With a compensation plan that consists solely of a free subscription and accolades from the editor, it’s no small wonder that SquareUp has a difficult time attracting and retaining a regular staff. When I started this endeavor, I recognized and accepted that our writers would come and go.

Still though, it’s hard to recover from losing someone as valuable as Myron Taylor. Myron wrote for SquareUp from Issues 1-6 and has “retired” to pay more attention to the demands of his real job. We’ll miss his well-researched, informative articles, and I definitely will miss his support and thoughtfulness.

Likewise, Dan Robuck has left our staff. In the issues he worked with us, Dan wrote a newsletter series and pre-convention articles, sold ads, and more than doubled Foggy City’s subscriptions. Thank you for all you’ve done Dan.

I’m now that much more appreciative of the “regulars.” Ric Gonzalez couldn’t escape from the magazine if he wanted to, simply because he’s my partner and is in the closest proximity when I’m in need of help. He works without complaint and I’m certain has logged more hours than any other staff member.

Jim Bailey, also a copy editor, actually looks forward to our editing parties. Hmmm ... if only I could clone him.

Mark Walker, another excellent copy editor and writer, deserves credit for his work on Issues 1-6. During this time, Mark honed his skills in eliminating redundancies and instances where writers say the same thing twice.

With this issue, I’m pleased to include an article from one of our original writers, Debbie Dawson. I’m also pleased to add Paul Waters to our staff. Paul has contributed to several issues and will continue to focus on developing each publication’s theme.

I know there are many more talented writers out there, but I don’t know who all of you are. If you’re writing for your club newsletter, why not make a contribution to the national community and write for SquareUp also? Call or e-mail and we’ll talk. Our wages are nonexistent, but we have fun ... well, at least most of the time.
With tourist temptations that included the Castro, Nob Hill, Fisherman’s Wharf and others, San Francisco provided more than the usual number of distractions as the host city for our 1996 annual convention. The main attraction, though, could be found at the Hyatt Regency Embarcadero, where 1,147 gay and lesbian square dancers and friends joined together to celebrate Stars, Thars and Cable Cars.

Early arrivals were able to join in on San Francisco’s huge Pride Day celebration. Tourists are often advised to dress in layers during San Francisco’s cool, windswept summer days, but the advice and extra clothing were both discarded when the temperature climbed into the mid-nineties. Marching square dancers wilted in the heat but impressed a cheering crowd anyway. After the parade, the Embarcadero’s Vaillancourt Fountain—never intended to be a public pool—provided relief for the dehydrated masses.

The Grand March at San Francisco’s 1986 “Star Thru the Golden Gate” is remembered as one of the best and led to high expectations for this year’s convention kickoff. When an outside march had to be scrapped because of Fourth of July conflicts, Terry Presley and other organizers designed a simple, effective indoor choreography—we marched in concentric circles (eight to be exact), each moving in the direction opposite its preceding ring. After the march, the national anthems (England, Australia, Canada, United States) were presented. Organizers placed each anthem’s lyrics on the back of club placards, and our Canadian square dancers must have been impressed that their friends from the States were finally able to sing every word of “O Canada.” During the Opening Ceremonies that followed, Steve Liebhart, an original Stars, Thars and Cable Cars board member and a visionary behind the convention, was appropriately remembered and recognized.

The Honky Tonk Queen contest continued its tacky traditions, with Lois (“old queen”) Carmen Denominator and her sister She-Devil, Lil Biddydick (emcee) casting dispersions on each of the contestants. Tami Wynotte, whose considerable talent is exceeded only by her age, lit up the crowd with a rendition of Gee, But It’s Great To Be Here (complete with a
spirited backup from hand puppets). The entertainment continued with the She-Devils' tribute to the military, a statuesque twist on Iwo Jima (see photo). After this fun and frivolity, the contest came down to a hair-raising, nail-biting choice between Barbara Bush and Elvis. (It's noteworthy that both were escorts who upstaged the contestants.) With strong audience support, Elvis won, leaving Barbara to commiserate with sister Gypsy Rose Bush. Elvis' victory is further evidence that this contest has gone to the dogs!

The 1996 Golden Boot Award recipient is Carol Roberts of Squares Across the Border (see accompanying article). Anne Uebelacker, 1995’s winner, made an impressive award presentation and permitted Carol enough time to collect her thoughts before delivering a gracious and moving acceptance speech. Carol, long a legend in the IAGSDC® for her commitment and perseverance, joins a distinguished list of award winners.

The first Fun Badge Tour was held at San Francisco's Star Thru the Golden Gate Convention (1986); ten years later the tour remains one of the convention’s most popular events. Anne Uebelacker called, with Mike Desisto joining in at the Ferry Building. Other stops included Crissy Field, the Palace of Legion of Honor, Golden Gate Park (Music Concourse) and Castro Street. At each site, Trevor Hailey, conductor of "Cruisin’ the Castro" tours, provided historical insights. The final tip, held in front of the Castro Theater and in the middle of Castro Street itself, entertained a surprised street audience (that is, as surprised as one can be in the Castro).

The specialty tips become more specialized each year, and this year stretched the limits (and the waistlines) with the addition of a WMFOFT (White Male Fat Old Fart Tip).

Unique staging contributed to exciting performance demos. Conducted in the Hyatt's huge atrium, and visible for 17 stories, the demos by Gold Rush, Times Squares, Foggy City, Barbary Coast Cloggers, and S.F. Saddletramps entertained audiences of square dancers and curious onlookers alike.

Every convention has its defining moments. Stars, Thars and Cable Cars had many, but none so poignant as the memorial tip at the closing ceremonies. "Squares In The Circle" conceived and composed by Donald Eldon Wescoat and accompanied by Marty Kahler on oboe, was called by Bill Eyler, Anne Uebelacker, Todd Fellegy and Andy Shore. A moment of silence followed the tip. Of the many tributes we have witnessed at past conventions and other community events, few have been as powerful or moving as this.
Medallion Dancers

Congratulations to the 1996 recipients of Freeman Stamper's 10-year convention medallion:

Russ Cashdollar, Baltimore, MD
Deb Cohen, Philadelphia, PA
Ed Conley, San Francisco Bay Area
Jim Copeland, Portland, OR
DC Cronyn, Seattle, WA
Tony De France, Palm Springs, CA
Mike DeSisto, Edgewood, WA
Tim Elliott, New York, NY
Ron Goodman, San Francisco, CA
Gus Gustafson, Seattle, WA
Bill Houghton, Vancouver, BC, Canada
Warren Jaquith, Washington, DC
Brad Jones, San Francisco, CA
Russ King, San Francisco, CA
Ett McAtee, Baltimore, MD
Claire Meisel, San Francisco, CA
Matt Messner, San Francisco, CA
Don Morton, San Francisco, CA
Mary Ann Murphy, Eureka, CA
Chuck Novak, Grand Rapids, MI
Tom Pearson, Washington, DC
Howard Richman, New Jersey
Monte Roush, San Francisco, CA
Joe Sain, San Francisco, CA
Andy Shore, Mountain View, CA
Terence Wilder, Albuquerque, NM

1995 recipients not recognized in Chicago
Art Katz, Sacramento, CA
Chris Phillips, South Florida

The callers

Old favorites and a few first-timers comprised the star-studded cast:

Ray Brendzy
Saundra Bryant
Vic Ceder
Tim Crawford
Mike DeSisto
Bill Eyler
Todd Fellegy
Eric Henerlau
Deborah Parnell
Andy Shore
Anne Uebelacker
Bronc Wise

Thanks to the convention committee

Relax, it's over! We had a GREAT time!

Randy Clark, Co-chair
Tom Tripp, Co-chair & Corresponding Secretary
Bruce Isner, Co-chair & Treasurer
Allan Berenstein, Recording Secretary
Con Breer
Adam Conovan
Felix Fornino
George Fox
Connie George
Chuck Krysieniel
Mark Levine
Gene Tebbe

A gigantic Thank You to all volunteers!

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FREE CATALOG!
The 1996 Golden Boot Award

Text of speech by Anne Uebelacker, 1995 Recipient

Last year at this time, I was the lucky person who was presented with this prestigious award by two very dear friends, Louis Torres and Bill Eyler. Little did I know that with this award comes a curse — who to choose for the following year.

I sat down and thought about possible criteria for the upcoming candidates. After spending some time talking with a few of the past recipients, we came up with a format that seemed like a reasonable set of guidelines.
1. The person must be recognized nationally and internationally for their contributions to the gay and lesbian square dance world.
2. They must be an active member within their own club.
3. They must have worked for and promoted all facets of the activity.
4. They have been a liaison between the gay and lesbian square dance community and the straight square dance community.
5. They have given freely of their time for the love of the activity, beyond the call of duty.

It may sound like a tough set of guidelines but believe me, there were many deserving names on my list of possible recipients. So many people have given so much to the betterment of gay and lesbian square dancing as we know it today.

Now comes the curse... Who do I choose? Do I pick a politically correct person, do I pick a popular choice person, do I pick a number from one to ten and hope for the best...

The truth of the matter is, there was never any doubt in my mind who should be the 1996 Golden Boot recipient.

I have chosen a gift of West Coast Indian art that has the raven as its symbol. The raven is known as the transformer who created the world. It is the cultural hero. The Raven also symbolizes creation, prestige, and knowledge, someone who can talk easily to all ages and types of people. A teacher, an intellect.

The Raven describes, in accurate detail, the person that I wish to honor with this year's Golden Boot Award: Carol Roberts from Squares Across the Border, Vancouver, Canada.

Some of her contributions to the activity:
- Carol was the co-chair of 1990 IAGSDC® convention in Vancouver, Canada.
- She is the liaison for the Fraser Valley Association (straight SD clubs) and SATB.
- Carol and Elgin Hodgins are the only remaining original members of the club. Carol was the originator of Squares Across the Border with Art Smith from Seattle. She saw gay SD at a rodeo in Reno and brought it back to Vancouver. Carol has attended every convention since Seattle 1984.
- Carol is again on the committee for the upcoming 2001 bid for the IAGSDC® convention.
- Carol has been an executive member or coordinator for the past 13 years of the club's existence. She has been very supportive of the gay community and has given freely of her time and energy.
- As a result of Squares Across the Border joining the National Gay/Lesbian Square Dance Association, the name changed at the Denver convention to "International" to reflect the first Canadian club.
- She is the first to give praise and recognition to someone else but is the very last to acknowledge her own contributions.

Carol is loved by all who have met and danced with her at every level.

Carol's Acceptance Speech

It's kind of hard for me to talk right now. I'm very touched and very honored. I can't help but think of Keith* (Keith Snowden) right now. But I have Lauro's (Lauro De Haan) bracelet on my other hand, so I should be able to do this.

The stories about starting our club. It was very much a shared venture from Seattle and from the people in Vancouver. As everyone knows, you can't dance by yourself, you need seven other dancers. And when we started, we had two squares of dancers, and a very generous man, Art Smith, that got us going.

It has been a privilege for me. I don't know what my life would have been like without having a chance to share it with all of you. When I come to Convention now, it just amazes me. I miss some people very, very much, but to watch you dance just blows me away. And I think I've said this to our dancers before. When we started John Barley's it was a disco trying to be a leather bar or a leather bar trying to be a disco, and that was in Vancouver. Before that, leather men didn't dance. Some of them would be very surprised to see you today. One of the most important things for me is I've watched people come into our club on Saturday nights, and to be able to have a good time, they would have to get drunk or be stoned. And they would have to dance by themselves, and that was their Saturday night.

And every time I watch our dancers, and all of you dance, on a Saturday night, in a church, in a substance-free environment, with such joy, it just amazes me. And I'm just very grateful that I've had a chance to be a part of that, and that all of you are willing to share that joy with new dancers and with your friends.

Thank you very, very much.

*Editor's Note: Keith Snowden, Lauro De Haan, and Carol Roberts were all members of the 1990 “Northstar Promenade” Convention Committee. Keith was also the 1992 Golden Boot Award recipient. Keith and Lauro have both passed away.
The Alamo City Wranglers had a rather unique beginning, but I’m sure every club has its own special story. Our club was started on a challenge. The outgoing president of the IAGSDC®, Marilyn Martinyak from San Jose, said “I challenge you, Cricket Matheson, from San Antonio Texas to get a club going in Texas by convention next year.” This challenge was placed at the IAGSDC® convention in Vancouver. In 1990, we had our first “fly-in” where San Antonio was blessed with a large response of people who came to help form demo squares. Dancers from Seattle, Portland, Albuquerque (including a caller), Denver, and Baltimore came to the Alamo City for a weekend of work. Our first class started shortly after that. Six years later, we are still a rather small club, but have over 50% representation at convention. I’m personally proud of our club.

Since this is about our history, we really need to go back further in time to 1986. Harland Jylha (one of our founders) and I had the honor of meeting Ernie Conte from Portland. He was in the Air Force Guard in San Antonio for a military school. All three of us met at a straight singles square dance club here in town. It was there that Ernie invited me to my first gay square dance convention in Portland.

Harland was taking lessons that year and was going to Seattle for the holidays. He asked his instructor and his wife if there was a club in Seattle where he could dance. The only listing was a club called Puddletown Squares, with a little notation of “gay” after the name. Harland said, “It sounds good to me” and he instantly got the name of the contact person and wrote a letter. As a consequence, he was invited to the Puddletown Squares Christmas dance. That was his first experience dancing with a gay club and he loved it.

I got to Portland in the usual straight square dance drag. Cute towel off the belt, long sleeve shirt, long pants, and all these gorgeous Portland people are in shorts and short sleeve shirts. I felt I stuck out like a sore thumb. It was the best weekend I’ve ever had. There I met David Vanderhoof (another founder) and Danny Alvarado, and found they also lived in San Antonio. That now made four of us. Still not enough for a square, but I had the bug to get this fun activity started in San Antonio.

The four of us attended the Phoenix convention. David was from Tacoma Gaslight Squares, and Danny Alvarado had an affiliation with the Bay Area. Harland and I had no club affiliation and had to march at the end of the Grand March with the nobodies. Subsequently, we met some wonderful dancers from The Wilde Bunch in Albuquerque, who adopted us. We were Wilde Bunch members until our own club got going. We were accepted into the IAGSDC® at the Miami convention in 1991. The challenge was accomplished.

We have had about seven classes since we started. We are also current members of our local association, and have started to go out to local anniversary dances. Slowly we are getting known in town and have even had occasional visitors to our club from the straight world.

Of the founding members of our club, two currently hold office. Danny Alvarado has moved to Dallas and is helping the Longhorns to get off to a great start.

We will be celebrating our fifth fly-in “Pass Through the Alamo V” in March, 1997. Hope you can come down and enjoy some Texas hospitality.

As in every club, there are a few leaders that get things started, but it requires help from others to keep things going. The founders wish to express a big THANK YOU to all of our class members, whether they are still dancing with us or not. To all of those who came to our fly-ins or demo squares from the beginning, did art work for us, got us sound equipment at a good price, or got us music so when we don’t have our lovely caller, Terry Wheeler, we have music to dance to. It takes everyone to get a club going.

Yellow Rocks to all!!!
The March Hare and his marketing think tank had told me everything I needed to know about creating recruiting materials and using a database to track my progress and the sources for the names on my mailing list.

My head was spinning from all the information I had received from the Cheshire Cat, the Red Queen and the Mad Hatter and Co. The next thing I had to do was speak to the Caterpillar, who would tell me how to create a communications plan.

The problem was, how would I find the Caterpillar? I sat down on a grassy knoll, scratched my head and was wondering what to do next, when, all of a sudden, the White Rabbit with the leather vest came racing past me again. "Recruit! Recruit!" he cried.

I jumped to my feet and followed him down a long path, then through a thicket, until I found myself standing in a clearing where the plump Caterpillar reclined next to a hookah pipe on a large mushroom, surrounded by dressers and armoires. Sequined gowns, wigs and necklaces hung from the branches of the surrounding trees, and cosmetics lay strewn across the grass. (It looked like someone had tossed a hand grenade into Elizabeth Taylor's bedroom).
Yet, surprisingly, the Caterpillar wore no makeup himself and was completely naked. In each of his hands he held a telephone.

"Who are you?" demanded the Caterpillar, as I sidled up to his mushroom.

"I was sent here by the March Hare," I answered timidly, "To ... to learn about how to create a communications plan. I don't want to square dance alone."

"Square dance alone! What a ridiculous concept! Wait a moment, let me phone the March Hare." The Caterpillar picked up another phone. "Can I speak to the Hare please? What do you mean he's eating a jam sandwich? Tell him it's the Caterpillar. Come on, chop! chop! ... Is that you, Hare? You sent me this person ... who is he? Oh I see ... bit of a dolt, huh? Better leave it with me then. No, I don't want a bite of your jam sandwich!" The Caterpillar slammed down the phone and turned back to me, "So you want to learn about communications, do you?"

"Yes," I answered, "I now understand why planning and proper recruiting materials and methods are important, but I don't see how communications fits into the picture."

"Oh dear," sighed the Caterpillar, "You are a very dim young man indeed! But you're not the first dizzy queen to cross my path, and I don't suppose you'll be the last. Here we go. The place where most organizations and businesses fall down is in the communications department. Oh — would you be a lamb and get me that case on that dresser over there. No, not that one ... not the red one, the mother-of-pearl, that's it."

I handed the heavy cosmetics case to the Caterpillar.

"Thanks pumpkin. You're quite butch for a fern, aren't you? Anyway ..." The Caterpillar opened the case and pulled out a large black circle. "What do you think this is?" he asked.

"It looks like a black hole," I said.

"Precisely!" The Caterpillar started applying mascara with one hand, while yet another held up a mirror. "Now, pick up that rock over there and throw it at this black hole."

I did as the Caterpillar asked, and the rock disappeared.

"What happened to it?" I asked.

"It's disappeared, it's gone. Kaput!" replied the Caterpillar, rouging his cheeks.

"But what does all this have to do with square dance recruiting?" I asked.

"Well, you don't want your club or your recruiting committee to become a black hole, do you pumpkin? Look at it this way: Let's say you meet a real hunk in a bar and you give him your phone number. Now what happens next?"

"I wait for him to call me."

"And what if he doesn't call?"

"I'd think he wasn't interested."

"Well, it's precisely the same thing with prospective members for your club. They give you their names and addresses, and you have to call them back. You don't want to be a black hole, into which their names disappear forever. You
have to give them feedback.” He paused and held up a tube of lipstick, “Is this me?”

“Blood red? No, no, no, you’ll look like you just walked into a door. You need something warmer. Have you got a soft pink? Anyway, so what you mean is that we should provide prospective members with some sort of feedback, to let them know that our club wants them to join and that they are important to us?”

“Fabulous! You are so right, pumpkin, about that and about this shade of lipstick too. Red isn’t me.”

“Are there many steps to having a good communications plan?” I asked.

“Yes, there are, but your communications plan is the most important part of your entire recruiting plan. Without good communications, you may invest a lot of time, money and energy, only to yield poor results. Your communications plan is the lynch pin to success. Be a dear and bring me that blond wig — not the Doris Day, the Dolly Parton — and those 8 pairs of stilettos. While you’re doing that, I’ll teach you, one step at a time, about how to make a successful plan.

1. Always send out thank you letters after receiving a name, whether the name was received by mail or in person. A thank you letter should be sent out to the recruit within one week of receipt; this tells the prospective member that you have their name and you appreciate their interest. If the name was received as a referral by one of your existing club members, call the member and thank them for support. Don’t forget: Be tidy and close your communications loop. A simple thank you letter goes a long way.

2. Create special newsletters targeted at prospective members. They should be sent out regularly during your recruiting season. You can use the newsletter to communicate information about your club and the activities it offers. The newsletter will be a bridge between your club and prospective members. It also reinforces the message that they are important to your club.

3. Two weeks prior to the start of your beginners class, send out an announcement. Make sure this includes dates, times and directions. Also include a telephone number and invite them to contact you.

4. One week prior to the start of your beginners class, phone each person on your mailing list with a friendly reminder about the start of the new class. This will be an excellent way for you to gauge your first night’s turnout. If they say they won’t be able to make it, ask them if they would like to be kept on the mailing list for the next beginners class.

5. A few days after the start of the class, call each of the recruits who attended the class and thank them for coming. This way you let them know that their presence was noted and was important to the club.

6. Phone each of the people who did not show up and tell them that you missed them. Remind them that they are more than welcome to come to the next week’s class. It’s not necessary to be pushy, just be friendly. If they say they won’t be able to make it, ask them if they would like to be kept on the mailing list for the next beginners class.

7. When it comes time for recruits to make up their minds about joining your club/class, phone them and tell them that you hope they’ll join. Again, the purpose is to drive home the message, “We want you!”

8. Every new person who joins the club/class should be phoned and thanked for joining. This is the final step. It closes the loop in your communications. From now on, the normal communications channels within your club should take over.

“Wow!” I said, “That seems like a lot of postage and telephone calls.”

“It is!” said the Caterpillar, “But it WILL make the difference between success and failure. Be a lamb and get me the electric blue gown over there ... split to the thigh ... two gold buttons ... that’s the one.”

“But what if my club doesn’t have enough money for all the postage?” I asked, handing him the gown.

“You may need to cut back to fit your budget, but whatever you do, don’t cut back on thank you letters and never cut out the phone calling strategy.” The Caterpillar wriggled into the dress. “I cannot stress enough how important the phone calling is to your success. If you abandon the calling plan, you will have wasted all of the time and energy you put into your recruiting campaign. Your yield of people showing up for your classes will be much, much lower without the calling campaign. And don’t forget ... always, always, remember to get phone numbers when you recruit.”

The Caterpillar, now resplendent in a mountainous blond wig, makeup and a gown that Cher would cut your eyes out for, stood up to his full height, “You see, anyone can be a caterpillar, but it takes balls to be a butterfly! Now, go on, pumpkin, be honest, am I gorgeous, or am I gorgeous?”

“You’re gorgeous,” I said, “Is there a party on somewhere?”

“Sixties Night at the Ugly Bug Ball and I’m on stage singing ... One pill makes you nervous, And one pill makes you small, And the ones that mother gives you, Don’t do anything at all, Go ask Alice ... Now just have a little puff on the hookah, pumpkin, then you’ll be ready to go forth and recruit!”

I woke up on the shores of Lake Michigan, “Are you all right?” said a voice. I turned around to see a man with a bushy mustache.

“I’m fine,” I said, “But I’ve just had the strangest dream about square dancing.”

“Oh really!” said the man, “You’re not in Chi-Town Squares, are you? I heard they’re a lot of fun.”

“Yeah, I am, actually! If you’re interested, I’ll be happy to take down your name, address and phone number. Well get some information out to you, including some informative newsletters about our club. Also, we’ll phone you before our classes start up to remind you about them!”

As I opened my bag and fumbled for a pen and paper, I found a leather vest, with a note pinned to it, ‘Now you don’t have to square dance alone. Go forth and recruit!’

It was signed,

Your Corner, The White Rabbit.
We Met Them In St Louis

BY IAN HENZEL

It was a strange course of events that culminated in Mike Flynn and me making the 4-hour car journey from Chicago to St Louis to teach a recruiting workshop for the area's straight square dance association.

Last January I began receiving e-mail from individuals and clubs, requesting copies of my Creating Marketing and Recruiting Plans for Square Dance Clubs.

Paul Waters started the ball rolling by asking me if I would be interested in teaching recruitment workshops. I said yes, and, unbeknownst to me, he put my name out on the Internet.

I soon began receiving requests from straight square dance groups. My initial reaction was to say no; my focus has always been to direct my time and energy toward the gay community, and to gay square dance clubs in particular. But then I decided that this might be a good opportunity to break down some barriers and, hopefully, dispel certain myths about gay people.

It would also give me an excuse to revise and update the 3-hour workshop I taught at Track 2 Chicago. I would extend the Chicago version, with more in-depth information and hands-on exercises. I started quoting prices for an 8 hour recruiting workshop. (Hey! I'm a Product Marketing Manager, do you get free medical advice from a doctor, or free legal advice from a lawyer? Ru Paul doesn't drag up for free, right?)

It's also my belief that if people are not willing to pay for something, then it has no value. I felt that my time, energy and ideas had value and were therefore worth a price.

The Association Of Square Dance Callers in the St. Louis area felt it would be of benefit for them to have a recruiting workshop, as they were experiencing a drastic drop in membership. They had heard about the techniques I had developed for Chi-Town Squares and wanted to apply them to their own recruiting efforts.

I spent over a month updating my recruiting guide, scrapping and rewriting the original workshop outline, and making the information less gay oriented. The once simple 20-page guide grew to over 60 pages and now included specific examples. I included hands-on exercises to encourage the attendees to think and work with the materials.

Eight hours is a long time to lecture, so I invited Mike Flynn to teach the course with me. Mike, whose career is in sales, had been responsible for the recruiting success of Chi-Town Squares in previous years, and he taught me much about his approach to recruiting. By merging his sales experience and my own work in product management, I developed the recruiting techniques now in use by our club.

There were 38 attendees, mostly older, heterosexual married couples. Mike and I wondered how we would be received; after all, this was middle-class middle-America, and we were two openly gay men in a position to teach them a thing or two. And so, undaunted, and armed only with a workshop outline and a complete set of overheads, we did a Greg Louganis and dived right in.

At first the students were a little unresponsive, but the turning point came when I showed them various newspaper ads and asked them what was being sold, beside the product. They liked this part. It was fun. I use this exercise to get people thinking about how to "sell" square dancing, about their marketing message and sizzle.

I then asked the group what they thought of when I said "Marlboro Cigarettes." The responses were: cowboys, tough men, the great outdoors, etc. Then I showed them a slide of a Marlboro ad from the 1920's. It features a stylishly dressed woman, and the phrase, "Tender on the Lips." That's right, Marlboro was originally marketed as a "ladies" cigarette. In the early-1950s, the product was reigned for a different market.

The students were then separated into groups and asked to come up with their own messages and sizzle. I told them there was only one rule, that there were no rules. There was to be no self-censorship, and they were to be as creative as possible. Mike and I were surprised by one innocent looking 'woman of a certain age,' who came up with the slogan:

Help Your Marriage, Improve Your Life. Square Dance with your Wife. The Only Place Your Wife Will Share You With 3 Other Women.

Who says middle America can't be smutty?

Once the ice was broken, Mike and I had a lot of fun with this group. Gradually they also became more comfortable with the word "gay"; in the beginning, some of them visibly cringed when they heard the "G" word. In fact, during the first hour of the seminar, Mike's presentation seemed overly focused on the word, and to me it sounded like ...

"Blah blah blah blah GAY. Blah Blah GAY blah blah."

Both Mike and I felt it was important to show the group that they were benefiting from information created by gay people, taught by gay people and successfully used by gay people.

At the end of the workshop, the students came up to thank us, and that's when we learned that quite a few people had refused to attend the seminar because it was taught by two gay men. As one attendee said, "Well, it's their loss."

Note: Ian Henzel and Mike Flynn are available to teach the "Marketing and Recruiting for Square Dance Clubs" seminar. The new expanded, Creating Marketing and Recruiting Plans for Square Dance Clubs is available for $15.50 plus postage. Please write to Ian Henzel, 2224 W. Eastwood, Chicago, IL 60625 for more information, or send e-mail to IanKH@aol.com.
Although there are many facets of gay square dancing that are special and unique, there is little doubt that the jewel in the crown is the annual IAGSDC® Convention. Ask anyone about their first convention experience and you are sure to evoke a big grin and an unending stream of “What I did at convention” stories. My first was Miami ’91, when I attended as a friend of the family rather than knowing I was family too. Even so, my convention experience was extraordinary, and subsequent conventions have done nothing to diminish the warm glow I feel when I think about my weekend at the Fountainbleu.

So what is it that makes this event so special that better than 50% of the participants return the next year even though the convention site may be on the other side of the continent? I think it’s because the convention represents a reunion of sorts. We talk about the gay square dance family. And if this is so, then the convention is undeniably a non-stop high-energy four-day family reunion. And as any family reunion is always about family history, this one is no different, and a myriad of traditions have become part of the event over the 13 years since the first convention was held in Seattle.

From its inception, the IAGSDC® Annual Convention has always been different. Although the first one in Seattle in many respects resembles some of today’s larger fly-ins, the convention has always been a step ahead. The first one broke new ground by hiring two traveling festival callers to call for a gay event, and then held that event in a hotel where even many of the locals moved in for the weekend. Although this has become commonplace, the Convention has continued to evolve and has created a niche rich with traditions unto itself.

Seattle ’84 started the tradition of the Grand March, The Honky Tonk Queen contest drug itself into the spotlight the very same year, and San Fran-
cisco in '86 gave us the Fun-Badge Tour. And how could we forget that Albuquerque '92 added the Moonshine Tip — simultaneously carving out a place in history for Bill Eyler who called the first Moonshine Tip at a Phoenix fly-in and then elevated it to a convention event in his own home town.

Although moonshine tips are commonplace at many events, the one at convention is in a class on its own — and even has its own unique history. The first one in Albuquerque was expected to attract less than six squares, and ended up being over 20. The second in Seattle had more attendees than the first convention had dancers. The lack of a third in Washington, D.C. created a major ruckus, and resulted in an impromptu event in one of the larger guest rooms that ended up as a very different type of affair (resulting in at least one romance). The fourth in Chicago saw a very determined security guard intent on entering the room but thwarted by two equally determined lesbians. The same fellow became the only known voyeur when he went to a previously unknown overhead vantage point and got quite an eyeful. And then San Francisco, which was, well, San Francisco.

Fun badge tours are not uncommon these days as part of fly-ins, but the convention fun-badge tour is unparalleled in terms of its venues, energy, and sheer magnitude. Past tours have seen us dance in Grand Central Station in New York, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., and on Castro Street in San Francisco. Anyone of these is the memory of a lifetime, yet we look forward to a new set of these extraordinary memories every year.

Even the callers have become a tradition of sorts. These days, any convention committee would likely be tarred and feathered for booking a convention staff that did not include Anne Uebelacker, Mike DeSisto and Sandie Bryant. Anne’s personal developments and Mike’s constant ribbing are as much a part of the history of the convention as the Grand March, the Honky Tonk Queen Contest and the Fun Badge Tour. Indeed it was Paul Marcum and Elmer Sheffield’s Honky Tonk Queen singing call record that gave rise to the Honky Tonk Queen Contest that very same year.

All Join Hands, continued

four possibilities, the Westin, the Sheraton, the Park Plaza, and the Madison. The Madison was the hotel of choice having the best dance space and the right number of available rooms.

Raising the money for any convention can be a daunting task. One can only imagine the amount of persistence, energy, and commitment the pioneers of the gay square dancing movement needed when confronted with a financial commitment of $15,000 to $20,000. Involving all parts of Seattle’s gay community was instrumental in accomplishing this task. The most successful adventures were garage sales. At the end of a garage sale (or any fund-raising event) the proceeds were eagerly collected and placed in a little red clutch purse carried by Fistful of Crinolines dancer, Bill Depew, the unofficial treasurer.

Time to square up! After months of grueling work, the first IAGSDC® convention commenced. Approximately 200 dancers from the U.S. and Canada arrived to participate in All Join Hands. “It was a terrific high. Before that time, we did not have a history of wonderful fly-ins. It was new and fresh — an opportunity to come together, to enjoy each other, to be out doing an activity we’d come to love,” remembered Karl Jaeckel, “We’d finally come of age.”

The Seattle Men’s Chorus performed for the opening ceremonies, and the mayor of Seattle shared opening remarks. The dancers were off and dancing! One must remember that gay styling was just developing. “There were some notable differences in our styling” remembers Karl. “It was sometimes a bit tricky with allemande left and weave the ring.” Full level Mainstream and Plus programs were danced at this first convention.

Exhibition dancing and workshops were well attended. Fistful of Crinolines dancers highlighted the exhibitions. Campy, yet polished, they set the tone of inclusiveness for subsequent conventions. Was this the crowning moment when they were dubbed dizzy queens?

Paul Marcum and Elmer Sheffield conducted workshops for Mainstream and Plus dancers to hone their skills. Agnes ran the Advanced workshop using Jack Lasry records. The atmosphere was low key and informal with dancers sitting on the floor between tips.

Agnes and Doug had the vision. With the assistance of dancers and the Seattle gay community, they initiated a convention movement whose attendance has grown by 1000 and has made the square dancing world a better place.
of their horror when they realized on the plane to Seattle that they were the featured callers on the record is only the first of many stories about convention callers. And even a little closer to home, the increasing involvement of the Gay Callers Association is a testament to the growing skills of our “up through the ranks” fellow dancers who are now spreading their wings on the other side of the mic.

Other events have drag shows, but none match the splendor and exuberance of the Honky Tonk Queen Contest. Never an entity unto itself, each contest draws on a rich tradition that is carried like excess baggage from one year to the next. Sybil was not only crowned HTQ, but was killed by her evil twin brother because he couldn’t stand the competition. She then came back to be part of the 10 year anniversary of the event — not came back from the dead, mind you, just came back. Yet even though she hung there for all to see stiffer than a drag queens wig, she still stole the show. And then there’s dear Lois Carmen Denominator, who was first runner up three years in row — year after year entered the room to the calls of “LO-IS.” It wasn’t until she was struck dumb in year four, that she finally won. This year’s event saw another repeat performance when Elvis the dog was elevated to the level of contestant by the judges, and declared winner by the crowd to the call of “ELVIS.” And the sight of Bessie Mae Mucho (Mike DeSisto), being escorted into the room by Jonny Preston at the Vancouver convention was a sight that will doubtlessly never be equaled. Old queens have never had such a fine venue to show off their talent (or lack thereof) for such a large and enthusiastic audience. This show alone demonstrates just how much a close knit family event the convention truly is — albeit with tacky costumes, big hair and enough mascara to keep a Mary-Kay rep in the chips for years.

No doubt regional events will come into existence. As our dancing populations continue to grow, perhaps in a few years a Mid-Atlantic Gay Square Dance Convention, or a California Gay Square Dance Convention will stake out a place on our already crowded dancing calendar. Yet even with a new tier of events charting new territory in the gay square dance scene, the convention will always remain unique.

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OCTOBER 1996 SQUAREUP! 15
Load The ... Bus?

THOMAS A. TRIPP JR.

Back in 1985 I attended my first IAGSDC® convention in Denver, Colorado. I found Denver to be such a lovely and congenial city that I stayed on for a few days after the convention. Then I left and spent a week in my old hometown of Chicago to visit friends. On the way back to San Francisco my plane stopped over in Denver again and I decided to stay and spend another week there exploring and square dancing.

By that time, San Francisco had already successfully bid to host the 1986 convention and I was heavily involved in that effort. When I returned home from my travels I reflected on the great time that I had in Denver, both dancing and sightseeing. I shared those thoughts with my good friend Eddie Smith (deceased 1993). Eddie was a wonderful sounding board for creative and intuitive ideas. As we chatted, we thought about all of the great sight-seeing opportunities in San Francisco and, wouldn’t it be fun to incorporate sight-seeing and square dancing for our convention? Hence, the “Fun Badge Tour” was born.

In retrospect, the simplicity with which we approached this event was awesome. We were young, naive and had only been square dancing for a couple of years. The concept was simple: We’d hire a couple of buses for a couple of hours and cart convention attendees around San Francisco to various tourist spots. At each spot, we’d get off the bus, dance to a prerecorded tape from a boom box then get back on the bus and go to the next location. For each place that the bus stopped, we’d give the participants a little round “fun badge” for having danced there.

Now here’s a little piece of gay square dance history for the records: When we first started square dancing we pirated the previously “straight” concept of fun-dangles and to this day, have brought it to new levels of creativity. We were literally queer for fun dangles! Here in San Francisco, everyone collected them and prided themselves on long strings of fun badges for dancing in odd locations, at odd hours, on holidays and for long durations of time. It became almost competitive.

With the advent of badge vendors to the gay square dance scene and good friends like Bert and Rhonda Swerer and Bob and JoAnn Fial, well, the sky was the limit! All you would need to do was to come up with a reason and a design for the badge and you could have it made. I must credit my dear friend James Ozanich with helping to make those contacts and open our eyes to the virtually limitless possibilities for fun badge creativity.

So the stage was set for the very first Fun Badge Tour. We picked the locations, arranged for the buses and started the promotion. The response was incredible; everyone wanted to do it. We kept going back to the bus company to add buses, and we still had waiting lists. Two, then three, then four buses. Two days before the event we were able to charter a fifth bus. It was a no-frills event, bus ride, dancing and badges and as I recall, we charged a whopping $10.00 per person.

On Sunday, August 24, 1986 the very first FBT, the mother of the FBT took off from the New Montgomery Street entrance of the Sheraton Palace Hotel. There was no 8:00 AM call, this tour took off at a civil hour in the afternoon after a lovely brunch in the grand Garden Court of the Sheraton.

We had just had a “fashion show” during the brunch in which the men donned square dance dresses and the women wore western attire on loan from one of our vendors. The tone and the mood were set. Garrett Peter (deceased 1992) had worn a bright pink dress in the fashion show and was a host(es) for one of the buses. It was the first time that he had ever worn a dress, and although not extremely pretty, was very delighted with himself. He announced to me just before the buses were to arrive that he had bought the dress and intended to wear it on the bus.

People in all sorts of costumes started appearing as we queued the crowd for boarding. I remember Nelson Kupperberg of New York arriving in a pristine white sailor-girl suit, complete with hat. Eddie and I frantically assisted with the boarding of the buses, clipboards in hand, checking off names. After what seemed like an eternity, the final bus rolled out on the first great FBT adventure. Neither Eddie nor I went; we were exhausted. We slumped back into the hotel where we sank into easy chairs in the lounge and I bought us both a celebratory drink. Somehow, we had managed to pull the thing off.

Since 1986 the FBT has grown in popularity as a great way to dance and visit a city. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, thank you. Having been somewhat heavily involved in the 1996 San Francisco convention I was a great proponent of the concept to end the FBT “tradition”, after all, we started it, we could end it. But we didn’t.

Thanks to the terrific efforts of Dwayne Treat, Mark Levine and a host of others, the 1996 San Francisco FBT took place. Unlike 1986, the flavor of the FBT has evolved — t-shirts, drinks and snacks on-board, live callers, permits, insurance, deposits and even a police escort. We had none of that in 1986; we didn’t know what we were doing, we just did it.
Little-Known Convention Moments

FREEMAN STAMPER

Some of you know that I’m into Broadway musicals and believe there is no conversation that can be held for which every phrase has not already been set to music. Concerning conventions, “I’ve seen them all, my dear, and I’m still here.” (From what show is that?)

1984 Seattle

There were about 250 of us in attendance. We couldn’t believe that so many gay people could get together and all dance Mainstream. At the Grand March, The Honorable Charles Royer and his wife personally welcomed us to Seattle. After 13 conventions, he is the only mayor (and the highest ranking elected official) to personally attend a convention.

Of course, we were intrigued that two nationally known callers would be there, Paul Marcum and Elmer Sheffield. They were as nervous as long-tailed cats in a room full of rocking chairs because they had a singing call record released of “Honky Tonk Queen.” Afraid we would find out and think they were making fun of our community, they did not know that the Fistful of Crinolines were performing to Honky Tonk Queen (with 16 dancers in a single square). Elmer and Paul wound up calling the performance live. They even had to do an encore of a portion of the same performance — two really super human beings. And, Patsy D’Cline clogging in high-heeled shoes was not to be believed.

Happy New Year began harping about gay dollars for straight callers.

1985 Denver

Since I helped create the interlocking squares which became the logo of the IAGSDC® and sewed the first banner, I have always been insistent that any depiction of the squares actually interlock because of the symbolism of the strength of connection through Callerlab. Hanging from the ceiling of the Grand Ballroom was a massive structure of the logo so that the face of it was parallel to the floor. Bud Rhyne, then president of the Association, cursed me because it had to be assembled on the floor and then hoisted to the ceiling in one piece. My best recollection is that it was about 50 feet long (if not, it was really, really big).

The Grand March was a disaster. Choreographed by Pam McKeaver (deceased 1991), it was a serpentine from the outer perimeter of the ballroom to the center. All was going well until it needed to start unwrapping. There were still clubs on the perimeter waiting to start the wrap, the chain broke, and there were dancers unwrapping before they ever wrapped. Moral: Don’t ever do a serpentine of 400 people in an enclosed space.

At this convention, it was attempted to “expose” dancers to the entire list of calls in the next program. Some dancers were intense about being at all those sessions so that they would “learn” the next. You wouldn’t dare try to squeeze them out of a square. Thank god that hasn’t been tried again! We now have enough experience to know that dancers don’t really know a program even after 3 or 4 months. “Mainstream in minutes, Don’t pause for Plus, and Advanced in an afternoon” just don’t work. (Not a musical, but know the origin?)

Happy New Year continued harping about gay dollars for straight callers.

1986 San Francisco

A really smooth-running convention, it had the best indoor Grand March to date. Of course, it’s easier to get 650 dancers in one ballroom than it is 1,000. The excitement was there because it was a traditional Grand March which did not break down. There was no banquet because the hotel double-booked the banquet in the Garden Court of the Sheraton Palace on Saturday night with a Japanese wedding reception. The wedding won. So, Star Thru The Golden Gate requested Sunday brunch in the Garden Court.

Sheraton: “Oh, we can’t do that. It is
open to the public for brunch and it is a big attraction."

STTG: "Then, we wish to make a reservation for Sunday brunch for 600."

We got the Garden Court, and, to the best of our knowledge, it is the only time in the history of the Sunday brunch that it has been closed to the public.

Since the registration cash box was stolen by an outside person on Saturday night, future conventions started focusing more on security. It seemed strange since, in Seattle, Mary Hardman, Mary Hardman (I don’t remember his real name) carried the convention funds around in a purse and paid the callers upon their departure in cash retrieved from the purse on the way to the airport.

Happy New Year repeated the refrain about callers and he received the Golden Boot Award that year. (Was there a connection, some people wonder.)

The Fun Badge Tour was born.

1987 Portland

Out of protest, Happy did not attend and did not attend another convention. It was a pity because he was a fine person, an honest and generous soul. He died in 1993 without being a part of the GCA. Happy was integral in stimulating the Callerlab dancers at the Reno Gay Rodeo in forming the association.

Seattle had a hospitality suite in which Stella North Dallas was hosting the second Honky Tonk Queen contest. To promote this event, Puddletown dancers distributed little water pistols which allowed people to create their own raindrops. Well, four creative persons purchased super-soakers. Complete with camouflage clothing and makeup, they made a guerrilla hit at the end of the contest. The curtains and carpet were so water-soaked that Seattle lost the deposit on the suite. Some of us burst from the room (being made of sugar), but those who voluntarily stayed had a swimmingly good time.

At the end of the convention while we were taking up the flooring, Paul Marcum donned a pair of gloves and helped move plywood. We were much impressed that he was not above doing manual labor. Just prior to disassembling the flooring, Paul and Don Wood called an a cappella tip in the ladies restroom keeping a beat to running water by turning the sink faucet on and off. Too much fun!

The Bradley family appeared for the first time at convention. Whether one likes drag or not, it does exist in the gay community and in the gay square dance community. These people go on to prove that there is staying power in the family and that something constructive can be done in a dress.

But, this convention had a real neighborhood feel about it. The hotel in Scottsdale is a sprawling collection of 2-story buildings. With many sidewalks meandering among the buildings, you got a lot of opportunity to visit on the way to and from your room, taking a different route each time. A swimming pool outside! And, a heated Jacuzzi so big you could get at least a hundred people in it. Nighttime pool activities were divine.

1988 Phoenix

Cross Trails In The Desert announced it would be using the hotel’s PA system as installed in the ballrooms. Not believing reports that the quality was good, at least three clubs shipped their sound equipment to Phoenix, thus saving the convention dancing that year.

The dinner was across the highway from the hotel in a park and consisted of barbecued meat prepared on site. Because the quantities of food were not controlled, the vendor ran out of food before all could be fed. Attempts to prepare more only caused very long delays. The Sunday brunch was outside under a tent on the hotel grounds. It was hot!

That was the first time I remember large groups of people with time to get to know each other.

The Medallion Dancers project was introduced, and data collection began for attendance at all prior conventions. There was much flap within Times Squares about the presence of drag in the Club and how it would be handled in the Pride Parade the weekend before convention and during the Grand March. There was also much flap in New York City about the acceptance of a group of dancers who were learning Mainstream outside Times Squares’ class. The issues weren’t as simple as they may seem; but, needless to say, drag was present, and those outsiders did register and danced at the convention.
While I did not attend it, the Fun Badge Tour included a finale of dancing in Grand Central Station. Those who did participate will tell you that it was their most memorable stop—ever. New York City is H-O-T in the summer. One bus on the Tour broke down, and dancers were stranded on the bus with no air-conditioning. Thus, was born the fun dangle for the “bus from hell.”

1990 Vancouver

North Star Promenade has had the best installed flooring ever. Everyone remembers “Queen Elizabeth” addressing the Saturday banquet and teaching us the royal wave—tiara, teeth, tits. The act has not been exceeded yet.

Ray Brendzy was a staff caller for the first time, and so was Steve Edlund. Both are straight (sorry, Happy), but are very easy on the eyes. Anne and Joe Uebelacker were still a hetero couple and called some very exciting duo tips.

1991 and forward

By now, I spend more time at my information table than on the dance floor, so most conventions start to resemble the next.

Miami in 1991 had the distinction of having the host hotel closed for renovations after callers had been booked and hotel dancer reservations were being made. The offered alternate site, The Fontainebleau Hilton, caused a change in dates, and several callers and many dancers were unable to participate due to the inability to change bookings and vacation plans. There was an outside pool again, and many hours were spent entertaining each other and non-dancing hotel guests. Hosted by the She-Devils, the Honky Tonk Queen contest was fabulous because it was quick-paced and felt like a show. No HTQ contest has been better.

For 1992, Albuquerque’s Diamonds in the Desert marked the first time dancing was outside the host hotel. Held in the new convention center, there were no complaints about rooms being too small. HTQ was the “contest from hell.” It was unbearably long, and there was much dissatisfaction with the judges’ choices—I know first hand. The Moonshine (aka Midnight) Tip was introduced to convention, and the anticipated small group grew so large that a human curtain of clothed dancers had to be formed down a hallway while the nude dancers streaked to a larger hall.

Our return to Seattle in 1993 for Remake the Circle took us out of a hotel completely by staging the convention on the campus of the University of Washington. Many people complained about staying in the dormitories, but I loved it. You see, I was not out when I was in college, and I loved the thought of being in college as a homosexual. It will be extremely difficult to ever produce a greater Grand March than outdoors in the huge square in front of the campus library. The rain stopped long enough to stage the event, but the ground was not dry enough to stage the banquet outdoors as planned.

Washington, DC, in 1994, Chicago in 1995, and San Francisco in 1996 are all within the remembrance of the vast majority of the current dancers. Each of you is certain to have her or his own special memories.

For each of us, the most special convention is our first. It is there that we reach nirvana with huge masses of dancers, the best callers money can buy, and the ability to make so many friends for a lifetime. All of these elements kindle and constantly rekindle energy in our soul which we did not know could exist. And it’s all there in this “hokey” activity called square dancing.

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You want to do WHAT?
The Business of Running a Convention

JOHN POPE, TRACK TO CHICAGO & RICK HAWES, EXPLODE THE ROSE

John Pope

Without hesitation, the average square dancer would have a strong negative reaction to being asked to help organize an IAGSDC® convention, let alone be in charge of one. It takes a special person or group of people to do this job. Many people think you would have to be crazy to take on such a responsibility. There is a lot of truth to that statement. To a select group of people, hosting the annual IAGSDC® get-together is a challenge, an opportunity to give and a source of pride.

It is probably best that not everyone wants to put on a convention. A clear vision of what a convention is and how to host one works best. Too many cooks and the soup suffers. Luckily, there are enough facets to a convention that different people with different interests can come together to make it all work. If a certain Tammy Wynotte were to plan a convention by herself there would be a fabulous Honky Tonk Queen contest and little else. The art of building a convention involves getting a strong team together and a solid game plan. Somehow this team has to bring together a grand overall plan along with ideas on specific areas of interest.

Who are these crazy individuals who want to sacrifice themselves before the entire IAGSDC®? Well, they come in many shapes and sizes but have some similar traits. First of all they have to get excited about the convention and what it all means. Most have been to a number of the events and have some deep feelings about it. They have pride in their local club, city and themselves. Showcasing one’s local attributes is very much a part a convention. Wanting to prove something to themselves and others is another factor.

An underlining element in all of this is that these people know they can pull it off and do a good job.

There is no ideal situation or perfect personality for putting together an IAGSDC® convention. Try to please more than one person all the time and you are certain to fail. Try to please 1200 gay and lesbian square dancers for a few days and your fate is doomed. This hobby of ours adds so much to our lives that it inspires dancers all around North America to give a piece of their lives back to it. They are not large in number and may be a little crazy, but we all gain so much from their efforts. We should be glad they are among us.

Rick Hawes

I wish I knew why I was doing this again. Getting through Explode The Rose successfully in 1987 was such a relief. That experience should have been enough for a lifetime. Now, here we are, again, organizing Weave The Rose.

Did I fail to learn something from the first experience, or was there something I did learn that demands a second application? Isn’t daily life sufficiently challenging? Am I so egotistical or am I nuts? Why wasn’t once enough?

To the best of my knowledge I am the only surviving member of the original ‘87 convention committee who is still actively involved in square dancing. For that matter, there is only one other member of those Rosetown Ramblers still in Portland and still dancing. Everyone else has died, left town or quit dancing.

I suppose people think that most of the effort in organizing one of our conventions goes into site and caller selection and getting contracts signed. Not so. That stuff gets done early by a very small group of people who have at least agreed that they really want to do this and are well aware of the limitations on time, space and money — when it can be, where is there sufficient space, and how much it all costs. Once you have the big stuff out of the way you have a couple of years to spend working out the details.

Working out the details means involving many more people who haven’t got as much invested in this event as you have. Much of your time and energy in organizing a convention goes into keeping the personnel focused on the outcome and away from the process — getting them to buy into the event by investing a smaller portion of their time and energy to accomplish something that will ultimately be fun and somehow fulfilling. If everyone involved in the preparations gets to worrying about what everyone else is supposed to be doing and how they’re doing it a lot of time and energy is going to be wasted smoothing over divisive conflicts of personality or method. The organizer’s job is to get people fired up to do the show, enlist workers, match individuals’ interests and abilities to specific tasks that need doing, and keep on them to ensure that their specific tasks are accomplished. Compared to this, dealing with the management of the facilities and the callers is nothing — with them, at least you have contracts.

The closer you get to convention time, the more time you have to spend covering all the details you’re aware of and making more time to cover the
ones you missed or have no contingencies for. Something is bound to be missed until the last moment, or to go wrong when least expected so you have to somehow plan on remaining sufficiently flexible through the convention to deal with anything from acts of vengeful gods to gratuitous miracles.

Once it's all over you can finally relax — after taking another month or two (or more) to scrub and close the books and write the report for the Association.

Three years well spent to ensure that 1000 people have a good time for three days.
As I think about it, it occurs to me that I may be involved in this just to give myself an excuse for a good vacation. I’ll need one by the time it’s over.

Fun Badge Tour Destinations
Compiled by Ric Gonzalez

Star Through the Golden Gate 1986 San Francisco
Coit Tower, Fisherman’s Wharf, Palace of the Legion of Honor, Fort Point, Twin Peaks, Cliff House, Castro Theatre

Explode the Rose 1987 Portland
Council Crest, Mount Tabor, Cathedral Park, Pittock Mansion, Pioneer Courthouse Square

Crosstrails In the Desert 1988 Phoenix
(taken from fun-dangles) Scottsdale, Phoenix, Arizona State University, Squaw Peak

Peel the Apple 1989 New York City
Lincoln Center Plaza, Cathedral of St. John the Divine, City Hall, Battery Park, Grand Central Station

Northstar Promenade 1990 Vancouver
Stanley Park, MacMillian Planetarium, Regent College, Queen Elizabeth Park (Bloedel Conservatory), Robson Square

Cast a Shadow In the Sun 1991 Miami
Cultural Plaza, Miami Beach, Deco District, Bay Front, Coconut Grove

Diamonds In the Desert 1992 Albuquerque
Sandia Tram, Coronado State Monument, Tiguex Park, Old Town, Civic Plaza

Remake the Circle 1993 Seattle
The Locks at Commodore Park, Space Needle, Westlake Park (downtown), Volunteer Park (Capitol Hill)

Stars and Squares Forever 1994 Washington, DC
Iwo Jima Memorial, Pentagon, Lincoln Memorial, Canadian Embassy (on Canadian soil)

Track II Chicago 1995 Chicago
State of Illinois Building Plaza, Federal Plaza, Montrose Harbour Area (Lake Michigan), Adler Planetarium, Buckingham Fountain

Stars, Thars and Cable Cars 1996 San Francisco
Ferry Building, Golden Gate Bridge (Crissy Field), Palace of Legion of Honor, Golden Gate Park (Music Concours), Castro Street

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Honky Tonk History

by Sybil (as presented in Albuquerque's '92 Convention Program)

Editor's Note:

A legend in Honky Tonk Queen history, Sybil met her demise in 1992 when Terry Presley abandoned her persona (though she did return from the grave for a short appearance at the 10th Honky Tonk Queen contest in 1995).

The following is Sybil's account — distorted as it may be — of the history of the HTQ contest. This sordid story should be updated with additions from 1992 to present. Perhaps another HTQ winner is up to the challenge? Stay tuned.

The Early Years
(the Ones Without SYBIL)
1984 Seattle, 1985 Denver, 1986 San Francisco

The Honky Tonk Queen Pageant was originally created in response to a square dance record entitled "Honky Tonk Queen" recorded by two internationally famous callers, Paul Marcum and Elmer Sheffield. Both these callers were at the first Convention in Seattle. The song was such a hit with Miss Virginia Slim from Seattle that she created the Honky Tonk Queen Pageant. She not only created it, she crowned herself Queen!!!! What a woman!!!! And by creating the pageant she established herself as one of the most important Drag Queens in all of Drag Queen history! Was it because she was the first queen? NO! Was it because she won the next year in Denver and the next year in San Francisco? NO! Was it because she was one hell of a lady who will always remain in the hearts of all the people who have had the chance to know her? NO! Any one of these would have been more than enough reason for the dear girl to go down in history, but all these reasons were overshadowed by her ultimate claim to fame. By creating the Honky Tonk Queen Pageant, IT WAS THERE FOR SYBIL TO WIN!!!!!

A Star is Born
1987 Portland

It's 1987, Portland, Oregon, and Virginia finally reveals her genius and how she managed to win the title three years in a row. It seems that every year up until 1987 she didn't allow any other contestants! Is that brilliant or what???? In 1987, she allowed other contestants to run and decided not to run herself (which is good 'cause she would have just won again). The contest was held in her hospitality suite. The room was packed with gorgeous sweaty square dancers, both male and female. The contestants were milling about, the atmosphere an odd blend of casual and tense. And there I was, a young innocent girl from San Francisco, just out for a good time and a few laughs. There were other contestants. I would describe them but unfortunately compared to me they were so blah and pathetic that I can't honestly remember a thing about them. Oh yes, I do remember one thing, they were all unbelievably ugly. But why dwell on the unpleasant. I, SYBIL, won and things would never be the same. Oh yes, I should mention one important side event. Steffany, from Western Star, made a brief appearance. I had worshipped her from the first moment I had seen her at the closing of the Gay Games in San Francisco the year before. She was everything I thought a Drag Queen should be — two tons of teased hair. But now seeing her through the eyes of the freshly crowned and universally adored HONKY TONK QUEEN, I saw her for what she really was — two tons of ratty wig. I felt something almost akin to pity for her, or was it repulsion. But why dwell on the unpleasant.

Anyway I won, I won, I WON!!!!!!!!!!

A Star Becomes a Goddess
1988 Phoenix

At first I didn't think it was going to be a good year. I was shocked to find they had rewritten the rules and I would be forced to give a pageant at the Phoenix Convention. I had planned to just abolish the whole thing and reign as Queen forever. But things turned out better than I had feared. To begin with, the Pageant had grown. The year I WON!!!!!!!!!!! there...
were about 60 people crammed in a hospitality suite, about seven pathetic has-been contestants and ME! In Phoenix the pageant had grown so large that we moved from a small side room to a main ballroom. There was a mob of over three hundred adoring SYBIL fans, over 25 pathetic has-been contestants and ME! And then a truly wonderful thing happened. They handed me a long hard object. It made me quiver, it made me moist. It was a microphone and it MADE ME A GODDESS!!!!!! Oh yeah and this mousey little thing in an overdone dress with enough satin and lace on it to gag a maggot named Miss Pam Demonium won the contest.

The Legend Continues
1989 New York

Miss Pam Demonium shocked the entire square dancing community by performing the first really intelligent act of her otherwise boring and uninspiring life. She didn’t show up in New York. This was incredibly wise for two reasons. One, it would have surely hurt her feelings to realize that absolutely no one remembered her or cared that she had shown up, and two, it gave SYBIL the microphone AGAIN!!!!!!! This came about due to the incredible genius of Miss Wella Balsam. Wella is one of those girls that every important organization needs. She was that hard working dedicated person who kept the whole thing going. Of course this dynamic personality was an overcompensation for a basically drippy wallflower psychological makeup. I mean the poor thing had been a total nobody, completely overlooked her entire life if she had depended on her looks, but what the hell, it kept the whole thing going. And what a thing it had become! In the Big Apple we took over the main ballroom. The huge room was packed with over 700 people, over 40 pathetic has-been contestants and ME!!!!!

This year the winner was a classic example of the power of the sympathy vote. The previous year she had shown up in a scraggly little grass skirt, barefooted, sporting a coconut bra, and no hair. To compensate, this year she came dressed to the max with enough hair to make Steffany gag. (Ms. Steffany continued to hover around the pageant much like an overdone moth flitting around a flame she could never attain. She also brought along the Bradley Sisters. It is rumored these harpies were the result of a torrid and absolutely disgusting long-standing lust fest between Steffany and the entire male population of Des Moines, but it’s probably just a nasty rumor, not anything that I would want to get around.) Yes Miss Tami Wynotte, a homely — I mean home girl, certainly did herself up to beat the band. I would like to say it helped improve her basic looks, but why lie. Anyway, everybody felt so sorry for her she won.

The Dark Clouds Begin to Gather
1990 Vancouver

Unlike her predecessor, Tami did not have the good graces to stay away. Not only did she show up, SHE TOOK CHARGE OF THE MICROPHONE!!!!!!!! The little bitch was disgusting. By imitating my style, my glamour, my every little nuance, she managed to pull the whole thing off. Oh sure, I was there. I was still everyone’s best wet dream, but it just wasn’t the same. And of course Miss Wella — the doctor says I’ll be better any day now — Balsam was there. AND THEY MADE HER A PRINCESS!!!!!!! And something about Virginia Ham, which I thought was part of the catering. Obviously the whole pageant was going to HELL IN A HANDBASKET!!!!!! And to make matters worse everywhere I turned I saw Stephanie with him, Terry Presley, my wicked evil twin brother. They were everywhere, head to head plotting, scheming, but what would be the result of their devious plans, WHAT!!! The strain was getting to me!!!!!! Oh yeah, Layona Davenport won the contest. She had heard that it helped your chances to sleep with the judges, and since she didn’t know who the judges were, she just slept with everybody who attended the convention.

Stormy Weather
1991 Miami

Miami, my home town, was a nightmare. My wicked evil win brother showed up with a woman HE CLAIMED WAS THE REAL SYBIL!!!!!! MY NERVES!!!!!!! I mean she WASN’T A DRAG QUEEN!!!!!!! SHE WAS, WAS, YOU KNOW, A WOMAN!!!!!!! Not that I don’t like women. I adore them. But this one was claiming to be me, or claiming I was claiming to be her. It was all so confusing. With that slime Steffany just smiling like Tammy Bakker at a two-for-one tacky makeup sale at Woolworths. And Terry whining “why does everyone always want to see Sybil, why doesn’t everyone want to see me?” (I had patiently explained to him that there wasn’t much of a market in the world or popularity for aging leprechauns, but some people just can’t face reality, sad isn’t it.) It was all too much. And then on top of it all that miserable excuse for a Queen, Layona Sofa, or whatever her name was, brought the entire Chicago Rehabilitation Ward (they called themselves the SHE DEVILS, never were truer words spoken) and then turned the pageant into a full blown extravaganza!!!!!! Sure I was still everybody’s reason for living, but it was just all becoming too, too much. IT ISN’T EASY BEING A SEX GODDESS LET ME TELL YOU. Anyway this thing from New York, who confused Voguing with making faces won and I can’t even remember what her little pretentious one name was. Cher, or Mystique, or DOMINO, or something like that. And there’s Terry with that look of murder in his eyes, and Steffany with that wicked, wicked, wicked, smile, and all those PATHETIC HAS-BEEN CONTESTANTS!!!!!! But I’ll show them. I’LL SHOW THEM ALL!!!!!! I’ve found an incredible Beverly Hills Doctor who has agreed to SURGICALLY IMPLANT A MICROPHONE IN MY THROAT AND THEY’LL NEVER BE ABLE TO STOP ME THEN, NEVER, I TELL YOU!!!!!!! This year ALBUQUERQUE, and then THE WORLD!!!!!!
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