

Australian Callers Federation



CallerLink

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ACF Chairman's Report.

Hi everybody.

We have returned to base after an absence of nearly 3 months. It didn't seem long enough. Considering I had planned on a square dance free trip, it may surprise you to know that we ended up visiting Nev & Bev McLaughlin at Buderin one weekend and witnessed a graduation of some 20 dancers. It is indeed great to see that we can still encourage and interest people to join our unique activity.

A couple of issues came up during my absence, but they were handled capably by the Vice Chairman Steve Turner. Thanks must also go to him for doing the chairman's report for the April issue.

The 50th National will in all probability be over by the time you receive this Callerlink. If you attended the convention I trust you not only enjoyed yourself but also had the opportunity to learn something from a callers point of view.

When I visit a club I go primarily as a dancer. But as a caller I am always alert to pick up something of value from the resident caller. This applies especially at a National when you get the opportunity to listen and dance to a great variety of callers. I have been calling for 32 years but I still believe that I can learn something from even a junior caller. We must keep an open mind on this. If life is a learning curve of experiences, then square dance calling is a never ending curve of learning. One such learning curve is the coming convention in Darwin in 2011 where there are no resident square dancers and has never had a national Convention. We callers can have a great impact in its success by endeavouring to support it and encouraging our dancers to join in the trip to Darwin.

In the event that I am not re-elected to the board and or to the chair, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow board members for their ongoing support and cooperation they have extended to me for the past 3 years.

Jeff Van Sambeeck
Chairman

Editor's Ramblings

It's time for the National, in fact it's time for the 50th National and we in the West are naturally excited that it's in our part of Australia. Years of planning will be switched on soon and many happy dancers will converge on Perth. We are looking forward to opportunity to show you our state and sharing a good time of dancing. We are also looking forward to renewing acquaintances and making new friends. We hope you enjoy your time over here and go away with only good memories. We will miss the callers and dancers who couldn't come and hope to catch up with them next time. We will especially miss those who couldn't come due to circumstances beyond their control. And under that heading I'm sure many of us will miss not having Graham Rigby in person, I know I will.

All the best

Jeff Garbutt

Philippines Square Dance Experience – January 2009

(Brian Hotchkies)

It's Sunday morning, and our tour party of 18 Square Dancers is assembled in the Philippine Airlines area of Sydney's International Airport – excited & enthusiastic about our two-week trip to the Philippines. Our mission: To introduce Square Dancing at the Benguet State University (BSU) with around 2,000 of their students and staff.

We had our first class with students in the University gymnasium. Each group was scheduled for a two hour lesson, and during this time I would teach the basic fundamentals of our wonderful activity. Although very similar, I tried to make each class just a little different so our helpers would not become bored by continually doing the same thing for eight, or nine hours every day for two weeks.

I would typically teach for around 40 to 50 minutes, then have a short break before starting again. With most groups I'd use the last 30 minutes or so of the two hour session to do some "fun-stuff" with them.

The interest, enthusiasm, energy, and speed of learning which the majority of students exhibited amazed us all. I had really expected that, at least some of the dancers on tour with us, would attend the first day or two of lessons, then want to go off somewhere to do sight seeing, or shopping, etc. but all were so taken with every aspect of the students, that not one person missed a single session – and some days we didn't finish until after 6:00 in the evening..!

Size of most groups I taught at the BSU campus was around 15 sets. The smallest being 8, and the largest 29. Because of time constraints we only worked with each group just the once – with a couple of exceptions. In comparison with classes I've taught here in Australia, I felt that every group over there was above average in almost every department. They were a joy, and a pleasure to teach, and to be with.

Nursing students were one of the groups I was able to work with on more than one occasion. This was mainly due to them wanting to come back as helpers when they had a free period from other lectures. Their regular classes were at the other end of the campus – over a kilometre from the gymnasium, and as there was no transport available, walking was the only option, which they did on several occasions. Nothing seemed to be too much trouble.

All groups were exceptional learners, but the nurses were probably the best. As a consequence, Estrellita (head of the University Physical Education & Sports staff) selected four sets of nursing students to present a demonstration of Square Dancing at the formal Friday night dinner for ourselves and visiting management staff from other Universities.

Figures danced in this demonstration included: Grand Slide, Allemande Thar, Shoot the Star, Ladies Chain, Star Thru, as well as a selection of the usual Basic figures. During their afternoon rehearsal, the four squares also did an easy *progressive squares* routine, where all the sets moved (with S/D calls) from one location to another – they were absolutely amazing.

The people at the University, and Orphanage were so enthusiastic, appreciative of our efforts, and fast at learning..!! I'm sure there'll be a follow-up visit when one can be arranged. If there's a possibility **YOU** could accompany us, you should make it a serious consideration.

Brian

CAN I REMEMBER? (By Paul Long)

Unlike a lot of very lucky callers I personally do not have a great memory and have no problem publicly saying so. Of Late I have been consciously making an effort to train my memory by taking at least three get outs, conversions, equivalents or zeros and by visualizing them and repeating them over and over before I go to club I have found it easier to remember on the night.

After attending a recent CAWA seminar on Memory by my good old' mate Steve Turner I have now been given another tool to work with which is helping me to memorize these conversions, get outs and zeros.

During the seminar Steve explained to our group that he remembers certain situations by creating a picture in his mind, visualizing it and giving it a title.

Here are a couple of examples from Steve, which most of us would recognize!

A simple conversion from a Zero box to a Zero Line

Swing –thru – girls circulate – boy trade – boy run – bend line

The Girl circulate – Boy trade part reminds Steve of Acey Ducey in Plus so Steve remembers this conversion as **“The AD”**

A simple conversion from a Zero Line to Zero Box

Touch ¼ - single file circulate – boy run

Steve calls this **“Touch a Single”**

Fairly self explanatory, everyone touch ¼ and single file circulate

Both the above are simple examples, never the less an effective method for memorizing.

Along with what I was already trying I have been working on this system.

Here are a few get outs which I often use and now have given a title which has enhanced my effectiveness of memorising each one.

Naturally everyone would visualize a different picture, hence more than likely come up with a different title.

Zero Box Get out title - TOUCH RIGHT & LEFT

BIC - Touch ¼ - Girls Run - Left Touch ¼ - Boys Run - Where's partner! - Right & Left Grand

Not brilliant choreography but the picture in my mind tells me that from a zero Box I am going to call Touch ¼ and Left Touch ¼ ,the girls and boys run just seems to come as I have pictured it. More to the point I can memorize it and still provide an alternative to a get from a Zero box.

Here is a get out from a Zero Line that I often use but on occasions I seem to call R&L thru first or forget parts of it. Not any more!

Zero Line Get Out title – REVERSE GIRLS DIAGONALLY

LIP – reverse Flutter wheel – pass thru – wheel & deal – Centres veer right – girls diagonally pass thru – R&L grand

The REVERSE in the title clearly sends a picture in my mind to call Reverse Flutter wheel first - the Girls Diagonally – gives me the hint for centres veer left to set up for the girls to diagonally Pass thru.

Here is another get out from Zero Lines that I like to use combining everyone leading right and the If you want to concept , once again I find it easier to remember and call now I have given it a title and pictured in my mind that from Zero lines everyone leads right – I need to trade by to get couples facing – then call the if you want part.
The key for me is in the Title.

Zero Line get out title – LEAD RIGHT IF YOU WANT

LIP – Everyone Lead Right – Trade by – If you want circle to a line – If you didn't Swing thru – Where's Partner - R&L Grand

Regardless of what calling methods are used such as sight ,memory ,que cards, modules etc we as callers have much to remember and all have a great deal of knowledge and store much information in our memory bank which we call upon night after night calling at a square dance , definitions , lyrics ,names , modules ,jokes, get outs , zeros , equivalents and the list goes on.

Callers use a method of calling which best suits him or her, which is fine as long the individual is comfortable and more importantly gives the dancers variety. I have found personally whilst sight calling the important of memorized sequences such as get outs etc are a much needed combination for variety and dancer pleasure.

I have called along side many callers that simply amaze me at what they remember, whatever system or means, good luck to them I say. I on the other hand welcome ideas such as Steve presentation and I know there were other callers present that were of the same opinion.

I have been calling for a number of years and many would know my biggest struggle as a caller is remembering, so if you are like me and I'm sure there is one or two that are, have a go! I am not about to say I could rattle off every bit of choreography I have but I can say the use of this system over a short time has definitely helped me memorize choreography that I normally would not.

Like everything we do as callers it takes time, practice and hard work but I can honestly say it has helped me and would like to thank Steve for allowing me to relate my story and share it with you via this article. Hope to catch up with many of you at The 50th National.

Now, what was that date? Just Kidding – See you in June

Paul

Learners & Teaching Them

Learners Classes are the life blood & the means by which our square dance activity can survive. As I see it there are many callers, clubs, & societies that are not really trying to promote & assist in our survival. I am probably called old fashion but I still believe we should run an evening class separate from our mainstream night to promote & teach new recruits into the activity. This has a two fold effect on square dancing: (1) it give the new people a full night of learning, & “angels’ can be controlled to a certain degree. Teaching will take time; time is what we must give them! (2) Our clubs can retain a higher standard of dancing without upsetting our regular dancers. How often do we see a regular dancer bring a learner into a square saying “*you’ll be right*” & then breaking down the set? I also believe we should run regular annual learners classes, as this not only gives more people the opportunity to come along & learn, but keeps the activity out in the public eye.

Too many callers are too quick of the mark when it comes to running higher programs without much thought to learners. (How many callers have a “Plus” club that has greater numbers of dancers than their mainstream clubs?) It is far easier to teach existing dancers something new rather that to teach new people how to dance. We loose so many dancers through natural attrition, old age, illness & for many other reasons, & we need to keep on replacing them with new dancers.

I look at America & even here in Australia to a lesser degree at the so called professional callers & most are heading to higher programs, but few run basic learners classes (they are far too good to call to learners, & place them into the “*Too hard basket*”) consequently our numbers are dwindling & standards are falling!

Looking back at some of older callers, some of which are no longer with us unfortunately, but what they did for the movement has proven my point, if you continually run classes for learners numbers will grow & the movement will survive. We have callers that turn up at State or National events with just their music & no dancers to support the occasion. We have callers that in my view would be just at home with a full length mirror as they do not watch what the floor is actually doing & appear to be more wrapped up in themselves than the dancers in front of them. To call at State & National events you are representing your club/state & should have club members present for you to call to & not rely on other dancers! Dancers will support you if you support them!

This year I’m starting my promotions off with a charity night with the “S.A. Police Dixie Band” & will include square dancing. The charity is “Childhood Cancer” & square dancing will be bounced off the public at this event, getting them up to try this great activity of ours. Please try different ways in which to place square dancing in front of the pubic for your promotions. Give us your ideas on publicity & thoughts on promotion! Our editor would love to hear from you also!

I know this article will provoke a few, but I hope it will stir some of you up into running another learner’s class this year with more commitment & a lot more success!

Jeff Seidel
South Australia

THE DISSAPPEARING DANCER

There has been a lot said about the downturn in dancer numbers over the last couple of years. Callers are looking for reasons and avenues to try to turn this around and also encourage the younger dancer into the movement. I personally don't have the answers but after reading the "MS 2009 Program Review" put my mind to work (rare).

Firstly comments from dancers in recent times with responses when asked why:

1. That was boring. (Mainstream dancer visiting a mainstream club)
2. We're not going back there again, we felt like fools. (Recently graduated learner going to a mainstream club)
3. We won't go to a mainstream dance because we don't know it. (A2 dancers learning C)

Responses:

1. Basically did the same dance all night to different tunes – Grand Square, square thru – swing thru. (I have actually danced a tip of 3 singing calls with all 3 dances using exactly the same opener and figure.)
2. The dancers knew what the caller was going to call and were starting the move before the call and just pushed us around as though we knew nothing.
3. It's been that long ago since we did a lot of the mainstream moves that we have forgotten them.

There's probably heaps of others like "I don't like that caller because..." and so on.

When watching dancers from the viewpoint of a non-dancer I see a few things that may turn potential dancers away from the movement. Things like:

1. A caller slips up and has the dancers promenading out of sequence – "Brown's Cows" mingling to square the set.
2. Stops calling and carries on singing the song leaving the dancers to do their own thing – "...weave the ring (sings song), heads...".
3. Moves that don't look good. One that stands out is "Load the Boat".
4. Dancers that anticipate, subsequently causing a breakdown.

From all this I look in the mirror and ask these questions:

1. From day 1 do we teach: style, timing, set co-ordination, set orientation.
2. Do we use exercises (non mainstream) to condense above
3. Do we teach the base for some moves – e.g. "Dixie" for "Dixie style to wave"
4. What actions to take to eliminate anticipation.
5. What happened to the "Golden Rules"
6. Do we teach the accepted procedure for dancers to perform, to correct an "out of sequence" promenade. (if not told otherwise in the call)
7. How many of us are too anxious to get the dancers into plus before they can dance mainstream competently.
8. How many callers vs how many karaoke singers.

A little food for thought that can be expanded and will probably get me into trouble.

ALAN EADES

And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda

*But the band played "Waltzing Matilda,"
When we stopped to bury our slain,
Well, we buried ours, and the Turks buried theirs,
Then we started all over again.*

These were the words that for some reason came to mind as I was on my way to the 2nd funeral in 2 weeks for an ex dancer. Both had featured in my early years as a new caller. They were learning to dance as I was learning to call and both had become long term supporters of square dancing on the Central Coast and regulars through the doors of Tuggerah Hall.

Of course, as both had aged they'd got to the stage where regular participation in square dancing just didn't happen but firm friendships had been struck with others of a similar vintage. So now, for them, it was afternoon teas or visits in hospital that became the norm.

But the song kept coming back to me and I started to wonder how many other parts were as relevant to Square Dancing today as they were to ANZAC day when Eric Bogle wrote the words so long ago.

*But the band plays "Waltzing Matilda,"
And the old men still answer the call,
But as year follows year, more old men disappear
Someday, no one will march there at all.*

Our activity is dwindling and those that are left grow old. This is what was happening to ANZAC day particularly following the Vietnam War. It was as if we were too embarrassed to remember war and my generation was starting to question the point. Now through the schools, acceptance of the Vietnam Vets etc. my children's generation are passionate enough about ANZAC day to make a pilgrimage to ANZAC Cove. How many of my or my parents generation made that pilgrimage in their youth? None. So how do we start to orchestrate a similar change in attitude towards Square Dancing? We need to change our attitude first.

*And the old men march slowly, all bones stiff and sore,
They're tired old heroes from a forgotten war
And the young people ask "What are they marching for?"
And I ask meself the same question.*

Change march to dance and sometimes when I look at the dance floor this is what I see. The older people do dance slowly. The arthritic pain and loss of hearing has removed the spring from the step and taken the smile from the faces. Are they really enjoying themselves or are they "Reviving old dreams of past glory"?

And those that were left, well, we tried to survive. I'm starting to wonder if this will be me in a few years time. Trying to survive in a world where square dancing (or square dancers) have all moved on. I'm not yet 50 but I've been calling for 32 years, just like I've been working for 33 years and somewhere down the track I'd like to use some of that "Long Service" leave to tour the world like the generations before me.

Where are the young callers? Will there be any (many) dancers left anyway. I think we will need a massive change in our attitude before we see an increase in the number of young people joining us (these days in square dance terms young = under 50).

First, we need to smile and look like we are enjoying our selves, laugh a little, especially when someone else makes a mistake make sure you laugh with them...

We need to be more welcoming with out being overwhelming, particularly with the very young (>20). Here's one comment that's come back to me. "I love my grand kids but I don't want to dance with them, so why would I want to dance with someone else's". This person has chosen short term pleasure over the long term viability of square dancing.

Let the young ones kick up their heels. Let them "Square Up" at conventions, dance fast, change squares, swing fast. All those things that I liked to do when I was a teenager and sometimes still do. I'm sure they don't want to dance with someone else's grand parent all night either. But they don't mind dancing with older dancers as long as they have some fun time and some young time.

We need to relax our dress code. We don't need to push early 1950's fashion. David Jones stopped pushing big petticoats about 50 years ago, perhaps we could take the hint. Make them an option rather than a necessity.

To the memory of Vince Mckenzie and Arthur Grieve and for the future of Square Dancing.

Lest we forget.

And their ghosts may be heard as we round up by that billabong, who'll come a waltzing matilda with me?

Gary Carpenter

Callerlink is circulated every even numbered month. Articles for Callerlink are welcome and can be sent by:

- Post - typed or neatly handwritten to 1 Spinnaker Drive, Australind, WA 6233 – We don't have FAX
- E-mail – jeffgarbutt@gmail.com - in either WORD, PDF, Text or HTML but not PUBLISHER.
- Or submitted Through your ACF State Co-ordinator.

Please remember that articles from other publications are probably subject to copyright and we need to get permission to reproduce them. So if you find an article from somewhere else we need full details of the other organisation including who and how to contact them.

Closing date for articles is the 15th of each odd numbered month.

Recent Callerlinks are available at: <http://members.westnet.com.au/jefffracie/callerlinks.html>

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If you have anything you would like to advertise in the way of goods and services of value to other callers, please submit it to the editor.

Accredited Caller Coach Steve Turner

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WANTED - MEMORABILIA

I would like written material & photographs that can be placed on the ACF website. Some people have sent records & newspapers, I thank them for this, but articles & photographs would be better suited.

E.g. articles on: Fred Burn, Cyril Edwards, and Graeme Whiteley from Tassie. Les Johnson, Eric Wendell, Ron Jones, Tom McGrath, Vince Spillane, Ron Whyte, Les Schroder, Jack Murphy, Wally Cook, Ron Mennie, David Hooper, & there are numerous others you could help me out with.

I will be putting something down on Colin Huddleston & Allan Frost & some other South Australian callers. Please help out by supplying some history from your state for the ACF website.

Regards Jeff Seidel

The next exciting issue of CallerLink comes out in August 2009 !

If you have material you would like to be considered for publication, please submit it to the Editor or your state rep by 15th of July 2009 at the latest. State co-ordinators – get your reports to the Chairman. It's your newsletter – and you can make a difference.

Squares 'round Australia

New South Wales

This year we are holding a Callers seminar on the Central Coast NSW with Steve Turner, over the weekend 27th November, 2009 to Sunday Lunchtime 29th Nov. 2009.

Cost for A.C.F. members will be \$ 140.00.

I would like to invite interested Interstate Callers to register their expression of interest.

Andy Lown
NSW ACF Co-ordinator.

Western Australia

State Coordinators Report

It has been a relatively quiet month, however, in saying that preparation for the forthcoming 50th Australian National Square Dance Convention have taken precedent over everything else and needless to say we are looking forward so very much to having you here with us.

Preparations for the national have really progressed and everything seems to be in order for what I am sure will be a very memorable, exciting and fun filled experience for all who attend.

A couple of things I really should make mention of are the recognition of 30 years of calling by our own Ken Pike (well done Kenny) and an unbelievable seminar based on memory skills presented by Steve Turner. I have noticed with great interest that since achieving CallerLab Accredited Caller Coach status Steve has started presenting workshops and seminars throughout Australia and beyond. May I take this opportunity to recommend that if you have the opportunity to attend one of these sessions "take it". Steve's subject matter, experience and presentation are really something not to be missed.

Looking forward so very much to seeing you in Perth.

Kevin Kelly

Victoria

Hi everyone, it has been a bit quiet in Victoria since our last report. During the month of May two clubs celebrated milestone birthdays. Westgate Square Dance Club celebrated its 30th birthday and Jaybee Square Wheelers celebrated its 25th birthday. We send our congratulations to Frank Kennedy and Mike Davey the respective callers. Westgate was started by Frank in 1979, when Frank took a break for a number of years to travel Neil Wynn and David Tucker ran the club together. Frank returned to Westgate after a number of years to take the club to its 30th birthday and it is still going strong. Jaybee Square Wheelers was formed by Jack Burgess in 1984, in May 1989 Mike Davey was selected to be the club caller after the sudden passing of Jack. Mike has taken the club through to its 25th birthday.

With the 51st National Convention now just around the corner, Victoria will turn its attention to ensuring that those dancers and callers who travel to the Convention will have a wonderful dance experience.

Howard Cockburn

Tasmania

Hi from Tassie

This year Perth is hosting the 50th National - A huge mile-stone in the history of Square Dancing in Australia. But WA isn't the only state going for gold! Just last weekend, (the 16th of May) saw Golden Celebrations for Graeme & Shirley Whiteley. Graeme was presented with his Golden Microphone Award and Certificate by his long time friend and fellow initial board member of the ACF, Jeff Seidel. Shirley was showered with accolades and flowers (behind every good man there is a woman?) Without a doubt, Shirley Whiteley has been in there boots & all. Tassie honoured the occasion, (honoured Graeme), with 6 sets up the whole night. His club put on the best country supper imaginable and dancing continued until 11.30pm. Celebrations flowed into Sunday with a BBQ and dancing at the Whiteley's family home. We applaud you, Graeme & Shirley. You (and others like you) inspire us all.

See you all in a square in Perth,

Yours in Squares,
Di Austen,
Tassie

Queensland

All is well in the Sunshine State! The QCA has just held its Quarterly Meeting at Logan City Square Dance Centre and very much appreciated the hospitality extended by the Centre. The QCA Annual Gala Dance, incorporating the Amateur Caller Contest is confirmed as the afternoon of Saturday 22 August preceding the evening Society's Sunshine State Round Up. The Qld State convention is being hosted by Alan Allemanders at Cleveland on the weekend 11-13 September. Next year's State Convention will be hosted in Rockhampton. This is my last report as State Coordinator, and I wish Gary Petersen every success in his taking over the position on the ACF Board and as the ACF State Coordinator for Qld.

David Smythe