

FUN IN SQUARE DANCING

We all hear "fun" discussed - put the "fun" back in square dancing. But what kind of "fun" do we mean?

There are two types of "fun" in square dancing: (1) **DANCING FUN** comes from successfully completing a group of calls to an Allemande Left, and (2) **SOCIAL FUN** which means talking with people, sharing food, etc.

The original idea of "fun" in square dancing years ago was a combination of both types. People worked at successfully completing a group of calls, and they made sure they knew the calls well enough so they would be successful time and time again. Knowing call definitions thoroughly was important to them in order for them to achieve DANCING FUN. Getting together for a dance naturally resulted in SOCIAL FUN too.

Today everyone is concerned about keeping the "fun" in square dancing, but what kind of fun? SOCIAL FUN! This is constantly emphasized, and this is fine. But what has happened to the other kind of fun - the fun of being able to dance because you are very confident at what you are doing? This has been relegated to a distant second. It almost seems as if the calls are a necessary evil to be endured in order for people to come together to have SOCIAL FUN.

What happens when we relegate DANCING FUN to a distant second? We turn out people who can not dance the Mainstream Basics. When people can not dance the Basics, when they break down on Run, Trade and Circulate - which are the 3 fundamental calls of square dancing - are they having fun? NO!

If people are poorly trained, either by being rushed through class or by having no emphasis by their caller or club leaders on the importance of thoroughly knowing the definitions of the Mainstream Basics, then these people will break down squares on a regular basis. When people break down squares on a regular basis, they lose their DANCING FUN. They become nervous and uptight, and this impacts on their SOCIAL FUN. So they decide to find SOCIAL FUN elsewhere, which means they leave square dancing.

Because people can not dance, we rush them to Plus, where there are a lot of lengthy calls. People can memorize these (from only one position, or course) and so one call will let them dance for 30 seconds, which is 30 second without breaking down. Isn't this wonderful? There is nothing more ridiculous, as well as sad, to see dancers who can Load the Boat and Relay the Deucey and can not do Ends Run. But eventually everything comes back to Mainstream Basics, even the execution of lengthy calls, so people keep breaking down.

If dancers would be encouraged to thoroughly learn the Mainstream Basics, if callers would put their material together so that the dancers would understand the Basics, then we would have confident dancers. Confident dancers are the people who really have DANCING FUN. They have fun completing the calls because they don't break down. They have fun helping others be successful in the square. They have fun goofing around in the square, because they can do this without breaking down the square. Because they have all this DANCING FUN, they have the SOCIAL FUN too. They are not uptight because the person next to them at the food table knows they always break down the square - instead the person next to them knows how well they dance. So they have the total package of BOTH TYPES OF FUN.

I SUBMIT THAT IF WE WANT TO PUT THE "FUN" BACK INTO SQUARE DANCING, WE NEED TO TEACH PEOPLE TO DANCE THE MAINSTREAM BASICS WELL. Give people the DANCING FUN of being successful in the square, not because they were pulled thru, but because they knew what they were doing and this caused success.

We will still have the SOCIAL FUN, but we will also have DANCING FUN, which means DANCER CONFIDENCE FUN, which in turn increases the SOCIAL FUN. If we all work to achieve both types of fun, not just one type, then square dancing will flourish. Remember that 50% is a failing grade. If only SOCIAL FUN is emphasized, then we will fail. We must have both types of "fun" in order to be successful.