

Past Chairman's Article

By Mike Seastrom

It's Fun!

It's all about fun! It's really been all about fun for many, many years. We get exercise, experience some of the best social interaction possible, and the joy to moving to music all at the same time. When we really get down to the "nitty gritty", it's all about the fun of this "team dancing" activity.

We don't need to master any fancy footwork or execute dance maneuvers that require certain head, shoulder, or arm positions, and as long as we move forward (somewhat in step with the music) and we don't interfere with others, it works! We dance as a team of eight: and with just a little cooperation and some friendly interaction in a sporting-like mind-set, we succeed and have a ton of fun.

Now it seems that part of the human condition, is at times, adversarial. Sometimes we have a tendency to complain; to look more often at what's not right with things, instead of counting our blessings and enjoying what's right and positive. Sometimes the politics of our clubs, associations, and organizations have actually caused our participants to quit dancing entirely. The responsibilities of being a caller, cuer, or dance leader have often been so overwhelming and stressful that one's life becomes too busy and frantic. We've seen some of our dancers and leaders decrease their involvement (or drop out of the activity entirely) just to maintain some balance and sanity in their lives. In this way, our activity faces the same challenges that every other organized group in society deals with. Approaching our participation with the right kind of balance and attitude can enhance the fun that occurs naturally with our unique dance.

There are big differences in size, anatomy, and "dance fit" of all our dancers. This could be annoying to some, but most of us have really learned to enjoy and have fun with these differences. Some of us just fit together better when we swing, do arm turns, promenade and dance the calls, but the enjoyment of being considerate and succeeding as a member of the "team" just adds to the fun we have.

How many times have you looked around a hall of dancers and noticed the diversity of the people attending the event? There are people of all walks of life, people of many different vocations, and so many different cultures and personalities. Many of us wouldn't have much in common, if it wasn't for our dance, and most of us wouldn't be interacting with each other if it weren't for square dancing. Our dance gives us a big opportunity to have a great time with a very diverse group of people. I imagine that this one thing (feeling intimidated or uncomfortable) has caused some new dancers to drop out, and yet with the right attitude it can be another unique characteristic of our dance that just adds to the fun.

In every club, at every dance, and at every festival or jamboree, there are dancers of differing abilities. There are new dancers, dancers who are very experienced, and dancers who have varying abilities to dance successfully due to age and/or physical

limitations. Sometimes dancers in our square have danced to a caller many times and some have never danced to that same caller. Some dancers can be nervous and others confident and poised. Some would look at this diversity as challenging or unpleasant, but the majority of us have learned otherwise.

Most of us realize that we are a team, and the success of each of us makes all of us succeed. We've learned that helping each other can not only be gratifying, but can be a major part of the fun. We also know that sometimes, we too "draw a blank", and need a little guidance. This can be one of the biggest joys of our dance when it all comes together and our square succeeds because or in spite of us. Again, with the right attitude, it's fun!

People all over the world are and have been enjoying square dancing for many years now. We have some serious issues to resolve to preserve our dance form for future generations. Yet the inherent fun of the dance, the natural joy of moving to music, and the ability of most of us to embrace and have fun with the diversity of our participants, makes this dance activity one of the best recreations around.

Let's rise to the occasion and look to the future. We may have to help our activity evolve faster than it has over the years, because we all know the world and our daily lives are changing at an incredible pace. Each generation is very different from the one before it, and what was popular with one generation is quickly old-fashioned with the next. We might even have to change the name, the costume, the programs, the halls we dance in, the amount we charge for each event, and update the way we market our dance. But to me there is one thing that is very clear. It's worth the effort to preserve an activity that has so many social and health benefits for so many different age groups. Most of all, because it's so much fun!