

Jack Luby interviews Ed Gilmore in December 1961

*This interview was recorded in 1961 between Christmas and New Year at the Mission Inn Hotel, Riverside CA between Ed Gilmore and the then president of the Square Dance Society of New South Wales (Australia), Jack Luby. Among other points, Gilmore states that **sociability** is vital in keeping people interested in square dancing. He argues that callers are often lured to explore overly-complex choreography and try to rely too much on gimmicks, with the result that a large percentage of dancers drop out of the activity*

**Jack Luby:** *Ed is one of the leading square dance and square dance teacher in America and I intend, during the interview, to get some idea from Ed of how square dancing is organized in America.*

**Ed Gilmore:** The general format in US and Canada is Square Dance clubs, social clubs, and neighbours and friends, actually, who get together, even in the big city. They become groups of neighbours and friends though they may come from quite widely scattered sections of the city, but its a social club, primarily, the successful groups, and this is the general operational method throughout the US and Canada, instead of an open dance program.

**Jack:** *That means most of your clubs operate from a married couple point of view. Is this right?*

**Ed:** Yes. You see, this, I don't have to tell you, the necessity for a regular partner is one of the requirements, in general, for square dancing and this, of course, to find people with regular partners is a married couple potential is the best method. We have, in fact, have in our instruction classes, for many years, refused to accept singles unless they have made arrangements for partners because the problem of trying to pair off couples, and so forth, in classes, even for instruction, we found didn't work. We put the responsibility on them. And I would say that probably better than 90% of the people participating are married couples.

**Jack:** *Getting right back to the fundamentals of square dancing, Ed, you do a lot of teaching that is for beginners, don't you?*

**Ed:** Well, I have. I am unable now because of our continuous travels, to conduct beginner classes but my wife and I talk in our classes. Incidentally, introducing us you said we were in Hollywood, we are in Riverside, California which is about 50 miles from Hollywood, at the world famous Mission Inn. In this area, this city, and in Redlands, which is not far from here, we taught over 4000 people to dance. Our largest class was in Redlands at 764 people in one class there. Here, in Riverside, just a block from this building we have 542 in one class. We've taught classes and called for clubs in Southern California for 5

many years before the pressure of touring and teaching in other parts of the country, and calling, finally just made it imperative that we do one or the other so we are touring now throughout the US and Canada about 10 months of each year for the past 6 years.

**Jack:** *There had been lot of controversy regarding the dancing over the last 2 years that, with intricate calling and fast directional movements. I understand that you are*

*more a perfectionist in square dancing. What is your attitude, generally, towards square dancing?*

**Ed:** My opinions have not changed a great deal. I was one of the first, perhaps, to introduce "hash", as such. We used it as a device then to simplify square dancing because when we began, at the time that I started calling and in my early experience in calling, the method used was to teach entire dances as memorized routines.

These were visiting couple dances, this was about 15 years ago, and this was all over the country. They taught memorized routines. In other words, you learned an entire dance and you accidentally learned, in a routine, Right & Left Thrus and Chains but it was a part of the routine and the whole dance. Then the caller didn't change that call. He called it exactly the same every time - same introduction, same figures -- usually four changes of the same figure for each couple in the early dancing, the visiting couple dances.

The problem arose that if someone was sick for a couple of weeks or went away for a while and came back. In the meantime, the caller had taught several new routines and that person didn't know these routines and found it impossible to dance. So, I broke the thing down into basic figures, primary basic figures, in the hope of simplifying if they would listen, and do one figure at a time, that they would not be required to do any memorizing and that would put the entire burden of memorizing on the callers' shoulders.

This worked beautifully because they could come and learn Right & Left Thru, Swing, Promenade, Do sa do and so forth. We had about 10 primary figures and about 14 or 15 miscellaneous or secondary figures that were not so frequently used. A total of 24 terms and figures to learn and then you could do any dance. All you had to do was listen, do one figure at a time, and you could do any dance. If a miscellaneous figure came along in a dance, the caller gave a brief walk through on that miscellaneous figure then called the dance.

This boomeranged, came back to me and knocked my pins out from under me because the first thing we knew it became important to see how intricate you could combine all of these figures and how fast you could call them with a competitive arrangement. This put each dancer in competition with the other 7 in the set, in a sense, instead of trying to cooperate with them to do a figure. It was who can get there first.

It set up a competitive attitude between caller and dancer. 6

- The caller, "I dare you to do this one", and the dancer
- "You call it, we'll do it. Let the hammer down."

This is a thing that dancers go through and we've been struggling along with this for a good many years. A certain phase in the beginner's experience, of a certain place in his experience, some of the beginners get carried away with this quick timing. A test of physical and mental alertness. "How quick can I hear, translate, and execute these?" The quicker he can do this, he feels, the greater the achievement. But then he, and he's never more than 10% of the total - this eager dancer, the average person coming

into square dancing to join a class will never get to this stage because he will never be that enthusiastic about square dancing.

He'll be convinced to go once a week or twice a month, if people will let him, while the eager 10% that just can't wait until tomorrow night because there's another dance are going to get 5 to 10 times as much practice. So, you are trying to serve both of these people in one group. We can't score them or classify them. After a time, this eager person gets a little tired of the continuous go-go and trying to keep up and trying to learn more figures and trying to do them faster. He wants to slow down, and he will if someone will let him. If he can find a place where he can dance and just dance for fun. The basic problem, the fundamental problem underlying all of this is "leadership Training". The training of caller-teachers who in turn train dancers and develop dancers who understand these problems and recognize a few simple truths and here are those truths:

Square Dancing is a group activity. You must have a group to have a square dance. You can't do it with one couple.

All right, then what will I have if I have a group of people? If I go out and gather up a group to start, in any neighbourhood, I will have a beginning group?

- I will also have every degree of ability and mental and physical alertness in that group.
- I will also have every degree of enthusiasm in that group -- from the least enthusiastic to the most enthusiastic so there will be a big spread. –
- I'll have all of this in the same group of people.
- I'll also have people who will continue but just (grudgingly), such as the fella just doesn't much care whether he ever goes back again but he comes, because his wife drags him.
- I'll have in that same group, the couple that wants to go five nights this week and they just put everything else aside, even family. They become complete square dance hobbyist. Here they are in the same group. The one looking for another class, another place to dance at every opportunity.

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- Finally, there will be the ones skipping every other week maybe or every third week, even more than that. Yet here they are, all in one group for the caller to serve.

Now you can't score them, you can't classify them. You can't test them. You can't say you're smart to one, you're dumb to another, you're enthusiastic, you don't care, and you don't give a darn, so we'll put you in separate groups. This has been tried. I have called all over the US for select handpicked groups of dancers, "We're going to have a high-level club" and they go around the community like a bunch of horse traders visiting all of the clubs and looking and watching and selecting this couple and that couple. Then they get this little hand-picked group together and what do they have? They still have every degree of mental and physical alertness. From the slowest one in "that" group to the most alert one in "that" group and the contest begins again. Now who do the callers serve? Who do they call for?

If we continue this thing (*identifying the types of dancers in the group*) far enough, you see everybody on the basis of:

- how quick you can hear, translate and do.
- How many miscellaneous terms can you remember?
- how good is your memory retention?
- If this is the test, we must wind up with one couple to dance with anybody.
- *Family Dynamics* - No one man or one lady too good to even dance with their husband or wife as, let's face it, there's a big difference in each family usually.
  - He may be quicker, more alert.
  - She may have a better memory for terms.

So, if we go on this choreography kick, this close order drill with girls, which involves grabbing everybody you can by one hand or the other and devious ways to get to the corner for a Left Allemande; if this is the "end" of square dancing, it can only be a process of elimination. And that is what it has become throughout our country. We have struggled with this problem. I think there is a great trend now, it's been indicated in my experience, away from competitive type dancing. There's more emphasis being placed on fun. More emphasis on good dancing from the stand point of movement to music and rhythm, timing, flow, natural sequences/figures. Less importance on which hands do you grab but more on how smoothly can you turn, or swing? How well do you time? Are you ready at the proper time? Do you give the right number of steps to each figure and arrive at your corner at the correct time? 8

This is the essence of good dancing is graceful carriage. These are the things that never grow old because dancing, from the beginning of man's history, has been one of the important ways for him to express emotions. It is not just physical exercise. If the emotion to be expressed is competitive feelings, then it is directly opposed to whole idea of SQUARE DANCING which is complete cooperation.

The proof of this is that whenever a set dances a square and it just falls together. Everyone is where they are supposed to be at the right time, and it flows, it's smooth and there's no stumbling or waiting for anybody. They finish the movements with the music and time with the caller (and sometimes even in spite of him) and they finish the dance at the right time -- everyone applauds like crazy. They are applauding themselves because they did the dance.

But if that same set hassles and has trouble and turmoil, and they get snarled up and get then straightened out and dance again and tangle again and then straightening out -- they don't applaud very much when they finish that square. It may have been called well but they didn't know how to dance well, and some didn't know how to time properly because they were too busy learning terms and new figures (which is a rule new name - confusing names - for old figures). They were too busy learning figures, you see. They didn't have time to learn to dance. Now this is our problem. This is no one's fault. We don't blame this on the callers because every caller does what he knows how to do. Every caller who takes the microphone and gets up and calls will call what he "thinks" what will make the crowd love him. What he "thinks" will make the people

happy. He never intentionally gets up and does things that will drive people out of the activity.

The fact remains, that we have grown so tremendously in the US in the past 10 years - and especially the last 5 or 6 - that thousands of new callers have started with no training. Absolutely no training. The majority didn't even know how to dance well. They didn't even know how to do individual figures well when they started calling. Yet they are trying to teach other people to dance, and to call for them. The dancer coming into this sort of activity is the victim of a circumstance which is no-one's fault, but nevertheless leaves him in the position of "Square Dancing for a short time and dropping out".

We have had, in this country a large and fast turnover of dancers. A year or so ago we did a spot survey to determine as near as we could, and it ran around 85% turnover in 2 years. The callers are recognizing this. This I know because I have been doing a great deal of leadership training and the number of invitations, requests from caller's associations, caller's groups for institutes (we usually do three-day weekend - Friday, Saturday Sunday) -- the invitations to do this type of thing for callers assoc. around the country has grown tremendously. In this season, I have done twenty 3-day weekends for caller's associations -- area associations and even state-wide associations. 9

They are recognizing that something is wrong. We are not keeping people. There must be a better way and they are seeking help. Basically, the problem is this:

- Callers get interested in first their dancers, and they're very enthusiastic, and then they get into calling and they get carried away with and intrigued with the game of manoeuvring people from here to there with various methods. **They get carried away with choreography.**

They are of the opinion that the dancers are carried away with choreography. The dancers are not. We can prove this very easily. You can take any dancer who's just done a figure, in the middle of the dance, he's done a Right & Left Thru and then a Pass Thru and then you stop him and ask him what 2 figures did you just do? He can't tell you. He does one figure at a time. That is how the dancers think. If a caller uses a real clever combination to get dancers from point A to point B the dancers don't notice the clever combination. Only the caller knows it's clever. But the caller gets carried away, and actually the callers are doing a very natural thing, I did it when I began. They're calling for callers, they're calling for themselves. And they find it pretty difficult to believe how little it takes in the way of choreography to keep the AVERAGE dancer happy.

Now, there's that small group, and unfortunately, they are usually the caller's best friends, a very enthusiastic, over enthusiastic group of people that want to go 3, 4 or 5 nights a week. The caller sees these people every time he calls a dance. They go with him for coffee and they go with him to festivals in other cities and they go to the conventions with him. They are always present, and these people think almost like callers and they tell the caller what they like. But the average person, who comes in, and they constitute 80% or more if we go from the beginning class on, the average person never says "boo". (*doesn't say anything about it*)

He dances until he's embarrassed by his inability to dance. He dances until he's embarrassed too often by not being able to do what the caller has said, or not being able to get there in time. Without ever knowing why, he loses interest, drops out. Says "ack, square dancing". And then, if his neighbour says we're going to join a class he says "Oh, I tried that." So, we lose two couples. Every time we lose a couple, we lose two. Because another couple will mention "I'm going to go to a square dance class" to him, eventually. He'll wrinkle his nose and said "I've tried that, it's no good. They tie you in knots. You need a Ph.D. to do it." We've heard this from so many people.

What we're trying to do is instigate a training program in every area, conducted by the older, more capable leaders. The ones that have gone through all of these phases. These experience popular callers have all tried speed and complexity, intricate choreography, novelty, mob hysteria, showmanship, telling 10

jokes and everything else. They tried all these things and they have all come to the same conclusion:

- The only thing that can be sustained year in and year out is good, comfortable, rhythmical movement to music and GOOD sociability.

Tremendous emphasis on the sociability. The enjoying the company of other people. These men are qualified to pass on information to the newer man, but the newer man is feeling insecure and cannot wait until the day that he can feel that he has risen to a level "on par" with the older leader. It is quite difficult to get him to accept the fact that he can learn from someone who he thinks is an old fogie that the activity has passed by.

Our problems here are probably very similar to what they are in Australia. I don't know if you have problems, we'll discuss this. We have found this to be true in each community that I have visited for the past 11 years. I'm almost always told by the callers and dancers in the community, "Well, Ed you don't know our town. This is different. We've got a situation here. We have this problem, or we have that problem..." However; they recite the same problem that every other community has, everywhere. Because in essence, this is the problem, - WE ARE DEALING WITH PEOPLE. And the problems that we have in square dancing is, people acting just like people.

They are going to act just like people. Callers are people and they are going to act just like people. If we throw up our hands in despair and say all is lost because somebody is acting like people, then the best thing to do is get out of it and try to find that perfect activity. I don't know what that is. However; if we recognize this, then we do the best we can with what we have.

I can make certain recommendations, and I do, and do it on a large scale in the United States at caller's institutes. To the leaders I am making some basic recommendations. **Leadership.** First you have to recognize that every activity is just as strong or just as weak as its leadership. And I don't think anyone can argue with that, so we must develop strong leaders. The principle leader in the square dance activity is the caller. He must be the principle leader. He must develop good dancers and good dance leaders who will lead dancers in so far as leading them through the necessary steps to make the dance function, make the club function.

**Minimum organization**, minimum rules of order and so forth. Sociability is the important thing. Minimum decisions by the group as a whole. Every time you ask the group to vote you're having a contest. If you ask a group to vote "shall we have refreshments next week or shall we not have refreshments" maybe 80 people in the group vote yes and four vote no. Those 4 will have indigestion next week. "They shouldn't have refreshments. I voted against it." They've lost 11

and that's important. But if somebody just says, "we're going to have refreshments next week" they will say, "oh?" and no one will have indigestion.

**Non-competitive**. Avoid anything competitive in square dancing and it has a better chance for success.

**Extend the training period**. We used to be able to teach people about all there was to do in square dancing in a relatively short time. Ten years ago, when we had a very small amount to teach in the way of features and terms, I took 30 weeks to do it. We used 30 weeks instruction on a once a week basis. We turned out some pretty fair dancers. They were not dancers until they danced a year because none of them knew anything at the end of 30 weeks. Simple reason, they had not had practice time. You don't learn the piano by going and taking one lesson. You take a lesson and the teacher assigns you your homework and you go home and practice these exercises 15 times a day for 6 days and then you come back. You have played at this same thing a tremendous amount of time.

The same with square dancing. You don't know anything until you've practiced it. With the number of things required for a dancer to participate in a club activity today, he needs a couple of years, at least, to learn. One year, minimum, before he's ready to come into the average club that's been going for two years or more.

**Avoid Class Distinction**. We advocate avoiding class; even avoid the word "class". Form beginning clubs. The word class doesn't suggest fun, it suggests work. Almost every beginner that I've ever taught in a class, the question that was uppermost in his mind when he walked in the door was, "when do I graduate? when is the class over?" And what he was saying, literally, was "When does the fun begin?" Someone had convinced him that square dancing was fun. If I bring him into a "class" he thinks this a period that he's got to get through because this is not fun, this is work and after I've gotten through with this work then I can have fun. So he's squeezed through 10 weeks, graduated, and clutches his diploma in his little hot fist and goes out to some square dance club and the caller just beats him to death. Stuff he's never heard of, things so fast that he can't possibly hear and translate and do because he hasn't had any practice. He's probably home watching television the next week. A great number of our people never get beyond the graduation night. That's the end for them. They go out and try a club and are horribly embarrassed and give up in disgust and say, "I'll never learn."

**We recommend beginning clubs**. Let a group of people come together and stay together because they feel secure with the people they started with. They know as much as anyone there. They all started from scratch, they are equal. The caller, of course, must make it fun and teach slow. Teach very slow as to the amount of material and dance the socks out of every figure that he does. It's 12

great fun, if you are new in the activity, to do a Right & Left Thru. You just thoroughly enjoy this great mystery figure, the Right & Left Thru. The caller doesn't have to replace it in 15 minutes with a Square Thru. They can do the Right & Left Thru over, over and over and not wear it out.

To get the leadership to teach people, and teach them slowly, and while teaching them teach them to dance round dances, couple dances, contra dances, quadrilles, progressive circles, progressive lines, even progressive squares. We've kind of cooked up a few new ones for callers.

**Variety and formation**, great emphasis on music, great variety in music. These things, I can guarantee, will never lose their charm. Variety through miscellaneous terminology is a crutch. I know, I tried it. Variety through speed and complexity is a crutch, and I know, I tried it. I used to call at 150 -160 metronome beats and throw the book at them, use mob hysteria, and get really soft and then scream out a command. This is mob psychology and it will make people scream. Then one day I looked up and said, "where did everybody go?" I began to think a little bit about "**why do people come?**" They come for relaxation and enjoyment. If they find relaxation, sociability, good people, good fun, they will stay with it. If they find competition, faction, friction, embarrassment they'll quit.

These problems will always be with us as long as there are new callers, but as callers mature, everywhere, and learn these things they will patiently develop dancers and clubs that will survive. We have many clubs that are 10 or 15 years old and I think we will have more.

**Jack:** *You mentioned a theory there, Ed, that you had a turnover of 80% of dancers in two years. You mean that you've lost 80% of your dancers in two years?*

**Ed:** Yes. 80% of the people who came into classes and the square dance activity leave in less than 2 years. A great percentage of them are lost, as I said, on graduation night. They never get into clubs. Most of those that get into clubs are lost in the first year of their club experience. This is around the country where callers are getting up and trying to call the things that are being published in the magazines to dancers who've had 10 or 15 weeks of instruction and danced less than a year. They cannot do the material that's being published, the way it's being published, and especially when it's called by a caller who doesn't know how to time it, or describe it, or teach it. So, if they do not "dance" they discontinue their participation. They drop out. They must "dance" if they are to stay with us.

**Jack:** *It does appear to me, I've been dancing from New York to Miami, around to Los Angeles, in all clubs your name is mentioned. That you are carrying more or less a cross for this rhythmic type of square dance. I also find that you have men behind you like Bruce Johnson, who is recognized as what is probably the greatest square dancer in the world. I hope that's the right*

*statement. It seems to be accepted in America as such. Back in Australia we accept Bruce as being a terrific caller.*

**Ed:** And I second that.

**Jack:** *You Second that?*

**Ed:** Bruce works with me as much as 3, 4 and 5 weeks together. He's on my staff. He's with me at Kirkwood Lodge. I'm very fond of him, I think he's probably the most talented caller in the square dance business. He has a tremendous talent and a tremendous humility and is a fine person. Bruce is working exactly the same.

You said I was carrying a cross. No, it is not a cross. I simply came to a conclusion as to what type of dancing will keep people dancing year in and year out and keep them happy over a period of time. I recognize that every dancer must go through all of the phases, and the beginner phases include this go-go-go business. Like children going out and picking up all the cuss words, the beginner dancer goes out and sees someone do a fancy little twirl and a kick, he has to do it. The fact that it wasn't taught by the caller, and isn't called, and it's something excessive, doesn't bother him at all. He has to put it in because he thinks it's cute and it's a chance to show off.

This is people acting like people. When they get a little bit more experience, they learn that those things are just excessive, they interfere, and they are rude. They interfere with other people's comfort because other people have to wait for them to do excessive twirls or kicks or something and they moderate in their approach as they mature. Every dancer comes along in the same general conclusions that I have.

The only thing is that I have had the courage of my convictions. I was told by some of my good friends, that I was going to have to go along with the crowd. I was going to have to do this or do that, I was going to have to call faster, I was going to have to call more involved things and so forth. That's what the dancers wanted.

I said, "no, I don't have to do anything. If they stop inviting me, I can stay home and teach new people. If no one comes to my classes I can do something else. I don't have to call square dances". I made more money in several lines before I was a square dance caller. I don't call for a living, that isn't my purpose. I call because I love it. So, I told them that I don't have to do it and I will not compromise. I will not do what I don't believe in, and if I can't thoroughly enjoy every minute of what I'm doing I'd rather be doing something else.

The net result of this, the people that told me I was going to be eliminated, I don't seem to see them anymore. I never solicited dates, calling engagements. I don't ask anybody if I can come to your town and call a dance. It's purely invitation and our invitation list has grown to where over the last 2 years it's over 1,000 invitations per year. I guess this means that if the people don't want to dance rhythmically and comfortably with great variety of formation, great variety of 14

music then they won't ask me to come and call. However; if they want the "Go-Go-Go" and the "Get and Grab" they have chosen a very peculiar way of showing it by inviting me back here year after year after year.

I have to believe that what I am doing must have some value, that I must be on the right track, or they wouldn't invite me back. I am very happy that callers, and a tremendous number of callers at that, are at least saying, "I think you're right. I think dancing must be comfortable, flowing, rhythmical, properly timed (no clipped timing), properly designed (no two right hands in succession). Try walking taking two right steps and then 2 left steps. Two right hands in succession is essentially the same thing but much less jarring because your weight isn't on the hand. But that's the only

difference. Yet still some callers are not concerned with working on this, which phase follows another in natural sequence.

**The Caller has to work.** What I stand for has not been easy to sell, or popular, because the caller has to work to do the type of calling I recommend. He has to work at timing, rhythm, phrasing, pitch, harmony, post command insurance, pre-command insurance, dance design, program design, balance of new and old. These are all of the good things that go into making good programming. He also has to work at knowing how to get along with people, how to handle people and its work. He has to study and learn and work.

**Going the wrong way.** This other thing, (*calling without the hard work*) all you have to do is pick up the latest magazine and read it, which a great many callers are doing. They are not even memorizing it. They read it (*they call the written figure from a piece of paper*) and then move on to the next (*call another figure reading it from a piece of paper*). That is easier to do. It's easier to do everything the ignoramus way, so that will always be the most popular way. (*the same applies to calling*)

**Jack:** *Do you think this method of yours, have you any way of testing whether it has stopped this drift of square dancers.*

**Ed:** Yes. There are people here. Why don't you speak to Bruce. Bruce has applied this general principle in his own clubs. Speak to Bruce, Bud & Millie Blakey, and Lou Roudersham. They have developed a tremendous number of dancers down in the San Diego area. They extended the training periods several years ago, at my suggestion, with a net result that even though they're in a very transient area (this is the largest Naval base, one of the largest in the country). They have a tremendous turnover of people in the community and even so, their turnover in their dancers is less, far less, than the national average. A great number of people around the country have put into practice for the last 2-6 years, the methods I recommend, and you discuss it with them and find out what their results have been. They have their percentage held in the activity tremendously by minimizing the amount of material and extending the training period, for a long time, so they will have time to teach people to round dance from the first night on. Teach them to do contras, quadrilles, make complete dancers out of them from the first night on. 15

Their dancers will never get up and say, "I don't like round dancing" because right from the first night they started round dancing and they know how so they say "I like it". What people know how to do they enjoy. 9 times out of 10 when people say I don't like this or that they mean I don't know how. I tried to do it and I was embarrassed, so I don't like that. But if they know how to do it, if it's dancing, its good.

**Jack:** *What are you offering your dancers, we'll say a dancer after a two-year period that has advanced very well at that period? Nothing can remain static, can it? And to keep the interest of your dancer you must be offering him something new in some way or other. What are you offering at that point?*

**Ed:** We are offering him continuous growth in dancing ability, expansion of the material we have (material he's already learned), continuous new arrangement of things, continuous changes in the music, and fortunately now we have a continuous flow of good music coming. Not always the material that's written up with it, but the music is

improving. You may have noticed this weekend, I rarely do a singing call the same twice or do the same dance to the same tune twice.

In other words, I do any singing calling to most any other singing call tune. The dancer doesn't recognize it. This you can prove for yourself that choreography is so important to the dancer. If he says, "I sure like the Everywhere You Go dance", we can say to him, "I will do that for you, how does it go? I can't remember the figure?" He can't tell you to save his soul. I've proven this a thousand times over. People request a certain singing call and I put the record and I call something to it. I may make up a routine as I go, or I may call Old-Fashioned Girl to Everywhere You Go and he comes up and thanks me. He doesn't know that I haven't done the dance (*that was written to the music or that I have called before*) because it's the music that he likes and remembers, not the routine.

Now, as to ever becoming boring, ten years ago with just the 10 primary basic figures that we had, taking only those first ten and we never attempted to build a program on the first basic ten figures (Allemande Left, Grand Right & Left, Swing, Promenade, Dosado, Right & Left Thru, Chains, Stars, DoPaso, Dosido were our basic figures then). With those 10 figures we could do 3,700,000 different combinations of those figures. We added 14 secondaries making a total of 24 figures and the number of possible combinations jumps to 784 septillion possible combinations. So, you see it can never grow old.

And then you multiply this by the various formations. You can do dances in a circle, you can do dances in lines, you can do dances in progressive squares (progressing to other squares), every time you change the formations the septillions go up and up and up in the possible formations. And then you add the variety of music and its infinite variety it can never grow old.

We permit this dancer to grow as long as he wants to grow, and we do not advocate graduating a group of new dancers into a group of 2 year dancers, 3 year dancers, every year a bunch of new people being dumped in with them. 16

The caller having to pull the entire program back down to the capacities of the newer people. Sooner or later the dancer that has danced a couple of years and knows how to play will say, "Look, I've served my apprenticeship dragging beginners through and now I want to dance." And he will be lost to the activity if he's constantly deluded with new people that he must pull and push and help. So, what I recommend is let the beginners stay together and grow together. Let them practice and play together until they are pretty well equipped to dance. Then let the older more experienced dancers from those groups gain new membership.

We have this argument from the people who say, "We have to graduate them, we need them in the clubs." Well, it gets them in the clubs and then drives them out. They're real nice to them the first night or two and then no one will dance with them. Pretty soon the new people are gone and some of the old people are gone because they've gotten tired of bringing in the new people. So, this doesn't work.

We tried to make them understand that every new person coming in, having matured wants to belong to "a" club. Many will join 2 or 3 or 4 clubs. This is where your new membership growth comes from. As he simmers down to where he only wants to

belong to one club (and this happens after 2 or 3 years) and dance in that one club and maybe visit occasionally in others, then the numbers has grown proportionally.

What we say is that you must do what you have to do to get a sufficient number of new people; and do what you have to do to keep them and hold them to make a club self-supporting and self-sustaining. If it fails, then you combine 2 new clubs of similar experience. You will lose a lot of people because it's a change and they resist change violently. Everyone resists change violently.

*{Side one of the tape ends here but when I turned it over it started in the middle of something that I don't even know what they are talking about}*

**Ed is speaking...** .....and when dancers can do a figure, hear it, translate, execute it and not even know they've done, it then they know it. This point arrives somewhere between, with the most alert at around 6 months, with the slowest 2 or 3 or 4 years and then some of them, maybe never. You always have a few in each club that you swear they will never learn yet they keep coming. They are nice people, good people, they are passed around to everyone in the club during and evening and protected and loved. If they are not nice people they will drop out. This is something you can't do anything about.

**Jack:** *Do I understand that in the first place, that you teach your dancers, just the new dancers coming in, to first move to music?*

**Ed:** Certainly. I don't know what your situation is in your area but here our problem is that the average person doesn't have much respect for hillbilly fiddle tunes. They think of square dancing as they've seen in the movies. A bunch of hillbilly people hopping around violently with musicians playing off-key. Self-17

taught musicians playing on homemade instruments. They don't have any respect for square dancing and they have the misconception that square dancing is both hillbilly, ignoramus stuff -- that it is violent and rough.

My first move is to completely disillusion them in this respect when they are coming in on their first night. I have modern, popular, the best sounding music that I can have playing. Good rhythmic dance music. Just playing, background music. When I get them up to dance, and I don't let anyone sit down, I make everyone get up to dance. The first thing I do is get all of them up and get them moving to one of our most modern sounding singing call tunes. Get them moving to it by circling left, right, promenading. I am calling.

I teach with the music going. I never turn the music off. I never walk people through and then start the music. This is a bad psychology because the new dancers says, "we listen while he's talking but when the music starts we do the dance and we don't listen anymore." But if the music is going they listen all the time, so I do the walk thrus with the music on. This is called dance throughs rather than walk throughs.

I immediately point out to them that there are three rhythms of the music, the downbeat, the upbeat, and the phrase and that there is a further rhythm which is the chorus (64 steps) and that most of the dances we are going to do will be measured this way. They don't have to count because the music will tell them and then I have them say "go" with me at the beginning of each musical phrase. Every beginner, virtually every beginner, that's ever come into a class, knows where that phrase is and can say

"go." He feels it. Why? Because from the time he was a child he's learned to recite "little boy blue come blow your horn, the sheep's in the meadow, the cows in the corn." This is a phrase, so as far as we are concerned this is 8 beats. It's "one, go" and the music is (*some humming here*).

He knows that, he feels that when he comes into the class. Of course, most callers have been teaching him to recite, "little boy blue come blow - the sheep's in the meadow the cow's in -". He isn't satisfied with this, but he accepts that this is square dancing. It isn't difficult to teach him to move to music, to teach him to glide (and set the heel down), glide forward on the upbeat - I use the term boom-chuck, boom-chuck. They glide on the chuck, the cord, the upbeat. They set the heel down on the boom. Chuck-boom, chuck-boom, chuck-boom. I get them moving conscious of this and conscious of every-so-far in the music it says "go". At that point we begin the figure. In their first training, we train them from the first minute, in strongly phrased dancing. Then we teach them to break the phrase later, in self-defence they must. There are cases where we must break the phrase anyway. In all dancing where we have the relation of 6's and 8's. For example, you're across the set from a person, the first and third couples. If you Dosado the opposite lady it will take longer than to Dosado the corner because she is two steps nearer to you - so you're going to save those 2 steps, anyway that you look at it, for the corner. So Dosado the corner becomes 6 steps. The dancer doesn't need to be 18

concerned but the caller must learn how to put 2 6's and a 4 together and come back out on phrase. This is why what I have to teach and what I have to offer has not been to popular. It requires work and study and effort. Anybody can get up and just recite words and ignore the music, but it will not be sustained dancing.

You see, from the beginning of man's history dancing has been to music, and every form of dancing in the history of the world is precisely measured

(*big quiet gap and again it just starts up*)

..... advise against trying to change any existing dancer who has not been trained this way.

Everything I recommend is to begin with the new dancer and develop him properly. **Don't try to change the existing dancers** and say, "here, you have ignored the music all your dance experience, now you must listen." He'll tell you where to go. That's a heartbreaking cost. We do hope, in this country, that this trend that's started --and you're saying that I have help - I have tremendous growing help -- most of the national leaders now are of the same opinion and teaching, in general, the same way I am doing. Joe Lewis, Bob Osgood, Jim/Jenny Brooks, Bruce/Shirley Johnson, Frankie Lane, Don Armstrong, these people are dedicated towards good dancing, smooth dancing, comfortable dancing for fun and fellowship. And there is special emphasis on the sociability and the fellowship and the fun. They are all working towards the same angle.

Of course, we have no one who understands what we are doing condemning what we're doing. If a man condemns what I do, if he says I'm wrong, I say, "do it, do what I do, then I'll let you condemn me". I have never found anyone who can phrase and time properly and use correct design of the dance and knows and understands the music in

relation to the dancing to the music that disagrees with me. It's only those who cannot do this who say, "it ain't no good" and what they are saying is, "I don't know how so I don't like it." The same as the dancer who says, "I don't like round dancing" meaning "I don't know how."

**Jack:** *That's another point Ed. I've noticed that in all clubs you are using round dancing.*

**Ed:** Yes. Not all, thank goodness 99% perhaps. There are still a few people round dancing, but we have there again the same situation as in square dancing. Too much, too many, too intricate, too much emphasis on choreography. Tricky positions, tricky little steps. This happened in America between 1890 and 1900. They wrote thousands of tricky, cute little 2-steps and the whole activity degenerated to just a straight circle two-step. We lost round dancing then. There are those who would apparently do the same thing again. We have this growing number of composed dances and the caller couldn't keep up with it about 10 years ago. He couldn't keep up with the growing number of composed dances, learn them and teach them. 19

Up until that time, every caller taught round dances to every square dancer. Then someone started a round dance class separate from the square dance. This divided our activity between the people who had the time, the inclination, the money, and went to the round dance class, and those who did not. Every club that we have is divided right down the centre. We have a sad situation now where we are putting material on the program that part of the people don't know how to do. This caused a decline in round dancing to a less than 20% a couple three years back. It's grown a bit, it's back to about 25% participation on a national basis from our records.

Our records are not complete. We do a pretty good survey because we have them set up the round dance programs wherever we go, and we keep track of the percentage doing each round. Percentage of total in terms of the dance. It gives us a pretty good picture of what the average participation in a given community is but not really a good picture because only the fairly-enthusiastic to very-enthusiastic dancers will buy a ticket to our touring callers dance, so I don't even reach the John-dancer who just goes to his club on Tuesday night once a week or twice a month.

**Jack:** *But do you do the round dancing with your square dancing?* **Ed:** Oh definitely. You see I believe in a balanced meal. When I go to dinner tonight, I will have meat, but I'll also have a salad, soup, vegetable, dessert, coffee, bread - fine. I want a balanced meal. Square dancing is the meat of this program, round dancing is probably second in importance, that would be the vegetable.

Unfortunately, some of our people have become vegetarians, they've just forsaken meat. They go off into round dance clubs, then from that to Arthur Murray's, from Arthur Murray's to folk dancing maybe and from that to bowling or water skiing.

Say Round Dancing is the vegetables, Contras might be the salad, Contrilles might be the soup or the dessert. A balance program of various formation. Great variety in programming not great variety in the various ways to use combined figures to get to the corner because this is deadly monotony. If you analyse it, the dancer doesn't know what figures the caller used, first they did a forward and back and then they did a bunch of stuff, Down The Middle, Pass Through, Round One, Square Thru, R&L Thru,

Dive Thru, Pass Thru, Square Thru, R&L Thru, Allemande Left. Next time, Down The Middle, Around Two, Four In Line Pass Thru, Arch In The Middle, Ends Duck In, Dive Thru, Pass Thru, Square Thru, so forth. The dancer doesn't know you used a different method.

The net result is that there's been a continuous whole evening of Down The Middle Around Somebody, Square Thru, Pass Thru, Dive Thru, Dixie Twirl, Bend The Line -- all night long. All from point A to a Left Allemande with original corner. This I offer is deadly monotony. But big variety in formation - star patters, double star patterns, all sorts of formations, lines of threes, the 20

unbalanced square. Get variety of formation with a formation featured in each call. Combined with well-balanced singing calls makes for a good program.

This is what you need to accomplish, it's easy to do with study and effort but it cannot be done by just getting the latest magazine and reading something and saying, "here's an interesting one, it combines a substitute with a shuffle the deck to a wheel and deal to a star thru to a dive thru, pass thru and a box the gnat to a change girls and an Allemande Left. Oh boy, they'll never be able to do this one (with some fake glee expressed here)."

This is a part of "new caller". Beginning callers get carried away with this idea, I did. I'll tell you honestly that I still love it, I'm fascinated by it. But I'm smart enough to know that the average dancer couldn't care less when I've been really clever. When he's happy is when I move him continuously through 3 hours of dancing without him stumbling and being embarrassed and he's moved rhythmically and he's not exhausted and tired and wants to dance another week, then I know he'll be back next week.

**Jack:** *Briefly if you can, in contra dancing, you doing that, what do you feel about that?*

**Ed:** Contra dancing in Australia should find their roots, because most of our contra dancing, I'd say 75-85%, comes from England, Scotland and Ireland. Primarily Scottish and English. They are longways dances. You're dancing in sets of two or three couples, you dance a figure, 64 steps with a couple, then you move down or up a couple and dance with another couple. It has all the values of both square and round dancing because there is a step to be taken for every beat of the music in contra dancing.

You don't just meander, there's no pauses, you just "go-go-go" and yet, it's never rushed. It must be measured in phrases, - it's nothing unless it's phrased. It combines the phrases and measured value of round dancing with the cooperating mixing value of square dancing. It's a valuable asset. Quadrilles are square dances measured in phrase, that's all. Progressive circles and lines and these things are all the same.

**Jack:** *Well, Ed, it's 6:30 and we should have been to dinner at 6*

**Ed:** Well, we're out of tape. I hope all of this will give you some information about the states.