

Ferris Wheel

The story behind it's origins

(Don Beck, January 19, 2026)

I was driving down a highway near Chicago thinking that we didn't need this rash of new calls that everyone was creating, because there was still plenty that we could do with our existing calls, BUT if I were to create a new call, what would it be?

The currently, frequently featured formation was the Two-Faced Line, so that was what I pictured in my mind. Almost immediately, the current Ferris Wheel action appeared in my head.

Then there was the question of naming it. As far as naming new calls went, my philosophy was that if it had an obvious name, such as a combination of existing calls, use that name. If there was no obvious name, pick something that was completely different.

The Ferris Wheel action was definitely related to a Wheel and Deal action, so the name should relate to that. I was this action of moving one couple in-between two other couples as shuffling cards, so I named it Shuffle and Deal! I then checked Bill Burlison's book of calls and saw that there already about six calls that used the word Shuffle. Being completely new at this, six calls, seven calls, what's the difference! I had no idea that only one of those Shuffles was being used (at the challenge level).

The next step was to write up the call and send it to all of the note services with hopes that it would be one they chose to publish. A few days later, I got a phone call from Bill Peters (whom I had never met at the time) saying, I see that none of the other note services have published your new call yet. I like it and would like to publish it, but...

I interrupted him saying that I'm guessing you don't like the name.

He said yes, but it's your call, and I'll keep your name if you want. Since a challenge dancer friend of mine had told me the same thing, I said that I was willing to change it. Bill asked if he could suggest a name, and I said yes. He said Step Ahead. I said no way Bill, that's not catchy enough. I asked when he was going to publish it, i.e. when he needed a new name. He gave me two days! I called one of the other note service publishers, a friend named Jay King, to see if he had any suggestions. Jay said that he hadn't opened his mail yet, so no, he didn't.

So I went back into my head. I figured that since it started with a Circulate, I might call it Circus Wheel, but that didn't do it for me. Following that line of thought, Ferris Wheel was the next option. I loved it, Bill Peters loved it, and the rest is history.

A little more to the story, I originally also defined it from facing lines, similar to doing a Wheel and Deal from facing lines. Obviously, that never caught on.

Several years later, when thinking of Ferris Wheel as As Couples Extend, then do a Wheel and Deal, doing it phantom is there was no one there to do it with, I realized that you could also do it from a quarter line. I still think that that would be a nice addition to its use.

Example:

Heads Pass the Ocean

Heads Swing Thru

Head Men Run

Ferris Wheel

Right and Left Thru

(Corner Box)