

Ron Nelson....a brief biography

Ron Nelson began his career in calling dances at the age of 16 in Central Florida. His first teacher, Don Armstrong, gave Ron a solid foundation in a broad range of dance forms, i.e. squares, contras, rounds, mixers, mescolanzas, and others.

Ron's first opportunity to teach was as a student at the University of South Florida, where he taught a variety of squares, contras, and mixers in his Physical Education classes.

Later, as a young sailor, he taught classes in Norfolk, VA. Fifteen years later Ron was calling for 5 different clubs and teaching their classes. As president of the Hampton Roads Callers Association he organized and taught a class for beginning square dance callers. Meeting weekly over a period of many months, Ron was responsible for teaching all aspects of calling square dances to an average of 10 caller trainees.

In 1981, Ron relocated to Texas, where he became the club caller for clubs in three states (TX, AR, & LA). Over this period of time he organized a contra dance exhibition group which performed at the state conventions for Arkansas and Texas. While living in Texas, Ron developed a relationship with well known caller-coach Cal Golden and called frequently for Cal's club in Hot Springs.

Ron became a recording artist on several record labels during the years he spent in Virginia and Texas.

Relocating to San Diego, CA in 1983, Ron was soon immersed in calling 5 to 6 nights per week. His programs encompassed beginner through C-1 choreography.

In 1988, Ron began production on "Let's Square Dance!", a 30 minute television program which aired until 1990. Ron was the Executive Producer, Director, and editor for the 42 episodes. His Associate Producer and Host of the show was Kenn Reid. Thanks to the efforts of nearly 20 volunteers, "Let's Square Dance!" aired on 8 southern California cable systems.

As Ron matured, his dancing tastes gravitated more toward the traditional forms of square dancing. He felt that there was not enough dancing "to the music" in squares. Contra dancing became a passion which he ultimately satisfied by helping to form the Reels & Squares, a contra/traditional dance club. Thanks to the efforts of five fellow dance callers who shared Ron's passion, Reels & Squares has offered an open dance format for over twenty years. Now, Ron shares the calling duties with only one other caller, Jimmy Akin. The program they offer there includes contras, visiting couple squares, New England quadrilles, circle dance mixers, Appalachian "big circle" dances, and an occasional English Country Dance.

As he prepares to enter his 50th year of calling square dances, Ron is embarking upon a new television project. His new show, "BARN DANCE!", will focus on visits to historic locations which provide a comfortable environment for traditional Americab social dance. Viewer's will have the opportunity to visit and learn the history of each "barn", whether it be an historic barn, town hall, or grange hall. He will be visiting modern western square dance clubs, modern contras, traditional square and contra dances, and other traditional American social dance forms. Ron recently returned from a trip to New England to document dances in New Hampshire and Connecticut, and has plans for other locations throughout the USA. Look for "BARN DANCE!" to air on a major cable network next season.