

Grand Square 57.3 – May 2015

Mary and John Aquino

It took only one lesson to get Mary and John Aquino hooked on square dancing.

“We were new to New Jersey, having moved from Westchester, New York, and we saw a small blurb in the town newspaper that Hix & Chix was giving lessons.”

They graduated in 1981 with 100 people in their class; a year later, they became presidents of the club, dancing five to six nights a week. The following year, the Aquinos were elected first vice presidents of NNJSDA (1983-85), and then became presidents (1985-87) and chaired at least four Mini-Festivals. They were the founders of Motiv8ors (an NNJSDA club that started as J & M Squares).

Their first job as presidents of NNJSDA was locating a hall for the Association’s 25th anniversary dance, which was just a few months away at the time. Over the years, they’ve hosted dances, classes, and lessons in their basement. For many years, Mary ran Happy Squares, a group that featured square dance demos at nursing homes.



Currently living in West Nyack, New York, John and Mary are still members of Motiv8ors as well as Hi Taws. They are also very active with a 200-member group called Seniors of Clarkstown. Every year, they look forward to their annual Senior Citizen Show. Mary makes the costumes while John videotapes the production and distributes the tapes.

The high school sweethearts were originally from Worcester, Massachusetts. Married 63 years, they have three daughters, one son, 10 grandchildren, and two great-grandsons. The whole family reunites at their home on every holiday.

An engineer and USN/USNR Korean War veteran, John spent his career in the family business, selling new and used injection molding machinery, while Mary raised the couple’s four children. In addition to square dancing, John enjoys photography and videography, model airplanes, and ham radio. Mary enjoys line dancing, baking, and sewing (she made all their square dance outfits).

A highlight of their dancing years was Liberty Weekend in 1986, which celebrated the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the Statue of Liberty. Dee Dee Wood, who choreographed *The Sound of Music* and *Mary Poppins*, came to John and Mary’s basement with caller Dick Pasvolsky to see square dancing for herself, and then choreographed the dancing for the bicentennial celebration weekend.

The Aquinos fondly remember 65 squares at Bergen Community College with Marshall Flippo calling for Hix & Chix, and having to limit an NNJSDA dance at Rutgers University to 75 squares for the Red Boot Boys, a callers’ quartet.

“We love everything about square dancing,” they say. “The music, the exercise, and mostly the people we have met. We are still in contact with some of the people we met more than 30 years ago.”

Robin Friedman, Kittatinny Rangers