

INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED square dance caller Jerry Story was born and raised in Fairfield. In fact, he learned to square dance at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. After three decades of raising a family in Texas, then running the Pride RV Resort in North Carolina, Story is happy to be back in Fairfield where he still has family.

Now a favorite caller of Fairfield square dancers, Story is known for being fun, lively, and challenging. “We’re just seeing the beginning of a square dance renaissance in Fairfield,” says Story.

“We’re just seeing the beginning of a square dance revival in Fairfield.”

Story’s wife, Kristy, is back in Fairfield full time, working for Jefferson County Realty and running her own business, The Clutter Bug. Story divides his time among Iowa, North Carolina, and the festival circuit. In August, he joined six other callers in West Bend, Wisconsin, where 400 dancers from 18 different states, Japan, and Taiwan traveled in for the event. Story is also scheduled to be the keynote speaker at the National Square Dance Convention in Des Moines in 2016.

Story has called at festivals all over the world. He also leads square dance workshops and square dance tours for the Pride RV Resort, and is excited to be a part of the Fairfield Fall Festival, a weekend square dance workshop on October 3-5.

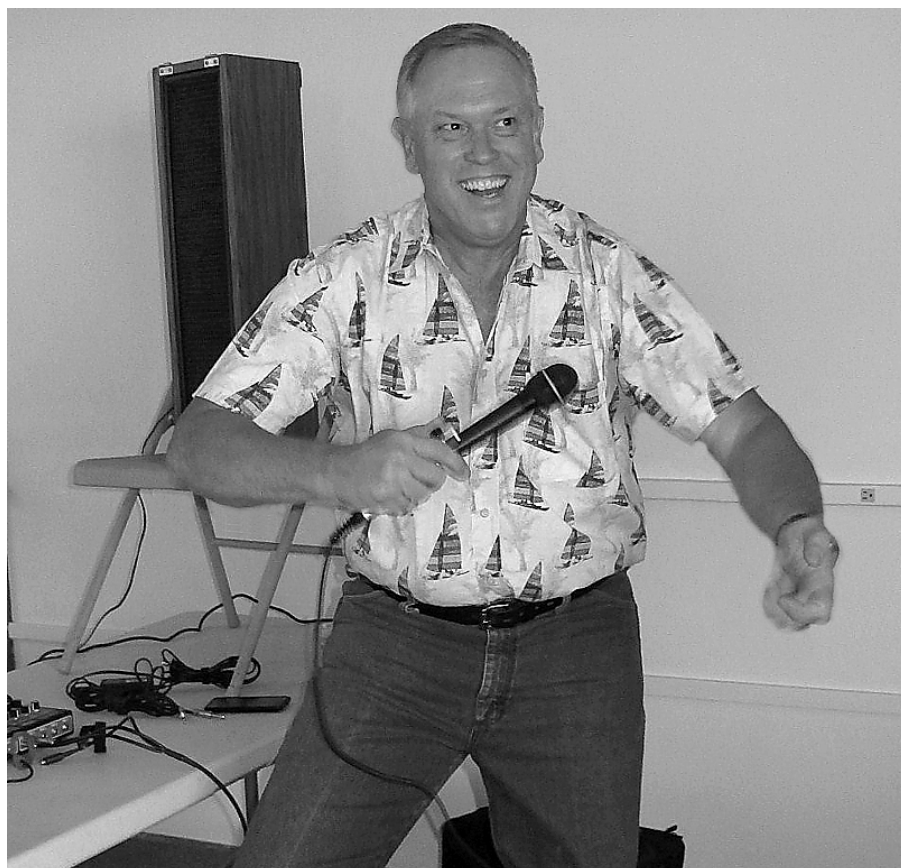
Finding His Calling

As a child, Story expected to be a musician. He got his first guitar at age five, and played in a country-western band. At 14, his parents brought him to a square dance, and he was hooked. He took classes at the fairgrounds and became a caller. By the time he was 16, Story had given up the band to focus exclusively on calling. After high school,

Jerry Story’s Calling

National Square Dance Caller Promenades Home

BY MEGAN D. ROBINSON



Fairfield-born Jerry Story calls square dances all over the world.

DAVID FLEMING

he was calling dances all over the state.

From 1971 to 1973, Story taught square dancing to over 200 students at the new Maharishi International University. Story married his high school sweetheart, Kristy, and traveled the world as a square dance caller, eventually settling in Texas.

Square Dance Revival

According to Story, square dancing had pretty much died off in Fairfield until Betsy Howland and Sarvani Viger-Edson got Robin Ragan, a caller from Ottumwa, to start classes in Fairfield two years ago.

Story has a lot of respect for the organizing power of Fairfield’s square dance enthusiasts and says, “Robin is a great teacher.”

Dancer Friendly Classes

Fairfield is at the forefront of a movement to return to simplicity. When Story learned to square dance in 1969, there were only 50 calls. Now there are over 120. Most square dance classes are offered only once a year, and students have to take 40 weeks of classes. Changing the current mode, classes in Fairfield are offered in 10-week sessions throughout the year,

with only 50 calls to learn.

“What they’re doing is the savior of square dancing in Fairfield,” Story says, “offering square dance to people in the doses they want it.” With lessons every 10 weeks, people can learn to dance right off the bat, getting an immediate sense of accomplishment. Focusing on 50 calls allows the caller to be a better teacher, fine tuning the dancers’ technique.

“The art of calling is being able to use a very limited vocabulary,” Story says, “and take these dancers on the ride of a lifetime, through all the different choreographies and things that you can do. That takes work on the caller’s part.”

Part of the success of Fairfield square dance classes are the regular dances and special classes available to all levels of students. After finishing a 10-week block, students can attend dances, workshops, or advanced classes. The ability to dance immediately after learning cements skills and keeps things fun.

The surge of interest in square dancing here in Fairfield doesn’t surprise Story. “It’s really a nice activity,” he says. Square dancing is family friendly, with dancers anywhere from 9 to 90. And with its cross-lateral movements, square dancing offers both physical and mental stimulation. “You can’t drink and dance,” Story jokes. “You have to have your wits about you.”

Fall Festival in Fairfield

For the weekend Fall Festival in October, Story will be bringing in a Japanese group, who he describes as “good dancers and very nice people.” Square dancing is extremely popular in Japan, Taiwan, and Germany. Over 60 years ago, American military bases introduced square dancing to Europe and Asia, and it’s been going strong ever since. Story expects the workshop experience to be “a nice cultural experience.”

Dancers from over a dozen states are also expected to attend the Fall Festival. Classes will be held in the 4H Activity Building on the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. For more information, go to www.fairfieldsquaredance.com. □