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AMERICAN SQUARES

Vol. III, No. 2

A Magazine Dedicated to American Folk Dancing

STANDARDIZATION OF CALLS

by J. "Cal" Moore

I consider the following calls as more or less fundamental and feel that the execution of them should be standardized: Do-si-do, sash-shay, swing opposites, once and a half, turn right back, all around, see-saw, corner swing, balance and swing, honor partners or corners, right and left through, etc.

Do-si-do: The Texas style of executing this call is practically universal throughout the state. It is executed by swinging your partner with your left hand, corner by the right hand, partner by the left hand, corner by the right hand. This can be followed easily with a promenade or circle four, six or eight. The advantage of the Texas style is that the same movement can be executed from either a circle four, six or eight. In Colorado their style of do-si-do can only be executed from a circle four. I can't say just what is done in the East, however, from reading some of their books and listening to some of their recordings, they apparently sash-shay around in back to back fashion on this call. My argument for the Texas style is that it can be executed with two, three or four couples in a ring.

Sash-shay: The use of this call in this area means to pass around your partner, corner or opposite in a back-to-back movement without touching and return to your original position. Other places execute the same call but do not release their hold. In this case, it can only be executed with the person you may be holding with either hand at the time the call is given. I prefer the open system so that you can sash-shay anyone the caller designates. The terms: all around, see-saw and do-si are quite often used here. However, all have the same meaning as sash-shay and call for the same type of execution. So far as Texas is concerned, the only thing about the movement is whether or not the gents should pass in front of or behind the ladies on the initial move. At present it is done both ways in various areas. Around Fort worth and Dallas, the gents pass in front of and around the ladies. In West Texas, the movement is reversed. So far as I am concerned, either way is OK, but I feel that we should settle down on one or the other. In this connection

Continued on Page 3

MIXING DANCES

by Charley Thomas

Some of my friends will regard me as a heretic when I advocate the mixing of squares and social dancing (by which I mean fox trots and jitterbug numbers). Here are my reasons, what are yours?

Our reason for running square dances is to give people a good time. Any question of the mixing of breeds of dances must be judged by that principle. It should not be a question of hurting our ego, or, with limits, what will be the most work for us. It must be what the people enjoy.

I have attended what I call professional dances, ones run solely for money, in New Jersey, Colorado and New York. In all of these places square dancing and social dancing were mixed. The same people participated in both, enjoyed both and no question about mixing the two was ever raised. Square dancing and social dancing can get along together, it is only a question of the right conditions.

The question arises mostly in the teaching of new groups and in one night stands. Conservatives will resist the introduction of a new (to them) type of dancing and will beg for social dances. In fact, I find that those who are set in their ways will ask harder for social dances than the others will ask for squares. Shall we accommodate them?

Can we give people more fun by restricting our dancing to folk dances? Will your group have more fun if the diehards are forced to folk dance or sit and sulk? Will the conservatives dance at all or will they refuse? Will they like folk dancing the better for being forced into it? Will the greatest number have more fun if we deny the recalcitrants their requested foxtrots and jitterbugs?

These questions must be answered for each dance and each group individually. The number of each type of dancer and hence the course to pursue cannot be answered ahead of time. Neither, I believe, can we say definitely that only folk dancing is to be done.

In answering those questions and hence determining how much social dancing to do, we should keep in mind the following points:

Have you any control over the type of people at the dance? One-night-stands here differ from courses; you can control the personnel of courses.

Continued on Page 4

AMERICAN SQUARES

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THE PAPER

With the November issue, AMERICAN SQUARES will be printed. It will, of course, cost us more, but, being agin rising prices on general principles, we are not increasing the price of the magazine. This will leave us the least expensive of the folk dance publications. In addition we note that we come out once a month, so far, and on time. We hope we can stick to it.

Perhaps you would like to do more for us than just send your best wishes. Our advertising rates (Advertising supports a magazine.) are \$1.50 per inch, \$3 per eighth page, \$4.50 per quarter page, \$7.00 half a page and full page \$10.00. Perhaps your local music shop would like to sell all over the country.

There will be included a directory of callers and of square dance orchestras. Listing in the directory for a year will cost \$2. Don't miss this bet to keep your name before the square dance public. And listing you will help us.

If you can't do anything else, we'd like to have from you, names of some of your friends who might be interested in subscribing to AMERICAN SQUARES.

Incidentally, our offer to give a subscription to AMERICAN SQUARES as a door prize at your next dance is still open. Just let us know when your dance will be. We shall send you two signs advertising AMERICAN SQUARES to be posted and you will take for us any subscriptions that may be obtainable besides making flattering announcements during the drawing of the prize. In exchange you get the door prize free.

Next month's historic issue will contain Frank Lyman's impressions of the Monadnock-Folkways Summer School and my report on Happy Weiser's Happy Square Dance Club's picnic held on September the 28th. Both articles will contain many dances and suggestions.

on its beautiful horses. They did their drilling and their dancing with a graceful precision that would have the most stiffnecked Cossack green with envy, and they brought every person in the hard-boiled audience to his feet in tribute. "To an outsider the spectacle would have been beautiful in itself, but the experienced onlookers were proud because they love horses and like to see what they can do after months of painstaking training. These were not trick horses or trick riders--they were working animals and men who spent their spare time training together.

NOTES

The Second Annual Square Dance Contest will be held at Amarillo, Texas, on October 24th and 25th. Sorry it's so far away from New Jersey or we'd drop down and show those Texans how. As it is, we can only recommend it to you. Drop your inquiries to H. Grady Wilson, Box 2446, Amarillo, Texas. The prizes are really worth going after.

Are you moving? Drop us a line and from our files we can put you in touch with some square dancers in your new home neighborhood.

Rod LaFarge is running a caller's night for the benefit of hospitalized veterans at Plome's Hall, Route 3, Paterson Plank Road at Moonachie Road, Carlstadt, N. J. on Sunday 16 November 1947, 7:30.

Ralph Page drops us a line concerning the Second Annual Monadnock Region Square Dance Festival to be held Saturday, 4 October 1947 at the Town Hall, Walpole, New Hampshire.

And to boost myself while we're at it, I'll be calling for the Young Friends at the 15th St. Meeting House at 15th St. & Rutherford Place across from Stuyvesant Square, New York City, on Friday, 31 October 1947. It's a Halloween party. Some of you New Yorkers want to know what I look like, drop around.

With regard to a horseback quadrille asked about in our last issue, Don Chambers, of E st Orange, N. J., writes;

"Bill Mauldin column in Herald-Tribune of Sept. 9, 1947, with date line from Missoula, Montana; re Missoula rodeo. First page, second section of paper:

"The star attraction was a quadrille performed by three dozen riders from Idaho, we call themselves the "Jefferson County Sheriff's Posse," and who were mounted on some of the finest specimens of horseflesh that can be found in this part of the country, which prides itself

ROSIN THE BOW

Folk dance personalities, notes

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Rod LaFarge, 115 Cliff St., Haledon, N. J.

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THE CALLERS' CORNER

by C. D. FOSTER, author of
LEARN TO DANCE AND CALL SQUARE DANCES

Continued from Last Month

In my younger days we used to have play parties. The old folks would not let us have dances because they said the devil was in the fiddle; so we had play parties. We played Weevely Wheat, Pig in the Parlor, Skip to my Lou, Old Dan Tucker, Go in and Out the Window and many others, but we had to sing. On the chorus we would say, for instance if we were playing Pig in the Parlor, "The right hand to your partner, the left hand to your neighbor, the right hand to your partner, and all promenade." If it was Go In and Out the Window, we would sing, "Go forth and swing your lover," or perhaps, "And now do-si your corner, and now do-si your partner," etc. But, of course, we were not dancing, we were just having a play party. Really, I would not call it square dancing, but we had a lot of fun and were just as happy as if we had had good sense.

And now in conclusion: my mission in the square dance field, if I have any, is to "Foster" this happy medium place, and I intend to leave this modernized, streamlined square dancing to the young folks; because in the first place I do not know it and in the second place the young folks have just as much right to dance their way as we older people to dance our way, but my advise to you is to learn both ways.

My field is much larger than most of you readers. I have hundreds of groups using my system to a certain extent, some more and some less, scattered over the United States, in fact in every state in the Union, in Canada and in Hawaii, and I am trying to give them what in my opinion will enable them to dance and have a good time in any community or in any situation they might find themselves. I believe that if they really know the old way of dancing square dances, they can dance any of the new ways because, after all, I fail to find anything really new in them except the arrangement and the words in the song or call. To me it is just like boarding house hash at a restaurant. All the old ingredients are there but they have been mixed together and dressed up in different garb and called by a different name. Some hash is good, some is bad and some is indifferent. So that's that.

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STANDARDIZATION OF CALLS from Page 1

I might say that the term Dos-A-Dos is used for this movement in the East and, according to the dictionary, it means "back to back". The term, unless properly enunciated is easily confused with the old standby, do-si-do. It is not used here except in an occasional singing call.

Swing Opposites: The main difficulty with this call is to standardize the direction in which the gents should travel: keep to the left, keep to the right or "cut the butter straight across". The other problem is what kind of swing: ball room, two hand or one hand? These two things should be standardized.

Once and a Half: We need to standardize the hold on this movement. I find two hand swings, elbow swings, elbow locks, ball room swings, and one hand swings. My idea about this is to have one of the swings as standard unless the caller designates some other swing in connection with his call.

Turn Right Back: This call is usually given during a right and left grand and normally (here) it is executed with a right hand swing or turn with a close elbow hold in order not to spread the set. Others use a full one hand swing with arms at full length. Some don't know whether to use a right, left, or two hand swing. I prefer the right hand swing with a close hold, forearms in vertical position using a slight elbow lock so as to be able to turn in a small space. I favor the adoption of a universal hold for this call.

Corner Swing: I have seen all varie-

ties of holds on this call, two hand swings, one hand swings and ball room swings. Around here it is usually a ball room swing. A standard hold should be adopted.

Balance and Swing: This call is a mess. I have seen everything from wrestling to hammer locks on this call. Some join right hands, some join left hands, some join both hands, some join opposite hands, some put in a nop or bounce. I prefer the gents using their right hands joined with their partner's left hand with a bow and courtsey. If executed with your corner, I prefer the gents using their left hands joined with their corners' right hands. In other words, both the gent and the lady should use the hand that is to the outside of the square. So you see what I mean when I say that some of this stuff should be standardized.

Right and Left Thru: There is some confusion on this call as to whether opposites should pass right or left shoulders. I prefer passing right shoulders. There is also some confusion on the proper direction to turn in facing around in order to go right and left back. The question is, should you turn to the right or left? Somebody needs to get together on this one.

This is the kind of stuff we talked about during our callers and instructors session held at the May Festival here at Fort Worth. As I stated, no action was taken on any of these matters, however, the group agreed that we should work toward the end of getting movements and holds

Continued on Page 4

RECORDS

MGM 5. Square Dances. Carson Robinson and his Square Dance Music. Calls by Laurence V. Loy. This team has done themselves up proud again. The beat is fine and the calls distinct. They are to be congratulated on their choice of dances, too, which are usually complete on one 10" record and give a change of partners. If they'd give Loy and Robinson some 12" records, we'd have some more classics. However, Lawrence Loy should get some new patter. I could finish each call after hearing the first words.

- 10051A Hook and a Whirl to the tune of Solomon Levi. Reminiscent of Golden Slippers. I've used the call to other music and it's just as good there.
- 10051B Head Couples Separate to Oh Susannah. They're all fine. I can't say more.
- 10052A Lady Around the Lady. Same figure described a couple of times in AMERICAN SQUARES. Two couples get a chance to do the figure on one side of the record.
- 10052B The Devil's Britches. No calls. Makes us poor chaps who don't often get a chance to call to Carson Robinson wish he'd put out an album without calls. I'd like to pick the music.
- 10053A Bob's Favorite to Nellie Bly. Figure is reminiscent of Durlocher's She'll Be Comin' 'Round the Mountain. This call also gives the dancers a chance to sing.
- 10053B The Mavrick to Soldiers Joy. Gives a western doceydoe as a main figure. Texans will be sorry to learn that the description instructs in the Colorado one.
- 10054A When' the Work's All Done This Fall. A very interesting figure done from 3, 1, 3, 1 position.
- 10054B Pokeberry Promenade to Turkey in the Straw. Bird in the Cage and Seven Hands Round.

PALDA 101B After my eulogy of the Philadelphia mummies' string bands' records in last issue, I went looking for more with indifferent success. When I put this, When You Wore a Tulip, on, however, it sounded square-dancy and I bought it. Metro-nome 126. Then I hap ened to think that I had no dance for it. I was on my way to call for the A. Y. H. so I dedicated the resulting dance to them. They say that it is worth repeating:

After the introduction--one couple active only

You swing your corner and
I'll swing my corner
Swing 'em around and around
Now circle four
Around the floor
While we make the walls resound
We'll duck right under

(Keep holding hands, first couple, on the wrong side of each other, duck under the raised arms of the mixed couple, gent turns right, lady left, throw arms over their heads to make a four leaf clover.)

And turn back and under (Back under to place.)

And you do the same old thing
Right elbow your corner
Until she's a gorner

And everybody swing

Allemande left on your corner; allemande right on your partner, allemande left on your corner again and a grand right and left all the way around; promenade.

MIXING DANCES

Trying to make people do things they don't want to prejudices them.

What is most often requested is not always what the majority want.

Probably a larger percentage of your square dancers will foxtrot as foxtrotters will square dance.

Some people will sit and look at any dance.

Square dancing is exhausting to those not used to it. And those who will try new dances have worn themselves out square dancing. Let them rest while the others foxtrot.

Teaching is hard work.

It is difficult to teach enough simple folk dances to keep them happy all evening.

STANDARDIZATION OF CALLS from page 3 standardized. Something may come of it at the State Festival in January.

If the movements and holds were stan-

dardized, then it would not make much difference what figure a caller was using, you could execute his commands with a minimum of difficulty regardless of where you go.

I have never attempted to say what is right or wrong about any movement, however, so long as there is a wide variety of holds, direction of movement, going in front or back of a lady, etc., there will always be confusion galore. In the Fort Worth-Dallas Area, there are about twenty square dance clubs, and the callers are all pretty well together on their fundamentals, so you have practically no difficulty in dancing with any of the groups. Of course there are a few die-hards, but their influence is limited to small groups. We are not concerned with standardizing figures, variety in this keeps up interest and enthusiasm--something new to learn.

Hope this gives you some idea of what I mentioned in my report on the Fort Worth Festival last May.

THE RYE WALTZ

This is the fifth of a series of couple dances published, instructing in how to do the dances recorded by Decca in Albums A18 and A525. Next month the dance will be The Duchess.

Position: Face partner with both hands joined.

Starting with the gent's left foot and the lady's right, tap the heel to the ground on the first measure, on the second tap close to the other foot with the toe, again at the side with the heel and on the fourth tap close with the toe. You can hop on the gent's right foot and the lady's left at the same time if desired. Now take three glides to the gent's left and lady's right, one per measure for three measure and pause on the eighth measure. Repeat the whole for the next eight measures going this time to the gent's right and the lady's left. Upon completion of the sixteen measures of Comin' Thru the Rye, the chorus will be played in waltz time.

Waltz.

* * * * *

FARMER GREY

As called by Rod LaFarge at the Mineola County Fair. Copywrite by Rod LaFarge; used by permission.

Join your hands and circle left
Circle half way round
Circle back the other way
And swing your partner round
You swing her, you swing her
You swing her round and round
Hey, Hey, Farmer Grey
The farmer's not in town

The first gent out and swing that girl
Swing her round and round
Take her home and line her up
And single file around. (Ladies line up behind the gent
with right hands on shoulder of one ahead and follow him
around the square)
Oh the farmer, the farmer
Took another load away (All shout the last lines)
Hey, hey, Farmer Grey
Take another load away.

* * * * *

CASEY JONES

This came from Dearborn at Ford's.

Four ladies forward and you pass right through
Swing your opposite partner as you really ought to do
Balance in the center and don't be afraid
Gents take the corner lady and you all promenade
Repeat; do four times in all. Adelyn Hollis, Ypsilanti, Mich.

* * * * *

NELLIE BLY

Eight hands around . . . etc.

The first couple separate and march around the ring,
Now pass right by old Nellie Bly and step right around again.
Pas by little Nellie Bly and swing your corners all
Now take your corner lady now and promenade the hall.

Caller: Hi Nellie

Dancers sing back: Hi Nellie

Caller: Darling Nellie Bly. I'll sing for you, you've gotta dance for me
my darling Nellie Bly.

Same old buck and a brand new doe march around the ring
Now pass right by little Nellie Bly and step right around again.
Pass right by l'le Nellie Bly and swing your corners all
Now take your corner lady now and promenade the hall.

Caller: Hi Nellie

Dancers: Hi Nellie!

Caller: Darling Nellie Bly, I'll sing for you, you gotta dance for me, my
darling Nellie Bly.

And so on.

Doug Durant, Jr.

ED DURLOCHER'S COUNTRY DANCES. Bob Miller, Inc. New York City

This is a written record of what appears on records in Sonora Album MS 479. I suppose that it has a purpose and is a help to some people, but to me it is superfluous. I didn't care for the selection of dances in the album and since the book has exactly the same, I don't care for that either. In fact, it appears to me to be a completely unuseful book.

Now to say some nice things. The calls are well written out with the timing beside each call and the instructions on how to do the figures in the next column. The music is simply arranged and easy to play.

If the effort on these few dances had been doubled or trebled so that a beginner would have enough dances to go thru the evening, it would be a fine book. As it is, well, it just duplicates the album of records. Cct

* * * * *

For Sale

Postpaid

10¢ per package for mailing

COWBOY DANCES, Lloyd Shaw. The best book by the authority. 77 dances and a fine history and general instructions for starting a square dance \$ 4.00

DANCES OF OUR PIONEERS, Grace L. Ryan. A complete and well-done book in mid-western style. 85 dances in three parts with couple and circle dances \$ 2.00

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SQUARE DANCES, Ed Durlacher. 12 dances by the East's leading caller with music and separate fiddle book. \$ 1.00

PROMPTING, HOW TO DO IT. John M. Schell. 131 contras besides quadrilles. Published in the last century it is the best collection of contras that I know about. It is out of print. \$ 1.00

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HEEL AND TOE OR A DO-SI-DO, Johnson. 33 dances of all kinds for beginners. 75¢

FOLKWAYS COLLECTION, Gene Gowing. 19 dances by the director of National Folkways 75¢

WESTERN SQUARE DANCES, Ralph McNair. 30 fine western dances done up in lucid style with instructions for setting up a dance. \$ 1.00

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