

CALLER CROWD-PLEASERS

(Submissions included chronologically – most recent at the top)

61.1 (May 2019)

Dayle Hodge: I'm pleased with the energy that Dayle devotes to square dancing. After getting up at 4 a.m., driving partway to New Jersey, and stopping at a friend's to work a full day remotely, he called a fantastic dance filled with numerous patterns that this dancer of 37 years had never done. On top of this, he called three more dances in our area in the same weekend – and is able to remember the names of many dancers.

Clay Goss: It's fun to dance to a caller who is new to our area. Clay has a beautiful singing voice and keeps the dancers moving and entertained.

Paul Ingis: At Cross Trail Squares, we like to challenge our callers and dancers to be their best. So at our January dance we challenged Paul to call multiple Plus calls in a row. His record was nine, and we all had a fantastic time!

Joe Landi: You can't help but smile when Joe has you dancing to "Rubber Duckie"! It is such a youthful tune with so many happy associations – and at the same time, it is incongruous that adults are performing complicated steps in rhythm to its lyrics.

Howard Richman: When Howard was calling, he sang a song about latkes (potato pancakes). Whenever he mentioned latkes, everyone laughed. Needless to say, it was a very enjoyable performance.

Ed Kerns: Ed was the club caller and class instructor for Hunterdon Flutterwheels for more than 10 years until his retirement in 2018. One of my favorite memories is when he donned coconut bra, wig, and parachute-string "grass" skirt for a Hawaiian theme dance. He also loved to change the calls for his signature sign-off, "Happy Trails," if he caught a dancer singing them like lyrics.

Todd Felleguy: I really enjoyed Todd's use of left-handed Spin Change and Exchange the Gears, with guys taking the lead.

Dane Bragg: Before he started the singer "The Lion Sleeps Tonight," Dane gave some background on the song, which I appreciated.

Howard Williamson: Yes, he is fast and there were breakdowns. But it was worth it to hear such a fabulous and energetic caller! His vocal range is astounding. We loved the great variety of music, especially when he slipped in J.Lo's "On the Floor." Usually the singers are R&R time, but not with Howard!

Dan Koft: It was exceptionally easy for us to dance smooth Plus in exact rhythm with the music when Dan called – very gratifying.

Howard Richman: How do I love Howard Richman? Let me count the ways: personality, humor, friendly teasing and sarcasm, creativity, originality, outside-of-the-box song choices, unusual calls. Howard is so much darn fun. We will travel far for the chance to dance to his calling.

60.2 (September 2018)

Dan Tapper: The return of Dan Tapper for the Reelers Mainstream graduation dance in June was a highlight of the season. He drew a crowd of 13 squares and didn't miss a beat despite not having called for a year. Looking forward to his next return in 2019!

Ed LaPlante: I like the way Ed mingles with the squares when teaching.

Mary Pickett: She has a wide-ranging repertoire, keeps strictly to the beat, cues the rounds very clearly, and is sensitive to the abilities of the floor.

Mary Pickett: It's obvious that Mary enjoys cuing and is not above laughing *with us* at some of our mistakes.

Ted Lizotte: Ted uses different, interesting calling sequences. He's careful to watch the floor so squares don't break down.

Mark Franks: I find his talking under his breath amusing, and he uses really good music.

Ed Foote: I enjoy Ed's punny sense of humor. He's a good caller, too!

General: Showmanship and humor are what I like in a caller.

Paul and Stephen Ingis: Their creative choices of pop music, enthusiasm, clarity, and connection with the dancers bring an irresistible energy to the dances.

Howard and Donna Williamson: Howard is fast and fun to dance to, and Donna is always so upbeat and cheerful; but even more than that, they are the nicest people. They go above and beyond to make everyone feel welcome and have an enjoyable evening.

Jim Snyder: I greatly enjoy when Jim Snyder does the song “Long Black Train.” I also like that he and a few other callers use records! They’re still being made – they’re almost indestructible and have very good sound quality.

Don Moger: I appreciate his innovative choreography along with an easygoing demeanor and helpfulness. Don keeps dancers on their toes in the most entertaining of ways: “Do Load the Boat three times, but after each one, Star Thru.” “Do Scoot and Weave three times, but after each one, Swing Thru.”

60.1 (May 2018)

Mark Franks: My favorite local caller is Mark Franks! He is very capable, he can be challenging when he chooses, and his music is always great. Mark has a wonderful sense of humor, which sometimes can be “pointed” when he sees people doing their own thing (instead of doing what he called). He is always reliable and consistent – an all-around favorite!

Howard Williamson: I enjoy dancing to Howard Williamson. He adds a lot to his calling!

Mary Moody: We have so much fun when she customizes her music to align with the dance theme. When it was Dance Like an Egyptian, her singers included “Sheik of Araby” and “Cleopatra, Queen of Denial” (de Nile!). One patter used “Walk Like an Egyptian” – which we did while circling left.

Dennis Reardon: The first caller I ever danced to after completing Mainstream was Dennis Reardon. I was scared to death, but his fantastic sense of humor was irresistible and I’ve been in love ever since. He is still one of my favorite callers.

Mark Franks: Mark Franks has a wicked sense of humor. It makes his calling even more fun!

Todd Felleggy, Paul Ingis: At a couple of dances with only 12 or 13 attendees (not enough for two squares), several dancers had to sit out during each tip. Todd and Paul had the answer! They deftly made “rectangles” with two head couples at each position, along with the traditional side couples. We danced as smoothly with 12 as if we had had a normal square of eight. Thanks to these skillful callers’ willingness to adapt to the needs of the floor, we all had a more enjoyable evening.

Ed LaPlante: Ed is an excellent teacher: clear, methodical, logical, personable, observant, and (usually!) patient with his Mainstream class. “I’m talking, not calling!”

59.2 (September 2017)

Dayle Hodge: We were at a club that alternates Mainstream and Plus. During one of the scheduled Mainstream tips, Dayle discovered that all the dancers except one knew Plus, so he decided to call both simultaneously: Mainstream calls to one square and Plus calls to the other dancers. He managed to keep us all dancing without a single hitch during the entire tip!

Joe Landi: Joe was the club caller for Mountain Squares for many years, calling A1 and A2. He loved to call the following sequence: Slip, Slide, Swing, Slither. Then he would say, “Now reverse it.”

General: I really appreciate the callers who make Mainstream fun for experienced dancers by adding some Dance by Definition (DBD).

Roy Leber: Roy is gone, but I enjoyed when he said, “Make me proud.”

Joe Landi: His signature song: “Rubber Ducky, you’re the one; you make bath time lots of fun! Rubber Ducky, I’m awfully fond of you!”

Mark Franks, Ted Lizotte, Bill Harrison, Howard Williamson, and others: When a caller gets us back home using a clever pattern I’ve never experienced before, it turns a great dance into the highest high. Thanks to all the callers who keep inventing new and interesting patterns.

Don Bachelder: He uses great music and a very funny feminine voice.

59.1 (May 2017)

Todd Felleggy: Five couples wanted to square up for the last tip – not enough for two squares, but too many for one square. Todd offered to call the tip for six couples, so we persuaded two dancers who were on their way out to stay and join us. The formation was a rectangle rather than a square, with two couples in each head position and one couple in each side position. That was the smoothest and best tip of the night.

Betsy Gotta: Betsy always uses music that speaks to her, and my favorite was the Hooked on Classics she used at Rockytops – great beat to the “Toreador Song” from *Carmen* ... very exciting!

Dan Tapper: I love Dan's wonderful voice on rocking singing calls from the '50s as well as his friendly, upbeat, kind personality (with some gentle humor thrown in). He is also a superb teacher – organized, observant, encouraging.

Howard Richman: I recently had two back-to-back dance experiences. On the first night, a caller used the same 15 calls repeatedly, had no eye contact with the dancers, and seemed unprepared. A few nights later, it was totally different with Howard Richman calling. He was enthusiastic, organized, and had us dance a square-within-a-square. What fun! One last comment: A little humor goes a long way. The caller doesn't need to be a stand-up comic, but sharing a laugh with friends or strangers is always a good thing. ☺

Dayle Hodge: A man in a kilt could be the definition of confidence! Dayle combines that confidence with complex and unusual call combinations, a beautiful singing voice, intelligent sense of humor, and great interactions with dancers.

Paul and Stephen Ingis: We were short one man in a square, so Stephen danced while calling, using a wireless headset microphone ... what fun! And how can one resist dancing to Paul's singing call, "Cheeseburger in Paradise"?

Betsy Gotta, Howard Richman: We danced rectangle tips at two events, and both callers were absolutely fabulous at moving six couples (four heads and two sides) around the floor seamlessly. The rectangle formation could be a wonderful "special tip" at a dance or a theme for an evening.

58.3 (September 2016)

Jim Snyder: "Can you handle three women?!"

Ken Ritucci: Ken has a delightful way of acknowledging a square's successful completion of a difficult sequence ("Gold star for you.") and helping us laugh off a breakdown ("You're toast.").

Betsy Gotta: Betsy made simple choreography a lot of fun by having us keep a veerrry long string around the perimeter of our square off the floor. What made it challenging? Dancers were not allowed to use hands – only their waists, shifting of body weight, and lots of square cooperation.

Tim Marriner: Tim, always the showman, makes the singer "Cowboy" extra entertaining by adding all his sound effects.

Dan Tapper: I can understand what he's calling; it's clear, he enunciates. He's also a truly nice and patient person who doesn't make people feel like jerks when they mess up – very supportive.

Don Bachelder: When Don called for our last dance, we had a record seven squares! He uses a good mixture of music, and he and his wife, Sally-Ann, are just nice people who are an asset to square dancing.

Len Anfinson: He's the first one I heard calling "Neutron Dance" as a singer, and he does it so well!

Don Coy: How can crooning a love song turn into a great square dance? Just dance to Don Coy.

Fran Wadel: I like her chutzpah!

Dan Tapper: His music has a good beat, he gives good explanations, and I like the musical fill-ins he provides between words.

Paul Ingis: Our club is most pleased by Paul's choice of music from his large repertoire. We look forward to his lively tunes. We also like his dangle dances.

Wayne Applegate: His voice is so clear that I can hear and understand him, even without a microphone.

Nick Martellacci: Nick will always be memorable for his quirky outfits, shirt covered with beach shoes, leprechaun shoes, etc. As this talented, entertaining caller retires, we will miss him and we wish him well.

58.2 (May 2016)

Roy Leber (he was a gold mine of one-liners): "Follow your neighbor and spread – Ed, Ned, Jed, Fred, and Ted" (or other names). "Heads roll away – that's a guillotine."

Howard Richman: I have always enjoyed his original choreography, especially his clever and entertaining Asymmetric Squares and his "Move On" routines.

Ed Foote (king of put-downs): "It's a pleasure to watch you dance." "And the crowd goes wild!" "Well, at least you broke down smoothly ... and that square was a close second." (During last tip) "The best dancers always stay to the end of the dance."

General: I get energized when callers put together familiar calls in an order that I don't remember ever doing.

Dan Tapper: When our club had a scheduling snafu, we called Dan. He paused only to change clothes, then grabbed his equipment and rushed over. With no time for prep, this brand-new caller wowed us with a fantastic dance program.

Howard Williamson: I particularly enjoy his rendition of “Don’t give me no plastic saddle, it gives me blisters,” with the body language as he sings.

Mark Franks: He is so good both as a caller and with his dry sense of humor.

Dennis Reardon: We all laughed when he called “Yellow Rock – everyone U Turn Back – Back Up – Erase the Yellow Rock.”

Jim Snyder: I enjoy dancing in his unusual positions for different calls – not necessarily arky, but positions that make you think of what the call really means.

Howard Richman: I always feel like I’m in a Broadway play troupe, especially with his singing voice.

Joe Landi: “These calls are not optional.” (He was gifted a vest with this saying by Middletown Ramblers at their anniversary dance last year.)

Mark Franks: He makes Mainstream as interesting as Plus. He’s that good!

Wayne Applegate: I’ve always felt a special attachment to Wayne; maybe because we both love history, maybe because we both love Lancaster, Pennsylvania, maybe because he’s the one who taught me to square dance. And although it means a dance with him has ended, I’ve always loved his signature finale: “Ladies and gentlemen, my thanks to *you* – because in square dancing, there is no FUN without U.”

Nick Martellacci: His music is fresh, current, lively, and just terrific!

Howard Richman: I very much enjoy his traveling squares, in which he breaks us into couples and has us move on several times to other couples to keep making new four-person squares. It gives you a chance to dance with lots of different people.

Mark Franks: (You’re gonna love this!) I’m not sure what I enjoy more about Mark’s calling, his witty comments or his creative choreography. (Clap, clap, clap!)