

Just for Fun!

(Submissions included chronologically – most recent at the top)

60.2 (September 2018)

Ocean Waves: In May, Louis and I went on our first square dance cruise. Negotiating the 15-deck ship with a capacity of 4,900 passengers had us walking considerable distances. However, dancing on the 13th deck gave us exercise of a different sort. Besides the mileage covered during 20-plus hours of dancing, there was the balance issue. Although the smooth choreography of callers Sandie Bryant, Tim Crawford, and Ted Lizotte had excellent flow, the ocean waves did not always cooperate. Veering left or right was either too easy (overshooting our desired position) or difficult (straining to veer in spite of the slanted floor). Exclamations of “Whoa!” could be heard. Dancing on ships and ferries, as much fun as it is, really makes you appreciate returning to terra firma.

Jan Thompson (Motiv8ors)

60.1 (May 2018)

Now You C It, Now You Don’t: Back in the 1980s, when Helena and I were learning C2, we went to a National Convention and quickly found three other couples who were all at about the same dancing level. We decided to dance as a square to our favorite callers. The callers noticed that we were strong and started to use us as a pilot square. As we were in one tip, the caller (I don’t remember his name, but he liked throwing red-hot candies out to the floor) used a particularly hard sequence. We knew we hadn’t done it correctly and saw that most of the floor was down. When he looked at us, we gave him the “thumbs down” to acknowledge we were wrong. He said, “You’re fired!” We four couples vowed to meet up at the next National so we could dance together again. Unfortunately, one of them had dropped out of dancing by then, but we teamed up with the other two. After that, we lost track of one another – there was no email in those days.

Ken Robinson (Rutgers Promenaders)

Plus What? Mark Franks and I play a little game when he calls Plus dances. I keep track of all the Plus calls, and toward the end of the dance, I remind Mark of any that he has not done. Invariably, in the very next tip, Mark skillfully incorporates the missing ones. By the end of the evening, he has called the entire Plus list. Well, one night, Mark outdid himself. Cathy and I were dancing Mainstream at Y Squares, and the time came for the one Plus tip of the evening. As we were dancing, I sensed that the tip was a bit longer than usual, and when it was over, I realized something extraordinary: Mark had incorporated all 30 Plus calls into the single tip! That was the first and only time in my Plus dancing career that any caller had achieved something so ambitious. When it was over, Mark simply looked my way, smiled, and said, “Did I miss anything?”

Don Schlesinger (RocklandRockytops)

59.2 (September 2017)

My husband, Tom, and I had been dancing as partners all evening in the traditional man/woman roles. In the last tip of the night, our square was short one couple. The only two available dancers were women, neither of whom danced the opposite part. I suggested to Tom that if I switched to “man,” each of us could partner with one of the women, which we did. The first call was Four Ladies Chain, and I (on autopilot) danced right over to the other side of our square, along with my partner! Fortunately, the next call was Chain Them Back Home, so we both returned to where we started. We all had a good laugh as I kept repeating: “I’m a man ... I’m a man ... I’m a man!”

Pat Duemig (Circle Eights, Western Wheelers/Hix & Chix)

59.1 (May 2017)

The Challenge Challenge: My wife, Cathy, asked me to meet her for dinner followed by a surprise. Her chosen destination turned out to be Hi Taws, a Challenge club, whose dance was to be called by our good friend, Ed Foote. I was delighted to see not only Ed, but also many other friends. Of course, as Plus dancers, there was no question of our actually dancing.

After the first half hour of Challenge 1, a quick count of the room put the attendance at 23: frustratingly, one shy of a third square. Imagine my surprise – no, make that panic! – when Rich Baumeister came over and said, “We need you to fill out the third square.” “Me? I don’t even dance *Advanced*,” I protested. “Don’t worry, we’ll get you through; you can do it,” was his reassuring reply. And so, for more than an hour, I did indeed get through it. I

followed the cues of my fellow dancers, not just in my squares but in others, where I attempted to mimic the movements of my positional counterpart.

I got keen satisfaction from holding my own. But it was especially rewarding, during each tip, to enable seven people to dance who otherwise would have had to sit out.
Don Schlesinger (RocklandRockytops)

Inflatable Petticoat? On a square dance trip to Germany last fall, the American dancers were fun and lively – good dancing, good beer, and good laughs. When I expressed the frustration of fitting crinolines into my luggage, a Texan tried to convince me that I should have packed an inflatable petticoat ... and I believed him! Later, I discovered that the joke was on him, because inflatable petticoats actually exist, including a style for little girls in the 1960s. They are now made with PVC/latex.
Helen Jacobson (Reelers)

Switching Positions: A visitor from Wisconsin attended a Western Wheelers/Hix & Chix dance. Since he is a caller and can dance either position, he teased us in one square about switching with his female partner, but they remained where they were. In that tip, we also had two women who could dance either position as partners. During the patter, both of those couples mistakenly switched positions, yet we kept flowing smoothly and they eventually switched back to their original positions. Betsy Gotta, the caller, took note and asked Roy to take a video of our square. It brought all of us some good laughs.
Mark Bippes (Reelers, Kittatinny Rangers)

Remember Mainstream?! We had just finished a Plus tip and then squared up for a Mainstream tip, which happened to consist of all Plus dancers except one. Dan Tapper called Circle to a Line, which is a Mainstream call. But the entire square, without thinking, did Single Circle to a Wave, which is a Plus call – including the one Mainstream dancer, who was utterly confused. A shocked Dan stopped, laughed, and asked: “Did you just do Single Circle to a Wave?” We all cracked up laughing and righted ourselves. It was priceless.

Lacey Hill (Belles & Beaux, Circle Eights, RocklandRockytops, Western Wheelers/Hix & Chix)

58.3 (September 2016)

Norman and I were dancing in Brussels – the only couple in the square whose native language was English. The caller was Australian. He had arrived that day on a nonstop trip through Newark, New Jersey. The others kept asking us, “What did he say?” Our reply: “We didn’t understand him, either.” It took three tips before the floor was moving smoothly.
Barbara Kanter, Western Wheelers/Hix & Chix

I was babysitting my four-year-old grandson when he asked if he could play on my phone. I told him that I didn’t have any games on my phone, but he could look at my photos. Considering there aren’t very many of them, I was surprised that he was keeping quietly occupied for quite a bit of time. I looked over and noticed that he was moving his finger back and forth along the bottom of the screen. Over the photos? What was he doing? Taking a closer look, I saw that he had opened my Taminations app and was playing with the “dancers” – moving them to and fro, quickly and slowly, all over the dance floor! Now, whenever I babysit, he asks to “play on my phone.” At this rate, I wonder how long it will be before he’s ready for the real dance floor!

Tom Duemig (Circle Eights and Western Wheelers/Hix & Chix)

58.2 (May 2016)

Harvest Moon 2015. I’m a she who danced he, and he danced she. Confusing? Not until Saturday night, when she wore slacks and he wore a kilt. The square was befuddled. Is there a name for that, they asked? Yes, “arky”! How simple is that?
Mary Lundin (Middletown Ramblers)

Many years ago, the annual January Jubilee festival was held in Philadelphia. At the first festival I attended (in 1980), there were more than two squares of Rutgers Promenaders in the Plus hall. We decided to have some fun by holding a “challenge of the sexes” – one square all guys and the other all girls. We squared up right in front of Lee Kopman. He looked at us and the rest of the hall, and knew we had the strongest squares on the floor. He tried everything to break us down; he threw out calls that weren’t even on the list and formations that would collapse a typical Advanced floor. Nothing worked! Neither square broke down during the entire tip. By the end, the other squares had stopped dancing to cheer us on. I was dancing the man’s part and Roy Gotta was my partner, having stuffed rolled-up towels under his vest in the appropriate places. This was just one of the many times during the weekend that I had a blast.
Ken Robinson (Rutgers Promenaders)

A number of years ago, I called four club nights in a row and then an afternoon Brownie troop “Date with Dad.” When I called “four ladies star right, four men star left,” I forgot to tell the little girls to go home (not needed at clubs, but needed with beginners). I ended up with a number of squares in which the dads starred left *over* the girls’ star – a cute pattern I can only use at that type of dance, and which I have done deliberately ever since.

Dan Koft (Caller)

58.1 (September 2015)

(No submissions.)

57.3 (May 2015)

Several of us had just graduated from Plus lessons and were attending our very first Plus dance, to the calling of Glenn Matthew. We found ourselves in an almost all “newbie” square, and unfortunately, were breaking down a bit more than anticipated. One of our group was especially being challenged. All of a sudden, I realized that we were actually dancing more than not, and looked up to see that we had become a square of nine instead of eight. Glenn (with his portable mike) was calling from our square, while simultaneously helping the challenged dancer through the paces!

Pat and Tom Duemig (Circle Eights)

57.2 (January 2015)

It was a Pajama Night theme dance at Belles & Beaux, with Howard Richman calling. As it turned out, Howard had also been asked to call at a private party, and the young couple who hired him wanted to see him in action before signing the contract. So, he had given them this date and venue where he would be calling, and invited them to come and watch him – which they did. When they left, Howard told us that, upon seeing the pajama-clad group, the couple had said: “How very sweet. What is this, a home, where the residents have been let out for the night to dance?”!!

Don Schlesinger (RocklandRockytops)