

# SQUARE DANCING IN SASKATCHEWAN

## by Helen Savostianik

Prior to the formation of a Saskatchewan Square and Round Dance Federation which was initiated in 1979 at a Canadian Square and Round Dance Society (CSRDS) convention in Edmonton, Alberta and which lead eventually to CSRDS getting its mandate, clubs had already been formed. In order to have clubs, dancers were necessary. Saskatchewan and Manitoba clubs were formed in the late 1940's and 50's in waves of enthusiasm generated by people freshly back from American square dance schools.

Old Tyme square dancing from the early 1900's had been revitalized by Henry Ford of pioneer fame and Dr. Lloyd (Pappy) Shaw. Ford hunted out callers and fiddlers to write down the old steps and tunes. Shaw was influenced by his book, and as an educator in a small Colorado school, put square dancing in the school curriculum. He liked cowboy dances especially, so he interviewed miners and old timers from his own west who remembered how the dances had been done. In 1939, his research and experiences were published. Nine years later, he published "*The Round Dance Book*". Then, he taught himself how to call. He began summer classes for dancers, callers and leaders in folk dancing, teaching and recreation. People from all over the world have flocked to these workshops. Hub Guggemos experimented with sequences of calls in 1948, and modern square dancing was born.

Prior to the 1950's, Old Tyme Square Dancing, was part of an evening's entertainment in the Moose Jaw area. As a pre-schooler, one dancer recalls falling asleep on coats piled on desks in an old school where old tyme square dances were being called by her uncle. Caller Ray Rosler's father called old tyme square dances. Dancer Sharon Dollansky, as a girl of 10 years, said she was first introduced to square dancing in an old school house at a community get-together. They danced in a large circle around the room, not in squares.

**The new square dance movement got its start in Saskatchewan in various ways.** For example, when two couples, Earl and Marjorie Floyd and Hugh and Eva Fowler of the Belbeck farming community north of Moose Jaw heard of it, they attended the Square Dance Workshop at a summer resort near Bottineau, North Dakota and received instructions in the new basics. On their return in 1954, they organized a square dance group in the little community of Belbeck. Ten couples joined the club.

The movement got its start in the **City of Moose Jaw in 1955**, when Les and Jean Andrews were transferred by his company from Winnipeg. They had experienced the new method of square dancing in a Winnipeg square dance club. They talked their office colleagues into starting a club called the *Circle Two* in Moose Jaw. Their club grew so large that a new club was organized called *The Whirlaways*.

The history of square dancing began in Saskatoon with Mickey Johnson. Following Mickey came Gerry Hawley, who seems to have been an imaginative, enthusiastic person with a great sense of style, a love of music, and a natural inclination for dedication. These qualities plus his musicality and leadership abilities soon had his new dancers convinced that he knew all there was to know about square dancing, when in fact he was a novice caller learning as he went. *Style* was apparent when he and his wife Mary greeted the possible dancers wearing clothing that was both attractive and appropriate for the occasion.

At some point, they began selling square dance clothing and accessories. During his 15 years of tenure as a caller, and caller teacher beginning in 1955, 18 couples learned to call under his tutelage.

**The waves of enthusiasm for modern square dancing included interested people from all areas of Saskatchewan - the Northeast, the Southeast, the Northwest and the Southwest.** They were preceded by, followed by or accompanied by people who had a desire to call and/or were encouraged by a caller or dancer.

**Zone 1:** In 1957, a group of five interested couples from Unity in the Northwest, including Jack and Jean Forsyth, decided to form a club which they named *Unity Wagon Wheel*. The plan for the club was that it would consist of six sets with a few extra couples. Jack Forsyth would be the caller instructor at the Oddfellow's Hall. Five records were purchased for him. The fee was to be \$6.00 per couple.

**Zone 3:** When the *Hi-C* group at St. Martins United Church in Saskatoon held a hoot-nannie dance in 1972, four couples were chaperones. Frank Strange was a dancer. He called some square dances plus the Virginia Reel. Out of this came the *Swinging Saints* Square Dance Club. They danced at St. Martins.

**Zone 6:** Harold and Wilma Newlove, from Southwestern Saskatchewan travelled many miles in the early years calling and helping clubs get started.

**Zone 7:** The *Happy Hearts* Club in Regina was started in 1959-60 at the request of Father John Burns, a priest at St. Cecilia Church. Two couples, who were dancing at the YMCA, contacted friends and neighbors and put up notices.

**Zone 8:** In 1959, Bill and Isabelle Schmidt from Rock Glen told their friends Nellie and Roger Schafer that they would like to be a caller couple, but they needed people so that Bill could practice. Nellie and Roger agreed to be part of the group. Two squares gathered in Schmidts basement. Nellie said it was great fun.

**There are numerous reasons why people started to square dance and continued to do so.**

**Zone 1:** Joanne Kral, from the Ruthilda club, said that the friendships formed on the dance floor is the glue that holds square dancers together.

John and Helen Savostianik were excited to be invited to join the *Unity Wagon Wheel* club in 1958. Since the dance lessons ended between 10:00 and 11:00 p.m., they were able to hire high school girls to baby sit their three young children.

Mervyn Cooper from the *Unity Wagon Wheel* club, said that his 4H students were learning to square dance. As a leader, he needed to know how to dance as well.

Art Leeson from Unity was lonely after his wife died.

Vern and Naida Murray, from Kindersley, met so many wonderful people and made so many good friends. They have enjoyed the caller couples, and other visiting dancers at the *Kindersley Whirls & Twirls*, who have stayed with them over night.

**Zone 3:** Caller Martin Mallard wanted to use his singing talents to help people everywhere enjoy the benefits of square dancing.

**Zone 4:** Ron and Jeannette Jaques, from Endeavour, liked being involved. The club tried to promote square dancing at Threshermen's Day in Yorkton, and made a banner together for the *Gateway Twirlers*.

**Zone 5:** Nellie Schafer calls square dancers one big happy family.

**Zone 6:** Ollie Waker, Swift Current, spoke fondly of earning badges, including the ice-worm. Her husband, Art, built a rink in their barn in order to make this possible. They

travelled to get another club's banner or to retrieve their own, to take a trophy home by travelling the most miles, or to earn a badge by being one of the couples visiting the most clubs in a season.

**Zone 7:** Ron and Joan Jackson, a Regina couple, stayed with the *Wesley Whirlers* because of the creativity in everything they did.

**Zone 8:** In 1976, Linda and Gordon James, Weyburn, wanted something to do as a couple.

#### **Square dancing in Saskatchewan had its humorous side.**

There were two couples who, enroute home from a dance, were reviewing the calls but couldn't agree on the routine, so they stopped in the middle of the highway and danced that specific call with the lights on.

Dancers had a similar experience, but in this case the rental bus broke down enroute to Nipawin, Manitoba. The driver got a ride back to Prince Albert for another bus. However, during the wait, some of the dancers decided to dance on the highway. Not so smart! It was before pavement, and there were some dirty crinolines.

**There were hazards.** Bill and Isabelle Schmidt, caller couple from Rock Glen (Zone 8) wrote: "We were always afraid of deer and the weather. We did a dance in Glasgow, Montana one Saturday night, and never got out until the following Saturday when we had to do a dance in Estevan. We got there through the states, did the dance and came home through Canada. After that, the road was still plugged with snow going to Glasgow". Linda James, Zone 8, sums it up: "There was lots of bad weather, but somehow it did not seem to keep people at home." "Commitment was the key".

#### **Regular Club Callers Versus Visiting Callers.**

Each club in the cities, namely North Battleford, Saskatoon, Regina and Lloydminster often tried to stay with one caller, except for special occasions put on by that club. Sometimes two clubs interchanged by visiting each others club, and therefore took turns cancelling their own dance nite.

Callers and clubs in the rural areas operated in a different way. Some didn't have a resident caller, so they hired a guest caller on a regular basis. If a caller was willing to travel a few miles and was paid extra for mileage, he or she sometimes became that club's designated caller.

**Zone 1:** Ken Brownlee at Unity taught the beginners, while Art Acorn from Lloydminster was their regular caller for a number of years. Sometimes, arrangements were made for the caller or caller couple to be housed overnight and breakfast provided the next morning. Sometimes, the guest caller arranged to visit other local clubs as well on a day to day basis for his or her travelling convenience. Clubs in both rural and city areas hired callers for variation as well occasionally.

**Zone 2:** hired visiting callers for Halloween and Christmas dances in Prince Albert. Freda Paul commented that callers must have enjoyed the calling, as they would drive miles to call, lug heavy equipment in and out of the halls, and sometimes not get home until one in the morning or later.

**Zone 4:** The Yorkton *Park Swingers* dance to CD's usually, but since 2007 hold annual jamborees in the spring or fall with a guest caller. They have been invited to entertain and teach at schools, church groups, cultural events, etc. In earlier years, Earl Park was the caller at Sturgis and Yorkton, Corky Birt at Wynyard, and Chris Jacobs at Quill Lake, before the demise of all three callers.

**Zone 7:** hired guest callers usually for dances which were fund raisers, and during the absence of their regular callers.

**Zone 8:** Linda James said that in the earlier years, clubs changed callers fairly often, maybe because there were so many callers. In later years, quite a few callers seemed to stay with one club until it folded or the caller moved on.

### **Caller Schools:**

To supply callers for all the new clubs being formed, the Saskatchewan Square Dance Institute was started at Valley Centre in Fort Qu'Appelle to help train new callers and round dance teacher/cuers. Ken and Joyce Lee attended from 1960 - 1965. Visits to other dancing communities showed how different instructions were and how varied the dances used. To bring about uniformity and more pleasure from dancing known routines, (as it was no fun being in a square which goofed repeatedly), local callers went to the Square Dance Institute at Valley Centre, Fort Qu'Appelle.

A few callers joined the Square Dance Callers Club in Regina to learn what the Regina Zone was doing. Others went as far afield as the Banff School of Fine Arts.

In the research, twenty-one couples or singles were located that had attended at least one caller school in Alberta, Rock Glen, Chicago, Miami, St. Louis, Estes Park - Colorado, Swift Current, Regina, Saskatoon, Milestone, U.S.A., Vancouver, Wetaskiwin, Yellowstone, Moose Jaw or Fort Qu'Appelle.

Bob Nurse and Bill Schmidt, Bill Treleven and Norm Wood, and Martin Mallard both attended and conducted caller schools. Guy and Darleen Belliveau worked closely with Martin and Terry Mallard to organize and host 13 week-long caller schools yearly up to November, 2006. In April, 1976 a framed **Lifetime Honorary Membership** was presented to Guy and Darleen by Martin and Terry for all their past and present help.

### **Associations:**

**Zone 3:** The initial idea of an association was a place where callers could come and exchange ideas and make sure they were teaching the moves right. The first meeting was held at Gerry Hawley's home to start an Association. The callers met monthly. The name was the Saskatoon and District Square and Round Dance Teachers Association. In 1964, it was recommended that clubs join the Association. The president or authorized couple would represent the club. They could have one vote. Seventeen clubs from Saskatoon and eight clubs from the country joined. That was the start of the Association as it is known today.

The name was changed to the Hub City Square and Round Dance Association (HC-SRDA). (Terry Mallard, *Square News*, April 2013)

**Zone 5:** With so many clubs in the Moose Jaw area, some organization was needed to coordinate activities to avoid conflicts of dance nights and "Special Dances". In October, 1960, the Moose Jaw and District Square and Round Dance Association was formed. Membership consisted of callers with clubs, beginning callers without clubs, and one couple representative from each club. Twelve clubs and fourteen callers registered. In four years, the membership grew to 26 callers and 34 clubs, oddly 17 in the city and 17 in the surrounding towns and schools, Tugaska to the north, Chaplin to the west, Assiniboia to the south, and Milestone to the east.

## **Saskatchewan Square and Round Dance Federation**

Ab and Marie Bridges, president couple of the North Battleford *Do Si Do's* Club, and Bill Bowley, president of a Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan club in the south, were approached at the first CSRDS National Convention held in Edmonton, Alberta in 1979 to try and organize a Saskatchewan Federation, as some other provinces had already done. A Federation of each and every province in Canada was necessary in order for a **Canadian Square and Round Dance Society, in the making, to be fully formed and to fulfill its mandate to coordinate and promote the square dance movement.**

In a letter dated August 1, 1979, Acting Provincial Delegate Bill Bowley invited two interested couples to represent each zone area in Saskatchewan to a meeting, so that a good cross section of opinions would be presented at the Kinsmen Arena in Moose Jaw on September 8, 1979. From there came the division of Saskatchewan into eight zones. Martin Mallard roughly drew a map outlining zones as previously used in annual Valley Centre Days some 15 years prior at Fort Qu'Appelle (an organization of callers and leaders from throughout the province). There would be slight changes to indicate current conditions. Two couples were to be official representatives from each zone and were to have a vote in the process of organizing a Saskatchewan Square and Round Dance Federation. Each zone was then asked to meet and appoint delegates to a future meeting on November 25, 1979 in Saskatoon. At this meeting, the Provincial Officers were chosen from the couples representing the zones.

From 1980 to 2015, Saskatchewan square and round dance zone clubs in northern and southern Saskatchewan have alternated in hosting yearly Saskatchewan Federation Dance and annual meeting weekends. A guideline letter from the **archivist** has been presented to the president of each yearly hosting club outlining material needed in a report presented in a brief folder for the archives pertaining to the event in the specific year hosted. The list of the zones with their zone number, and the years that they were hosts, are listed in the Saskatchewan Square and Round Dance Directory. Editors for the Directory have been Martin Mallard and Dorothy Campbell.

Seven of the original eight zones are still functioning in Saskatchewan in 2016, although with reduced numbers of clubs and dancers.

**Zone 2** - disbanded in 2007.

## **Financial History - The Early Days**

How were the expenses met in the early days of modern square dancing in Saskatchewan?

**Zone 1:** Basically, the clubs members had to think of ways to finance their own clubs expenses. In the 1959-60, season rental fees for the *Unity Wagon Wheel* Club totalled \$785.00 and the caller fees totalled \$736.00. Therefore, a Stinker dance where music and callers were supplied by tapes, was held. Dancers were eligible to purchase stinker badges.

A grant was approved by the Department of Educational Fitness in the late 1960's.

**Zone 5:** In the early fifties, the *Hotsy Totsy* Club in the Moose Jaw area used \$1.00 of their \$5.00 membership fee to purchase sound equipment and records. The YMCA Circle 2 Club at Moose Jaw danced to records when the club was formed in 1955. Fees were an associate membership in the Y. 60% of the fees were used for the rent of the YMCA hall, and 40% was retained for the club for records, equipment, etc. The Zion Alamos were a church sponsored square dance club in Moose Jaw in 1958.

Well attended dances, by visiting dancers for the purpose of earning specific kinds of

badges, such as the Knothead for travelling 100 miles, bringing the club mascot home, or the club banner home, special dances hosted by neighboring or not so close dancers, such as a Valentine or Christmas dance with a meal included, or a Jamboree, helped to swell the coffers.

### **SPRA (Sask. Parks & Recreation Assn.) Involvement:**

On July 29, 1983, a resolution was put forward by caller Ken Lee of Moose Jaw extolling the values and virtues of square dancing, and therefore requesting that the Canadian Square and Round Dance Society work towards having Square Dancing declared as Canada's National Dance. Then, the Federation applied to the Saskatchewan Trust for Sports, Culture and Recreation to become organized as a recreational activity. On July 31, 1984, they were officially advised that they had been accepted to the Sports Eligibility List, and that they were now eligible to receive monies from lottery proceeds, instead of from tax dollars.

Each year the Business Manager of the Saskatchewan Federation submits an application for grant money to Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association, (SPRA), and then upon approval as to the amount of grant money that will be made available, the Grants Committee of the Federation Board of Directors will meet after April 15th to study and approve applications for grants money from clubs and zones according to the Grants Criteria. Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association receives money from Saskatchewan Lotteries to be distributed for recreational purposes in the province.

### **Square Dancers and the Community**

#### **a) Financial Donations:**

**Zone 3:** On March 1, 1982, the *Guys & Darlins'* (Guy Belliveau) and *Happy Wanderers* (Martin Mallard) sponsored a dance at St. Phillips School which raised \$1,052.00 for Kinsmen Telemiracle.

In 1978-79, the *Swinging Saints* (Ken & Eleanor Wilkinson) donated \$775.00 to Telemiracle when callers Ken, Martin, Guy and Blair Wollms donated their time.

The *Cotton Capers* donated \$2,000.00 to various charities such as Saskatchewan Chapter of Crippled Children and John Dolan School.

The Hub City Square and Round Dance Association members have danced at the Festival of Trees. Its proceeds go to the Saskatoon City Hospital Foundation.

**Zone 8:** The *Weyburn Twirlers* took part in the local Communiton, to raise money for various agencies for 28 years.

#### **b) Community Events:**

**Zone 1:** With Ken Brownlee, as a caller, the *Unity Wagon Wheel* square dancers participated in St. Peters School events on Seniors Day. Students were invited to take part in the squares. They danced at a Variety Night sponsored by the Arts Council in 1994, entertained at the Wilkie Farmers Day in 1994, entertained at Macklin, Wilkie and Unity Nursing Homes on numerous occasions, and danced with and for the Girl Guides on the Reward Holy Rosary Church grounds at their annual Jamboree in 1999.

The *Ruthilda Grand Squares* have danced on floats at Ruthilda parades. One was at the provincial centennial in 2005. They also did a demonstration. They have done teaching sessions at Landis school, joined the Big R Squares to dance at a summer variety fundraiser, and danced at Rosetown senior apartments and nursing homes.

**Zone 3:** Clubs entertained at nursing homes and in the seniors common room which was part of the condo complex. In 1967, a Centennial Square Dance Train travelled from Ottawa to Victoria. 325 square dancers in a 21 car train danced at 35 locations in 23 cities and towns from June 24th to July 9th. June 29th was Saskatoon's official square dance day. There were 1,500 callers, dancers and spectators. The Saskatoon Boys Pipe Band led the Grand March to the arena.

In 1982, during the city of Saskatoon's 100th Anniversary, the square dancers were proud and honoured to provide dancing and entertainment in various ways throughout the year as well as being part of the birthday celebrations on August 26th.

**Zone 4:** took part on Threshermen's Day in order to promote square dancing in the Yorkton area. By means of CD's, the Yorkton *Park Swingers* have taught at many venues including schools, church groups, cultural events.

**Zone 6:** In 1962, clubs were asked to dance for one-half hour on CJGB TVB.

**Zone 7:** In 1967, the *Happy Hearts Club* in Regina was asked to make a float for the Centennial year. The committee got a flat bed truck which they decorated with a skirt around it and lots of flowers on it. Two squares danced on the float with Bill Isaac calling. The *Wesley Whirlers* did skits and musicals, and put on the RCMP Musical Ride several times. They went out of town to the small community nursing homes to entertain the residents.

**Zone 8:** The *Weyburn Twirlers* had a float in the Fair Parade, took part in Rodeo Days, Wheat Festival, and hosted a picnic in the Park for dancers and visitors, and they hosted four Heritage Weekends.

### c) Community Locations:

**Zone 1:** Meeting Lake Hall: The hall at Meeting Lake in the Northwest part of Saskatchewan did not lend itself particularly well to square dancing sound-wise, due to its many sided shape both in the outside structure, and in the central stage area. It was built to accommodate an orchestra - not a caller with one microphone and a turntable for records. Not one to be deterred, John Savostianik strung yellow rope around each beam in the same spot around the center of this unusual shaped room. It's a good thing there was a ladder (folding) Ken Brownlee's baffles were hung up with old electric wire fastened to the baffles in the shape of hooks and placed over the ropes. Nails were driven into the posts which were part of the central stage. The square dance couples (blue cutouts) had fishing line on each one, so these were hooked over the nails with a pole which John had rigged up with two prungs on the end. After all, decorations were needed too.

Landis Hall - *Ruthilda Grand Squares* location for a yearly Special.

What an excellent spot to attend! It is just off highway #14. However, there was a drawback. The floor would sweat and need to literally be mopped at least once during the evening. Square dancers that lived in or near Landis were part of the committee involved in laying a new, most excellent wooden floor, which was most appreciated by all dancers. Dancer Wally German was one of the workers.

**Zone 3:** Anglican Church Hall: In the fall of 1977, the *Cotton Capers* moved to the Anglican Church Hall, in Saskatoon, because it was just the right size. In 1984, the *Cotton Capers*, *Odds 'N Ends*, *Happy Twirlers* and the Hub City Square and Round Dance Association joined forces to finance and install acoustical improvements. They put up acoustic ceiling tiles and burlap panels on the walls.

Twenty years later, joint club efforts enabled square dancers to replace the flooring at

the hall. Prior to that, in 1988-89 the *Wilkinson Whirlers* donated \$250.00 towards refinishing the hall floor.

On January 12, 1990, the *Wilkinson Whirlers*, *Cotton Capers*, *Happy Twirlers* and *Odds 'N Ends* put on a fan dance. Fans were installed in the hall courtesy of the square dance clubs. The clubs raised \$507.50 through the sale of raffle and 50/50 tickets. Proceeds from the fan dance and ticket sales were \$1,359.00. The Association got a new Gestetner for printing *Square News*. Bill Sipko built a box cupboard along the existing cupboard to hold the *Twirlers* lunch supplies. In 2003, the callers and dancers spent two-to-three days preparing the hall floor for a hired company to be able to lay new tiles on top of the old ones. Blair Wollms counter sank screws into the old tiles. Bill Woodward installed a cold air radiator. Periodically, a day was needed at other times to strip the old wax off the floor, generally clean it, and wax and polish it again. Guy Belliveau was often at the helm.

**Zone 5:** YMCA Gymnasium - Moose Jaw, Sask.

*The Whirlaways* and the *Circle Two* caller/dancers wired the YMCA gymnasium for sound in 1955.

### **Dance Attendance: Then/Now**

**Zone 1:** Fran Swan, a member of the *Kindersley Whirls & Twirls*, recalls a Jamboree with the Community Hall and the Church Hall both being utilized at the same time by two callers, because of the huge crowds. Partway through the evening, they'd switch halls, so that the dancers could experience both callers.

**Zone 3:** Examples of extremely high attendance at square dances took place in Saskatchewan when Jamborees were held. By the fourth Jamboree between 1959 and 1965, under the auspices of Gerry Hawley, a record 196 squares jammed the arena in Saskatoon and made dancing virtually impossible. From then on, ticket sales had to be limited to 150 squares.

**Zone 5:** The *Circle Two* club at Moose Jaw in 1955 started out with ten squares. Then it grew so large that a new club, *The Whirlaways*, was started which concentrated on beginners. Moose Jaw sponsored the 10th International, *Cross The Line* In '69 for three days. With so many reservations, they were sold out and had a lengthy waiting list a year in advance.

Back then, as now, we recognized that we must have beginners to keep the square dance movement continuing. Our membership couple, Ron and Joan Jackson, keep us aware of that fact through their verbal and written reports, and their three year comparison charts annually. In his report to the AGM in Saskatoon, November 8, 2014, he stated that from 2003 to 2014, Saskatchewan had lost 775 dancers and 21 clubs. Our survival will depend on the reversal of this downward trend.

### **Adapting To The Times:**

Every story has a beginning, a middle, and an end, but the Saskatchewan square dance story is not ready for the end. With dancer Kay Hauer as a leader and her angel dancers from the *Lloydminster Chain 'N Circle Club* displaying resilience by accepting and supporting new dancers at any time, by allowing individual(s) to start the first Monday following the request to join, by using CD's and records frequently, and visiting callers periodically, by arranging for the beginners to dance year round, by directing those who want to learn to call to a callers school, to have some level variation in the teaching, so that

the somewhat more experienced dancers do not become frustrated, she has been succeeding in increasing the membership of the club since the method was first used in April, 2013.

Since the Saskatchewan Federation Board of Directors donated unused grant money to the zones as promotional funds as a means to gain new dancers, and since the zones/clubs/associations attempt to be creative in their methods for using these funds to gain new dancers, the Saskatchewan spirit is alive and well.

With the program length adjustment, and consequent name change, from three days to one day, due to the reduction in the number of clubs and members to dance and do the work, namely the International Zone 8 (2015) (Northern Montana, North Dakota, north to Weyburn, and east to the Manitoba border), the St. Pat's Weekend in Zone 3 (2016), and with the replacement of the Northwest Zone Camp 'N Dance in 2015 by the Zone 1 Summer Solstice Dance, plus the amalgamation of the *Happy Wanderers* and *Wilkinson Whirlers* to form the *River City Squares* in 2011, action has been taken to resolve the fewer dancers dilemma. Additionally, since Eldon and Carolyn Neudorf have stepped up to the plate as caller couple at Danceland, effective in 2017, following the retirement of Bill and Shirley Treleaven, we may well have more than one reason to celebrate as Saskatchewan hosts **Festival 2016** in Regina.

\* \* \* \* \*

## ROUND DANCING IN SASKATCHEWAN by Helen Savostianik

In the early 1900s, society and city people abandoned group dancing for the couples dance. By the 1920s, they were doing such new dances in towns as the Charleston and the big apple. Shaw, an educator in a small Colorado school, published a square dance book in 1939 based on his research and interviewing experiences. Nine years later, he published "the Round Dance Book". The waves of enthusiasm for modern square dancing, soon followed by round dancing, included interested people from all parts of Saskatchewan - the Northeast, the Southeast, the Northwest and the Southwest.

### **Zone One** *Unity Wagon Wheel Club*

Over the years, round dancing has attracted the interest of many of our square dancers. It was found that round dancing instruction in a separate time slot from square dancing had been most beneficial for a successful 'learning' situation. In 1970, Gary Beaumont from Evesham, Sask. gave lessons one-half hour prior to the square dance. Val Trautman from Unity provided lessons in a private home from 1970 to 1971. He was followed by Gar Pope from Hayter, Alberta. Some of us then travelled to other points for further lessons and instruction. Ken Brownlee began giving instructions in this art form a few years later and continued up to 2010, whenever lessons were requested. However, our square dances were interspersed with some round dancing as well.

In the early (first) years, round dancing was taught dance by dance. After the steps were mastered, there was no cueing during the dance. Instead, one learned the moves and then danced from memory. One dancer recalls memorizing over 30 dances during the first season of learning to round dance with Val Trautman as teacher. Learning by means of this method had a distinct advantage. The tunes used were familiar, which simplified memorizing and retaining what you had memorized.

We continued to dance in the basement/recreation room of a Unity couple and a Kerrobert couple, after health problems ended the career of instructor Val Trautman. At least three couples did this consistently. Then, for a period of time, three couples and one teenager from Luseland, a couple from Kerrobert and a couple from Unity drove to North Battleford where we/they danced in a hall in the United Church. Ruby Kullman from Saskatoon, and sometimes Dona Keys were the instructors. Twelve people from North Battleford had formed the *North Battleford Round Dance Club*. With the eleven people from the *Unity Wagon Wheel* and the *Luseland Tumbleweed* clubs, it was financially feasible to hire Ruby Kullman as a cuer/instructress. When the club members dwindled to the point that the North Battleford Rounders found it necessary to fold, some of the members drove to Saskatoon to dance with Ruby's club or clubs. Don Beggs taped her music and cues to use for future practice.

### **Zone One:** Ardis and Jim Priest

In 1984 they joined a round dance group that Art and Joyce Acorn belonged to. By 1994, Ardis was interested in cueing round dances, so Ray Rosler gave her the two-step record for *The Parties Over* to learn. Then, she bought a turntable, speaker, stand and mic with some records from Jack Balfour in Edmonton. In the late 90's they taught a group of dancers at the Legacy Centre. Since then, they have guest cued and taught rounds around

Alberta and Saskatchewan at zone functions and clubs. They have attended National and International Conventions. They learn various round dance phases in Yuma, Arizona during the winter.

Dale and Katherine Olson: Dale started to encourage Katherine to take up cueing rounds a few years after he started calling for square dances, in approximately 1990. The first big event was a zone function at Biggar. Katherine had two or three records. She cues at all of Dale's dances and has taught before square dance lessons in Kindersley, Rose-town and Fiske. They both enjoyed being involved at the Federation Weekend in Kindersley. Katherine attended a cuers school put on by Ruby Kullman in Saskatoon as well as workshops by Ron and Donna Baba.

### **Zone One Policy Manual - Round Dancing.**

A matrix system/schedule was set up whereby all clubs within the zone would rotate annually at hosting the three zone functions - the President's Promenade, the Spring Jamboree and the Northwest Camp 'n Dance. There were 13 clubs within the matrix at its peak, including the *North Battleford Rounders*. The zone functions matrix schedule in the Nov./Dec. 2002 issue of the *Coordinator* placed the *Luseland Tumbleweeds* as hosts for the President's Promenade, because the *North Battleford Round Dance Club* was unavailable. On Feb. 21st, 1999 a motion was made to have an annual round dance afternoon and evening put on by the zone and hosted by an interested club that bids on it at an annual meeting, but it would not be included in the Zone Functions Schedule. *The North Battleford Round Dance Club* was the first one to host it on Dec. 11th, 1999. After the round dance on Dec. 11, 1999, the workshop took place in January. This system worked until 2007, when the host club, the *Kindersley Whirls & Twirls*, did not have a sufficient number of interested dancers, so the event was cancelled. At a meeting on February 11, 2007, it was decided that the annual round dance be discontinued at the zone level, due to declining attendance, and that individual clubs be encouraged to have their own round dance functions suited to their own situation.

**Zone Three:** Round Dancing for Ruby and Perry Kullman began in Saskatoon in 1964, when they accompanied Martin and Terry Mallard to a week-long square and round dance institute in Nelson, B.C. One-third of the program was to be round dancing. Perry requested a crash course in round dancing by the Mallards to prepare for the dance experience. They never missed a dance. They were hooked on round dancing, so they talked Martin and Terry into starting a round dance club in the fall of 1964. The name of the club was *Oval M's*. Martin did the cueing for the first ten years. Kullmans and Mallards shared teaching duties for a year or so. Ruby took over teaching the *Oval M's* in 1975 and has continued to this date - 2016! In the 70's and 80's, she started a children's club, which later became a teen club. In the fall of 1975, a group of ten to twelve couples (mostly singles) wanted to form a club, so the *Karousels* were born. The *Oval M's* celebrated 50 years of dancing in 2014, and the *Karousels* will celebrate 40 years in 2016.

**Zone Four:** Bjorg and Corky Birt had been calling and teaching square and rounds for 37 years by June 3, 1993. They started in 1956. Karen and Ray Thies: Other cuer/instructors have given Karen CD's, which she loads into her computer in various categories for easy access in her teaching. Karen uses a laptop. The couple began teaching rounds in 2006, and

have continued to date. Initially, they taught for one-half hour before the square dance. The evening's dance routine is two rounds and two squares.

Their dance level includes the rumba, but the dancers, as of October, 2015, said that they do not want to learn such dances as the cha-cha, so they do not require any more teaching unless they have some difficulty during the dancing when a specific CD is being used. All square dancers in the club round dance.

**Zone Five:** In the 1960's, Guy and Darleen Belliveau and Ken and Joyce Lee worked hard to get a round dance club started in Moose Jaw. These two couples drove to Regina for five years to round dance with the *Rhythm Rounders* and the *Rhythm E's*. After they were no longer calling on Thursday nights, Ken and Joyce danced with the *Pickadots* and then with the *Rosettes*, after Pick Pickford passed away.

In 1961, a plaque was donated by Pick Pickford in Zone 5 as a prize, for the club introducing the most new dancers to square and round dancing in the Moose Jaw and district zone in a given year.

In 1976, it was suggested that there be a memorial for Pick Pickford. Pick had been a square dance caller and round dance instructor as well as a tireless worker for square and round dancing in Moose Jaw and area.

In 1966, Rose and Ian Cundall were the first round dance cuers for the *Rosettes*. They continued until 1979. Bill and Pearl Bowley carried on until 1987.

Round Dance Clubs and the names of their cuer callers in Zone 5 listed in the Saskatchewan Directory for 1986-87 are as follows:

*Dance-A-Rounds* - Caller Couple Bill and Pearl Bowley, Moose Jaw.

*Happy Pairs* - George and Shirley Waldenberg, Moose Jaw.

*Milestone Round Dance Club* - Howard and Neoma Johnston, Milestone.

**Zone Six:** Ollie Waker and Art started cueing and teaching in 1962 and continued for 45 years. Ollie and Art cued and taught at the *Swift Current Square Dance Club* and the *Westwind Singles*. They taught many round dance classes. They had the *Twisty Vine Dancers* Phases I and II and the *Rhythm Dancers* Phases III and IV. Ollie and Art attended Round Dance Leaders Clinic in Hamilton 1988 by Easterdays. They were members of Roundalab, and attended conventions in 1987, 1990, 1993 and 1994 - a real learning experience. Many of us enjoyed her cueing yearly at Cypress Hills Funstitute.

Renz Struik has been square and round dancing for about 15 years. She started cueing eight years ago (2008). She started actively teaching round dancing at the beginner level - Phase II, and then gradually added Phase III figures. She has conducted round dance workshops at special weekend events.

**Zone Seven:** Howard and Neoma Johnston. Neoma and I started square dancing when a new club was formed in Milestone about 1978 with George and Shirley Waldenberg as caller couple. The following year a Round Dance Club was formed. Neoma and I worked with Waldenbergs for a couple of years. We took over the club in the early 1980's. The first Round Dance Clinic we attended was with Ruby and Perry Kullman as instructors. Each year, we travelled many miles to attend as many clinics as possible to try and improve our dancing and teaching ability. Some that come to mind were in Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Holiday Ranch Alberta, and Montana. In the mid 1980's, we also became

instructors for the *Rhythm E's* Club in Regina. In both clubs, we were very fortunate to have such wonderful people to work with. It was a pleasure. Neoma and I were also very fortunate to be on staff several times at the International. We always liked to stress position, although we likely pushed too hard sometimes. We were very proud of all of our dancers. We were teaching some Phase IV Plus when we retired. We hung up our mike in 2005, and always felt one of the best things about dancing was the people you met along the way. I lost Neoma in February, 2015. She loved dancing and I think it showed on the dance floor. Neoma was a wonderful partner.

Ron and Margaret Hopkinson took beginners' round dance lessons in Regina with Phil and Noreen Russell in 2003-2004. In 2004-2005, they joined *Rhythm E's* Round Dance Club under cuer couple Howard and Neoma Johnson. Phil and Noreen Russell took over as cuer couple the following year when the Johnsons retired. They danced for several years with the Russells before they too retired. At that point, a few couples continued to dance under *Rhythm E's* name but to recorded cued music. They did some teaching of beginners during this period, but relied solely on recorded cues. Things changed following their attendance at the first cuer school in Moose Jaw in 2013 conducted by Ron and Donna Baba. Ron started cueing that fall at *Whitmore Pioneers* Square Dance Club and at *Rhythm E's*. Two subsequent cuer schools under the Babas developed his cueing skills further so they now teach beginners' rounds and cue at *Rhythm E's* and the two Regina square dance clubs on a regular basis.

#### **Zone Eight:** Caller/Cuer Couples.

George and Alma Johnson - Glasgow, Montana. They started calling in 1959. They attended Valley Centre Institute for five years and were the first Americans to register for this Institute. Inclusion of round dancing in the Valley Centre Institute program was in part attributed to their efforts. In earlier years, the International Zone also had a Round Dance Council, who oversaw the Round Dance cuers and what they taught, so they were all learning the same dances.

Charles and Marion Gillies, Big Beaver, Sask. - in the fall of 1963, they attended Echo Valley Roundup to learn more round dancing under Earl Park's leadership. They retired from round dancing about 1973.

Earl and Vera Gieg started to go to Regina in 1963 to dance with the Rhythm Rounders with Ede and Ern Ellis as instructor couple. Since then, Ede's two clubs amalgamated and became the *Rhythm E's*. After a time, Bill and Pearl Bowley became their instructor couple.

Bob and Sharon Fichter - in the winter of 1970, they met at the home of Lyle and Maxine Chipley. This group later became the *Hitch & Vine Twirlers*. In the fall of 1987, they started to teach a beginners group of round dancers, and officially became cuer couple for the *Hitch 'n Vine Twirlers* in 1988. Since then, they've been involved in Round Dance programs at Estevan Power, St. Pat's Weekend, Kenosee Summer Squares 1989, Cypress Funstitute, and the 12th Federation Weekend in Weyburn.

Lyle and Maxine Chipley began round dancing in 1965, with Bill and Janice Dickson as their instructor/cuer couple. Kenn & Joyce Beggs instructed Basics and encouraged Chip to cue. From this group came the *Hitch 'n Vine Twirlers*.

Bob and Marian Lees. They started round dancing in 1998 under the direction of Bob and Sharon Fichter. Marian picked up the mic one night just to see if it was possible to

cue. In 2008, she started teaching a round dance class in Weyburn.

In 2010, Marian and Bob were asked if they'd take on the task of teaching the *Hitch 'n Vine* Round Dance class. Following Sharon Fichter's illness, Bob and Marian were asked to be the full time caller and cuer for the Estevan dance clubs. They have attended cuer schools with Ruby Kullman, and round dance leader clinics with Ron and Donna Baba.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **International Zone 8 Estevan and Weyburn**

### **History of Round Dancing**

During the later half of the 1950's, in communities large and small, along the 49th parallel in both United States and Canada square dance clubs were being formed. Early records indicate that the International Zone was formed as early as July 1958.

Square Dance Clubs were springing up in numerous towns and villages on both sides of the border. It was realized that in order for these clubs to share their new pastime, there had to be a similar program of familiar dance moves. Callers and dancers traveled great distances to monthly meetings to share, to learn, and to agree upon standardized movements and calls.

Round Dancing was part of this evolution. In those days, when you learned to Square Dance you were also taught several easy rounds. "*Pearly Shells*" was a favorite. Dancers learned the sequence of steps and danced from memory. There was no cueing. This was acceptable because in this era, most people were very accustomed to western and country dancing to the waltz and the two-step. Round Dancing and Square Dancing evolved side by side as the numbers attending weekly dances in the local community hall or country school swelled.

Records show that the International Zone was organized at Reserve, Montana on Sunday, July 13, 1958. Callers in attendance were from Saskatchewan, North Dakota, and Montana. Quoting from Newsletter #1 "In forming such an association, to meet once a month, callers and instructors felt they would be able to keep square and round dancing at a happy medium. All clubs will be learning the same styling, calls, and round dances. Jamborees would be more fun as all the dancers would know the same breaks, calls and rounds." This association started out with a program of teaching one new round dance every month.

The first International Square Dance Convention was hosted by Estevan in June of 1960. In anticipation of a large response, it was held in the Drill Hall in a hangar at the airport. There was a huge turn-out! Wisely, attendance was limited, in advance, to 250 couples. Round Dance Instructors and Cuers on staff were Isobel and Gordon Hill from Norwood, Manitoba, Bill Thompson of Mandan, ND, Noreen and Scotty Wilson of Regina, Sk, and Grace and Richard Yaholnitsky from Yorkton, SK.

As Round Dancing gained in popularity dancers were receptive to the idea of forming separate clubs. Over the years, *Estevan's Hitch and Vine Club* has been instructed by Bill and Janice Dickson, Lyle and Maxine Chipley, Allan and Ella Gray, Bob and Sharon Fichter, and Marion and Bob Lees. Manor and other clubs farther north and east danced to Art and Mona Wiggins. In Willowbunch, Charlie and Marion Gillies cued dancers' movements. *The Glasnevin Twirlers* danced to instructor, Earle Gieg and *Rosie's Rounds* in Weyburn were guided by Rose Drescher. There were, undoubtedly, other clubs and many more cuers.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **CLOG DANCING**

**by Rosalie Bodnarchuk**

Clogging, the grandfather of tap, originated around the mid 1700's when Scots, Irish, English, French, Danes and others migrated to the Appalachian Mountains. Mix in Aboriginal and African, and we have the melting pot of dancing referred to as "clogging." It has also been referred to as Appalachian Clog Dancing, flatfooting and buck dancing.

There are variations of clog dancing styles all along the Appalachian Mountain Range in the United States leading up to Canada, e.g... Canadian Step Dancing, Ottawa Valley Step Dancing, Newfoundland Jigs, Red River Jig, Cape Breton Reels, etc. All the "folk" dances have the same roots. Peasant dances from other regions and the gypsy dances from Romania are also thought to be included as well as Dutch klompendans (wooden shoes) and the Morris Dance.

Clogging evolved alongside old-time music and because of the growing enthusiasm toward the clog dance, around the late 1800s, early 1900s, traveling minstrel shows, later vaudeville shows and Hollywood incorporated a variation of clogging as part of their entertainment. New steps were introduced into the most isolated areas.

Clogging is a living folk dance. It reflects the time in which the dancers live and has progressed from free style dance into precision steps where routines are both choreographed and cued. Each generation of dancers uses their own style of music and dance, such as hip hop, rap, tap, jazz and even cheer leading to further evolve the clog dance form. Clogging is continually changing but remains rooted, and its best quality is that both young and old alike participate.

Generally speaking:

- Clogging is a left foot lead.
- Clogging is done to the downbeat with the heel keeping rhythm.
- Clogging, in all its foot-stomping glory, is about fueling the tune with the beat of your feet.
- Clogging shoes have a 'jingle' tap (double plates of stainless steel) which produce a sound distinctly different and more jubilant than the average tap shoe.
- Clogging is considered a folk dance – passed down via oral tradition.
- Clogging is taught as both a recreational and social dance form, but is now also classed as competitive in the modern world.

### **Saskatchewan Clogging:**

1983 saw the start of clogging in Saskatchewan. The club, *Saskatchewan Rhythm Cloggers*, was formed under Linda Wollms in Saskatoon, SK. and Marlene Jerred in Moose Jaw, SK. Marlene hosted a clogging workshop in Moose Jaw this same year which became known as the first provincial workshop and subsequently inspired others to become involved with clog dance.

A number of clogging groups started to form after that. Just to name a few:

- In 1986, Dona Keys, who was with the Saskatoon group, started the *Battle River Cloggers* in North Battleford.
- In 1990, Marge Foley-Jacob started the *Quill Plains Cloggers*.
- In 1993, Fyola Lorenzen joined with Shirley Newis to form the *Prairie Lily Cloggers* in Regina.

- In 2003, Marilyn Bossert, who was with the Regina group, moved to Kipling and started the *Kipling Kloggers*.

At the 1996 National Convention in Edmonton, Shirley Newis introduced Dona Keys and Marilyn Bossert. Through their discussions, a plan for a provincial clogging day was formed. The first SK Clogging Fun day was held in 1997 in Dundurn, SK. 2016 is the 20th year for the Fun Day.

Over the years, many clogging groups have come and gone. However, the current Saskatchewan Clogging Clubs are:

1. *Battle River Cloggers* — North Battleford - Dona Keys
2. *Bridge City Cloggers* — Saskatoon - Rosalie Bodnarchuk
3. *Kipling Kloggers* — Kipling - Marilyn Bossert
4. *Prairie Lily Cloggers* — Regina - Fyola Lorenzen, Cindy Weeks, Denise Johner
5. *SkyTrail Cloggers* — Outlook - Judy Currie
6. *Speedy Creek Cloggers* — Swift Current - Sabrina Empey
7. *Thunder Creek Stompers* — Mortlach - Randy Stewart

#### FUN-FRIENDSHIP-FITNESS

**Some other clogging instruction in Saskatchewan** - info collected by Dorothy Campbell

Norma Coburn of Delisle took classes in Moose Jaw from Marlene Jerred and taught clogging for several years.

Elise Cormier, originally from Nova Scotia, taught clogging there and in Oshawa, ON. Elise moved to Saskatoon in 1996. She started teaching clogging in 1997 at Sutherland Hall, RCAF club, etc. In August 1999, Elise became very ill. Donna Kurek took over the club. Elise started teaching again in 2001. Her club was called City Centre Cloggers. She has since retired.

\* \* \* \* \*