McAtee, Linda Kendall, and CJ Smith stepped forward to cover the halls. Preparing to call this

type of material on short notice is a big task, and the dancers were appreciative.

The STCC committee had made a decision against offering day passes and some people were unhappy. The discussion brought out what a day pass would have to cost to meet budget targets, how it would affect full-convention registrations and housing commitments, the committee's rationale for not offering day passes, and whether offering day passes should be a requirement for future conventions.

The Wheel & Deal Las Vegas committee has been quick to address housing concerns posted to the lists, including housing to replace the Sands and concerns about Harrah's room/bed allocations. In addition, because a number of new clubs are graduating members at mainstream level, the committee has assured us that the mainstream hall will be big enough to dance comfortably.

Some of the recurring themes in post-convention discussion are the specialty tip schedule (women's, bears, leather, people of color, and moonshine tips), the Honky Tonk

Queen pageant, and housing. Each committee draws the best parts out of the discussion to make their convention the best they can. Other themes of note were the IAGSDC® Rap and gay versus non-gay callers, and reminisces of what part of the convention meant the most to whom.

As of September 1996, the lgcwsd subscription list is 283 members, or 10-15% of IAGSDC® club membership. The list traffic brought some rapid unsubscriptions by people with tight mailboxes, and there were a few prank subscriptions leading to unhappy people. Because of the list visibility it had to be moved to a machine other than my employment (the list address is lgcwsd@dmshome.youngstown.oh.us) and a mailserver, majordomo, was added to manage subscriptions automatically.

All-in-all, it's been a pleasure to offer this service to the lesbian and gay square dancers of the IAGSDC®, and our friends.

## Festival 14

JOANN FIAL

**P**aul Waters called me and said, "Mike from SquareUp would like you to do an article about being a straight couple vendor at a gay convention and how you came to be the badge people." I told him the first part is easy, "It's great fun!" The second part will take a little longer ...

Back in the early days of R&J Fial (1986), we were trying to build a business from scratch while working full time jobs, Robert in transportation and me a buyer for an electronics company. He said, "If you can set up fourteen Festivals you can quit that job you dislike so much." Oh, WHAT A CHALLENGE! It didn't take me long ... #11, #12, and then #13. One night while going through *Follow The Sun*, a magazine published for Arizona Square Dancers, I saw the ad for "Cross Trails Thru", a Gay and Lesbian square dance festival to be held in Scottsdale in 1988.

I called the number listed and asked the young lady if they had a badge maker for the convention. She said they didn't. Well, before we got off of the phone that night she did, and I had festival #14.

Well, I didn't get to quit my job until October of 1989, but that festival 14 was the start of a wonderful friendship with the gay and lesbian square dance community. We have been to every convention since 1988 except Vancouver and Albuquerque.

We found that the gay community has the best square dancers. They are extremely patient, more relaxed, have a tremendous sense of humor, and have more fun than any group of people we have ever been around. It is the one place you can really be yourself, and where you don't have to put on a front for anyone. We feel very honored to be part of the "family."

Through the years Robert and I have watched the

IAGSDC® convention grow and mature into what it is today with the pride of "adopted parents." Each year is totally spectacular with all of the wonderful things to do, see, and hear, yet each year is somehow better than the last.

The festival is for the dancers, put on by the dancers. With that in mind, we have tried to provide items that may be for their specific wants or needs by taking their suggestions and putting them into reality. We will always continue that policy.

We offer out help and our friendship to the members of all the clubs in the IAGSDC®. We are willing to do anything we can throughout the year, from making new club badges to just being there when we're needed by a friend.

*Robert and I  
have had lots of great hugs  
and lots of good laughs  
with our dear Friends ...  
We've also shed some sad tears  
over the years  
when we've lost one of  
our dear Friends ...  
Thank goodness for square dancing  
because of it we sing  
'cause without it we'd never  
have had such dear Friends.*

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# Cleveland City Country Dancers

BOB DOWNING

**W**e were told at one of the conventions that we have the longest name in IAGSDC®. The signs were all made long enough for our name. We hope we have other reasons to be remembered.

Our club began when Ed Schellhaus, who had returned to his native Cleveland after spending several years in Denver dancing with the Rocky Mountain Rainbeaus, wanted to dance so badly that he decided to try getting a few people together to teach them square dancing. His hope was to get them far enough to dance at the Plus level while having some fun himself. For the next three years Ed and a small group of dancers tried to get out of Basic (not an easy task when the same eight dancers did not show up two weeks in a row). Some nights persons of questionable sobriety got hauled off a bar stool to make seven in the square and Ed would make eight. A few of these people even stuck around for awhile. Ohio City Oasis, a local bar, let us dance for free, even providing pizza. Slowly the numbers and the dance levels increased.

We were having a great time, but were having a difficult time convincing North Coast Clevelanders to give us a try. We did demonstrations at Gay Pride Celebrations, in art galleries, and various bars. Our motto was "Try Something New." We even danced at the Ohio State Fair and were well received by straight clubs. There was a large influx of dancers in 1992 so that some nights we had five squares. It was possible to begin at Basic and be dancing Mainstream in a few months. By this time we were dancing in the bar, the basement of the bar, and in the Gay Community center next door. It was decided we would move to the basement of the Archwood United Church of Christ. We then hired a straight couple to teach Basic through Plus. Bill and Judy Reese quickly became enthusiastic members, brought other talented dancers to dance with us, and became beloved by the entire club.

In October 1990 we had our first fly-in – "Load the Boat." This is a very popular event. We have danced on a river boat in the Cuyahoga, and have a masquerade called the "Captain's

Ball" with themes such as Disasters at Sea (Amelia Airhart won) and Pirates (you should have seen the Queen of the Pirates!). This year's fly-in featured a tour of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

We presently have about 50 paid members and a great group dancing Basic and Mainstream. We have Advanced dancers and even A-2.

In 1991 Gerry Wheeler (now dancing with Grand River Squares, Grand Rapids) became interested in line dancing which we were trying to do between squares and at the end of dancing. He went to the New West Institute in Long Beach and gave lessons in a local church basement. This became very popular and the Rainbow Wranglers were organized to do two-step and line dancing. We presently have about 30 members and dance every Sunday night at the Oasis, where we two step, line dance and square dance. Taking our cue from fly-ins we have had a fund raiser, "The Spring Roundup," for 5 years. People come from all over the country to line dance with us. We have raised nearly \$10,000 for AIDS and other related charities.

We dance all levels every Wednesday night at the Archwood United Church of Christ Archwood Avenue, Cleveland. We now have two great club callers, Brian Keating and Doug Sewell. Doug has been a great support to the club in many ways including providing the sound system. Two of our long-time dancers Lynn Dilworth and Paul Smith, are "Perfect Angels" and are a great assistance to us all. If you are in northern Ohio, please contact us and come "Square Up."

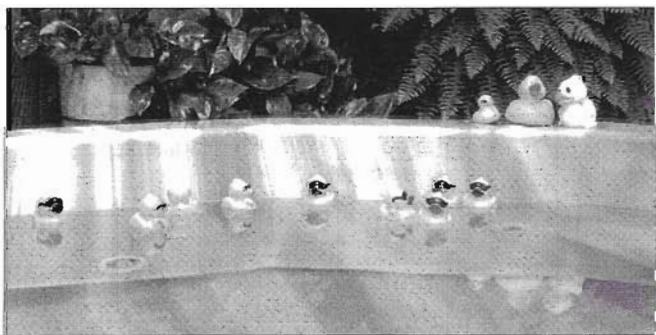
## The Rocky Mountain Rainbeaus

DAN PANTANO, PRESIDENT

**T**he Rocky Mountain Rainbeaus Square Dance Club was formed 13 years ago from the ranks of a square dance performance group which was used to promote the local gay rodeo. Each new member of the performance group had to pass an audition and the group was tightly controlled by the rodeo association. Of course this could not last. Feeling a need to square dance other than in performance, the Rainbeaus were born. They were incorporated in 1986.

Over the years the Rainbeaus have evolved and changed the way we are organized and how we respond to the needs of our members. Of course change is not always easy, but when criteria change, some response is necessary. Recently the club lost a number of its most active and vibrant members. These deaths threw the club into mourning and inactivity, bringing with it a dichotomy among the members. Overcoming these losses has not been easy, but the club has moved through the worst of it and is now stronger for it.

A number of things took place the last three years to push the Club forward. In 1995 we adopted new bylaws which helped organize the club by dance level. Giving each level equal



*Cleveland treats their Adopt-A-Duck's (from Stars, Thars and Cable Cars) to a swim in the hot tub.*



influence has made the task of housing various levels of dance in the same club easier. The current board of directors has sought to strike a balance between the various needs of its members. To do this we had to step back and broaden our focus. The club now serves far more people with vastly different needs and ideas than it did when first formed.

The big change in the focus has been to move square dance to the forefront. The club no longer sees itself as gays and lesbians who happen to square dance but rather as Square Dancers. This different focus has led to a number of positive events which should strengthen and build the club at a faster pace than before. Indeed, this last year has seen our club grow by 15% (total membership is now 77) while maintaining a stable treasury and increasing revenues from fun dances — remarkable results given the fact we are executing a hiatus in MS instructions and have lowered dues to \$25 per year.

The latest change has been its admittance to the Denver Area Square and Round Dance Council. As might be expected, there was some controversy. For the club's part, we encouraged the members to express their thoughts and concerns in level meetings. We allowed all sides to be presented and discussed. As a result we discovered the majority felt it time to pursue application to the Council. Our board did, and the Council then went through their procedures for admittance and subsequently voted unanimously to accept our application. We now have access to an actual Square Dance Float for parade; we have access to targeted advertising of special and recurring events; we have a local outlet for the club's insurance; and, we now have access to the local Square Dance network. These benefits will make the club's efforts at recruitment and everyday operations much more efficient and cost effective.

The social side of the club has also changed. As our members have begun to dance more at other clubs' functions we find our own events need to be made more special. To this end we have set our dance dates to the third weekend of the month with the evening dance held for the entire club, an afternoon dance for an upper level, and a pot luck in-between. This allows members to plan ahead and also encourages friendliness among the various levels, resulting in stronger participation and involvement. Our classes are held on an ad hoc basis except for mainstream. Currently the club is producing a C1 class with two squares in attendance, and our next Mainstream class is scheduled for September 1997. September is also the likely target for our next A class. We currently have three members taking Plus from another council club at a dollar savings for both the members taking the class and for our club. We will host four special events in 1997: the Anniversary Dance in February; the annual Breast Cancer Fund Raiser in May, Kent Pieper calling; a Club Picnic and Dance in July, BJ Dwyer calling; and the Fly-in in September, Mike Desisto calling. We will also host four special events in 1998: the Anniversary Dance in February; the annual Breast Cancer Fund Raiser in May; the annual Club Picnic in July; and the A&C Weekend in September. These events, combined with the events held in the straight community, provide plenty of opportunity for dancing.

In short, the Rocky Mountain Rainbeaus are very excited about the future.

## Letter to the Editor, *continued from page 2*

sexual orientation of the dancers while "straight square dancing" refers to dance configurations?

Given all of that, I don't have any suggestions that are not cumbersome or awkward. I'd be interested to know if others have given these terms any thought, or have comments. Rather than "straight" we could say "undeclared orientation" (in contrast to "gay clubs" which are declaring an orientation), or "presumed straight" (which at least acknowledges the presumption involved). I have tried "mainstream" or "conventional," but this is also flawed since it could imply that gay clubs are somehow marginal or odd. How about "gender position prescribed," since the basic idea is that boys dance as boys and girls dance as girls?

As for describing gay clubs, I would like to see more effort made to explain the practical difference in gay square dancing: namely, that everyone involved chooses which position they wish to dance, and the genders of the dancers in couples can be in any combination. I think that we can better attract and invite people to dance by explaining the dance difference. When I was invited to dance at El Camino Reelers, I really did not know what to expect. Since it was called "gay square dancing," I (mistakenly) thought that it was done in same-gender couples ONLY. In talking to others about the club, I make a point to explain that there is no requirement about sexual orientation, and that everyone chooses what dance position they wish to learn. I also mention that I am a "boy dancer," which may help them picture this. The arrangements implied were not at all obvious to me, and appear to be equally difficult to fathom for others.

While all of this may seem incredibly picky to some of your readers, I think it has an impact. Since I do not currently identify myself as gay (unless I can simultaneously identify myself as straight), I often find organizations with "gay" in their names intimidating. I know other bisexual people who feel similarly (as well as some who don't), and undoubtedly many or most heterosexual people would hesitate to visit a "gay square dance club." If we want to dance with these folks, let's invite them to our party!

Lastly, the obvious: like the vast majority of spoken and written expression, your descriptions of gay and straight dancers and gay and straight clubs imply that there are in fact two distinct sexual orientations which are in opposition or contrast. While this is certainly the "going paradigm" in our culture, it is not everyone's experience or viewpoint. I have read and enjoyed three issues of SquareUp, and have not yet seen the word "bisexual" in print. So, if you print this letter (which I hope you will), I'll have contributed to the diversity of terminology in print in SquareUp. I'd love to hear comments from other bi, ambiguous, or "non-labeling" dancers out there.

Thanks for entertaining my thoughts on this subject and thanks again for the hours I've spent absorbed in reading your magazine!

I'd like to suggest an issue about people's experiences with dancing "boy" versus dancing "girl." For example, which part do you like better? How do they feel different? I feel I'm learning a lot from dancing the male position, and would be interested in what others have to say on the subject.

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## Dear Square Dance Travelers,

Unfortunately, very few people signed up for the two trips that I was planning this year — back to Australia and the new one to Ireland/Scotland.

I cancelled "Pink Triangles Down Under 2" in December. With reluctance, I also decided to cancel "Pink Triangles in Green & Plaid", so both travelers who did register and Anne Uebelacker had sufficient time to make other plans.

As a result, I have decided to discontinue offering tours altogether. For future travel plans, I highly recommend subscribing to these monthly publications:

"Our World" (904-441-5367) and  
"Out & About" (212-645-6922).

Thanks to all of you who helped make "Pink Triangles in Red Square" to Russia and Latvia in 1993 and "Pink Triangles Down Under" to Australia in 1996 memorable, successful and historical events. The Russians and Latvians still talk about how much fun they had with the American dancers who visited. And Melbourne in Australia now has a thriving gay and lesbian square dance club. So, happy trails to you and yellow rocks.

  
John Paul  
Pink Triangle Adventures

