

JAY OREM

The old saw about a "friend in need" certainly holds true with us here at SETS IN ORDER.

Back in November of 1948 I had just struggled thru the initial issue of the then brand new Square Dance magazine. The whole operation was just about a one-man job - writing copy - selling ads - distribution, etc. I remember this one couple coming up to me at Pappy Shaws' Institute and asking if there was any way they might be of assistance. That was just about my first meeting with Jay and Helen Orem.

Helen, it turned out, was a writer and, man-oh-man, how I needed a writer!

Jay said he wasn't particularly trained for magazine work but he was willing to help out temporarily wherever he might be needed. Well - "temporarily" has added up to more than seven years of close association. Today Jay's our business manager with advertising, Institute planning, and office management just a part of his activity.

Most important along with the fact that Jay has become a warm personal friend is the fact that he and Helen have been enthusiastic Square and Round Dancers for 10 years. They've served as officers on clubs - helped organize classes and been on just about every conceivable type of Club committee. They've square danced their way across the country and during it all have gained a most valuable knowledge of Club organization. Since it's formation in 1950 these two have been at almost every meeting of the Council of Associations in Southern California and in this way have added to their storehouse of information on Association matters.

This week Jay will be conducting two sessions of a special Clinic on Clubs and Associations. In his preparatory work he took quite an intensive poll of various areas and has tabulated the results on the pages that follow. (Cs)

CLUBS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Facts, Figures, and How to Lick Some Problems

The structure of the square dance world as we know it today is made up of four major parts; dancers, callers, musicians and the places to dance. Without any one, the whole would be nothing. Out of these elements develop many organizational units such as square dance clubs and associations and it is with these organizations for dancers we are primarily concerned in this treatise.

Realizing that any activity that has mushroomed as rapidly as did square and round dancing brings with it vast organizational problems that the average volunteer officer is not prepared to meet, it seems beneficial to present an educational program suggested by those in the position of having solved some problems and trying to solve still more.

What may be a problem today in Westport, Connecticut may have been solved yesterday in Brighton, Colorado. So - a detailed questionnaire was sent to some association heads throughout the country and the results tabulated here and presented for study and discussion. It may help to more easily meet some of the common experiences.

PART I - RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility seems like a very solemn word to use in connection with something which is as much fun as square dancing. But, whether we like it or not, there are certain responsibilities which, when well dealt with, add to our own fun as well as that of everyone else.

CALLER

He is there to lead, entertain and teach.

These following basics will insure a good job: Call to the majority of the floorful of dancers; Don't try to be a showoff; Keep up on the best of the new materials; Cooperate with clubs and associations in reasonable requests; Present a balanced program; Promote square dancing instead of person; Encourage and promote friendliness; Be an entertainer if it doesn't distract from the calling; Develop cooperation between callers; Be prepared with the proper equipment and music to do the job.

DANCER

First of all, TO HAVE FUN. How?

A reasonably large application of any one or all of the following ideas should do the trick. Take an active interest in the club and be willing to serve on committees or as officers when called upon. Attend regularly. Express hospitality - friendliness. Try to "give" - cultivate extrovert qualities. Avoid being "clique-y." Be courteous. Keep the thing a hobby - a relaxing recreation. Welcome newcomers. Follow appropriate leadership. Be a good sport. Listen to the caller and try to dance as well as you can. Keep drinking away from square dancing. Avoid petty gossip. Cooperate with the caller. It takes a two way team to make a successful dance.

CLUB

The club is probably the most important factor next to the dancer himself in the entire activity. The term club as I have used it here is meant to mean any group assembled to square dance. Because of this the real responsibility to the dancers lies in the lap of the club and therefore of its delegated officers. In some groups which are caller-controlled and operated, the responsibility naturally falls in his lap. But it still remains a responsibility of the group for the benefit of the individual dancer.

The club will have the responsibility of furnishing the caller, the music sometimes, place to dance, necessary programs to interest and develop new dancers and hold the interest of old ones. To provide the facility and the necessary conveniences to properly entertain guest of the dancers is the club's responsibility.

ASSOCIATION

The association will have the responsibility of performing or helping to perform functions necessary for the benefit of the club or caller which can be executed by the association better than by the individual or club. Work with the club, caller, other associations and the public.

The association essays to find solutions for common problems, facilitate the giving of large area affairs, promote good fellowship and hospitality between clubs and their dancers. It campaigns for new dancers, advises on legal and legislative problems, co-ordinate with clubs, caller and a place to dance.

PART II - CLUB ORGANIZATION

In organizing a square dance club, there are a few important points to remember. Although the situations vary according to location and circumstance, there is much common ground. These are basic:

1. Keep your organization simple. The simpler the club government, the fewer the rules, the better.
2. Your purpose in the club is to dance together in a spirit of friendliness and cooperation, with each member willing to do his share.
3. Provide a workable plan to encourage new people to come into square dancing and into your club membership.
4. Keep it fun - keep it a hobby.

Just to see how your club stacks up, you might use the following CHECK-OFF LIST to apply:

1. Is your governing structure simple and do you operate with as few officers and rules as possible?
2. Do your officers and appointed committees follow through on delegated assignments?
3. Do you keep your accumulated funds as low as practical and when you do spend them, are they directed towards the betterment of square dancing?

4. Does your membership welcome new members into the group?
5. Do you welcome guests regularly? Do the individual members see that the guests have a good time and "mix" with them?
6. Do you all make it your business at each dance to see that everybody is having a good time - dancers, callers and music?
7. Does your membership take a general and specific interest in constantly bettering the square dance movement?
8. What is your attitude on, and have you formed a smoothly operating answer to:
 - a. Refreshments?
 - b. Finances (taxes and insurance) charges, etc.?
 - c. Teen-agers being included?
 - d. Party nights?
 - e. Elimination of drinking at or before dances?

ASSOCIATION ORGANIZATION

The association of square dance clubs has come into being as an instrument of helping individual clubs with problems they are unable to solve on their own. Again, these are basic points for successful organization:

1. Keep the "organizing" at a minimum, as in the individual clubs.
2. Be sure you can keep your association area well covered. Geographical distances should be only as far as the association can comfortably reach.
3. Don't lose sight of the reason for existence - to help clubs and dancers.
4. Spread the news of your association's doings. Keep your clubs interested.
5. Follow through. When you volunteer for a job, stay with it and do it the best you can.

Now, you might try this CHECK-OFF LIST on your association:

1. Is your governing structure simple?
2. Do you have just enough rules and regulations to get by, not enough to get in the way?
3. Do your officers take a real interest and follow through on duties and assignments?
4. Is your treasury kept at a reasonably low level? Are surpluses spent to further square dancing?
5. Does your association only attempt to cover an area where there is no geographical problem of getting delegates to meetings as often as necessary?

6. Are you always looking for and offering means of helping your clubs with their problems?
7. Do you look for and welcome new dancers - new clubs - into the organization?
8. Are you always working at ways to keep your present dancers interested and to re-interest drop-outs?
9. Do you have a sure-fire method of getting the news of the association - what goes on at general meetings, etc. - back to the individual dancers?
10. Are you alert to the legal aspects which affect your hobby?
11. Do you keep familiar with the facilities and support offered by community organizations?
12. Do you have a smoothly operating plan of co-ordination between out-going and in-coming association officers?
13. What are you doing about:
 - a. Getting new dancers?
 - b. Absorbing beginners into regular groups?
 - c. Co-ordinating between caller, club, association and dancer?
 - d. Finding adequate additional halls to dance where needed?

PART III - FUTURE OF SQUARE DANCING

From the questionnaires also, frank views on the future of Square Dancing in the various areas brought out reasons why those questioned found it good or not so good.

Here are comments that show some of the things that have brought good results and hence a bright outlook for square dancing: More private parties to which beginners were invited have brought more people into square dancing. Encouragement of spectators has resulted in new dancers. Exceptional leadership by teachers and callers is praised in one area. More new clubs and more new classes mean a growing future. Dances kept on a fun level. Active teen programs in and out of schools, sincere study of the real problems and corrective action taken by the leaders have proved helpful. "New blood" in form of beginners with some oldsters dropping out, the dancers taking more control and the caller having less, a plan to revive the interests of drop outs, and additional emphasis on square dancing as good clean entertainment have improved local situations. Several wrote that square dancing has achieved a good balance or that it has leveled off on a firm foundation or has reached a "settling normal healthy state."

Others expressed a need for more classes, more dancers, more unselfish leadership and there were some very definite problems that tended to make the future of square dancing not so bright in certain areas. Some of the problems mentioned are too few qualified leaders, over organization within an area, callers with high level calling but with no ability or desire to teach, too great a turn over, exploitation for fund raising, too much drinking, too many non-professional callers, too many clubs, poor arrangements for adjusting beginners to club level dancing, no longer free classes by the recreation department, use of live music when club could not afford it, dancers who will not serve as club officers, beginners not welcome, too few people for the number of clubs, small towns too

far apart and not enough dancers in each group, lack of interest in big dances, jamborees, etc., poor facilities (halls) and not enough in number, insufficient new blood and lots of other related problems.

PART IV - CONCLUSIONS

Square dancing is the only truly American dance. It, together with the style of round dancing now being done, may be shown to the rest of the world and to our friends and neighbors with pride as the real representatives of Americana and our democratic system.

It is our chosen hobby in which man and wife, boy or girl, or children may proudly and joyously participate. It offers the finest qualifications for clean, active enjoyment to meet anyone's requirements. Cooperation, coordination, friendliness, courtesy, use of the Golden Rule, love and an unlimited capacity for fun and joy are the characteristics on which this community activity is built. It is inexpensive, informal, available to anyone from any walk of life and does not necessitate nor include liquor of any kind.

To maintain this, our activity, and safeguard it against the destructive problems which constantly must be met, we must insure that the necessary organizational structures are formed, maintained and operated efficiently, simply and intelligently.

In closing this report we would like to express our thanks to the following associations for filling out and returning the questionnaires sent to them. The material and conclusions brought out in this report have been based on general analysis and averages from the answers given. It must be kept in mind that the answers and comments are primarily those of dancers although they are influenced to a degree by the answers received from the callers' association.

Mobile Square Dance Assoc., Mobile, Alabama
 Tucson Square Dance Council, Arizona
 Yuma County Square Dance Assoc., Arizona
 Arkansas State Federation of Square Dance Clubs
 Central California Callers Assoc.
 Cow Counties Hoedown Assoc., Colton, California
 Heartland Callers Assoc., San Diego, California
 Heartland Square Dance Federation, Lemon Grove, California
 Imperial Valley Square Dancers Assoc., California
 Palomar Square Dancers Assoc., Escondido, California
 Round Dance Teachers Assoc. of Southern California
 San Diego Square Dancers Assoc., California
 South Coast Assoc. of Square Dance Clubs, California
 Connecticut Square Dance Callers and Teachers Assoc.
 South Bend Callers Club, Indiana
 Decatur Square Dance Assoc., Illinois
 Illinois Federation of Square Dance Clubs
 Quad-City Callers Assoc., Illinois
 Old Colony Callers & Teachers Assoc., Eastern Massachusetts
 Ann Arbor Square Dance Leaders Assoc., Michigan
 Michigan Square Dance Leaders Assoc.
 Saginaw Valley Callers Assoc., Michigan
 Minnesota Folk Dance Federation
 Sedalia Square Dance Assoc., Missouri

North Dakota Square Dance Assoc.
Rogue Valley Square Dance Callers Assoc., Oregon
Willamette Valley Square Dance Callers Assoc., Oregon
Blair County Round and Square Dance Assoc., Inc., Altoona, Pa.
South Dakota Square & Folk Dance Fed.
First District of Texas Square Dance Assoc.
Houston Area Callers Assoc.
The Square and Folk Dance Federation of Washington
The Square Dance Assoc. of Montgomery County, Washington, D. C.
Tri-State Square Dance Assoc., West Virginia
Square Dance Assoc. of Wisconsin

Helen and Jay Orem