

NEWSLETTER

Convention Chatter PLUS!

Issue #2026-2

November 21, 2025

I WISH WE STARTED SOONER – Claudia Littlefair, Editor

The first time Dave & I saw a square dance demo we knew that square dancing was something we wanted to do. The demo was in an Edmonton mall and the year was 1980. At the time we were too busy with family and work commitments so we put it on the back burner. Fourteen years later we moved from Devon to Strathmore and before we got too busy again, we joined Strathmore's square dance club. It turned out to be one of the most rewarding life decisions we've made.

Now, after 31 years of dancing my only regret is that we didn't start dancing sooner – like in 1980. Just think of all the amazing dances, the wonderful friends, the great callers and cuers, the dance weekends and the conventions that we missed out on. **Words of advice? Do it now! Attend as many special dances and events that you possibly can.**

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2026 is an exceptional year because the National Convention in July is right next door in Penticton, BC, followed by our provincial Convention in September. Two memorable events just two months apart.

Click here to register or to find out more about the Alberta Convention, September 5-7, 2026, in Lacombe: <https://www.squaredancecalgary.com/convention-2026/>.

DID YOU KNOW . . .

Our Conventions were held in various cities and towns across Alberta. After 2017 it was recommended that Conventions be held in Lacombe because it suits our size and needs, is centrally located and it's financially viable.

1969 Red Deer – 1 st AB Convention	1988 Lethbridge	2008 Wainwright
1970 Lethbridge	1989 Cochrane	2009 Calmar – AGM Only
1971 Edmonton	1990 Red Deer	2010 Rocky Mountain House
1972 Calgary	1991 Medicine Hat	2011 Wainwright
1973 Grande Prairie	1992 Sexsmith	2012 High River
1974 Edmonton	1993 Strathmore	2013 Lacombe
1975 Calgary	1994 Spruce Grove	2014 Leduc
1976 Red Deer	1995 Sundre	2015 Lacombe
1977 Lethbridge	1996 Edmonton NATIONAL	2016 High River
1978 Edmonton NATIONAL	1997 Medicine Hat	2017 Edmonton
1979 Grimshaw-Peace Block	1998 Lloydminster	2018 Lacombe
1980 Calgary	1999 Strathmore	2019 Lacombe
1981 Red Deer – Central	2000 Olds	2020 Edmonton CANCELLED (Covid)
1982 Edmonton	2001 Leduc	2021 Edmonton CANCELLED (Covid)
1983 Medicine Hat	2002 Lloydminster	2022 Lacombe (host Calgary)
1984 Grande Prairie-Peace Block	2003 Springbrook	2023 Lacombe (host Central AB)
1985 Sundre	2004 Calgary NATIONAL	2024 Calgary NATIONAL
1986 Calgary NATIONAL	2005 Ardrossen	2025 Lacombe (host Edmonton)
1987 St. Albert	2006 Rocky Mountain House	
	2007 Strathmore	

**And the 56th Convention in
2026 Lacombe (host Calgary)**



AL'S COLUMN - CONVENTION INSIGHTS

Long-time dancer Al Moody has participated in, volunteered at and served on a number of Convention Committees. In this regularly featured column, Al shares some of his knowledge and experiences gathered over a number of years.

The Beginning

One day sometime in 1987, while working on the history of the Alberta Wandering Squares, I became curious about the dates of our Provincial Conventions. Research showed that the Wandering Squares forfeited their Labour day campout in favour of a Provincial convention in 1969. That got me thinking about anniversary dates.

I attended a Provincial AGM and asked if Calgary could have the Convention in 1993. Many questions arose as to why I had picked a date so far in the future. I just replied that I wanted time to prepare. Many shook their heads as to why this newcomer would make such a weird request. Paperwork done, motion passed and Calgary was granted the 1993 Convention.

Working on past experiences and with a lot of great help with the 1993 Planning committee, Calgary hosted the 25th Provincial Convention in Strathmore. During the festivities I sat alone up in the bleachers contemplating the good and bad points. I was unaware of a group of people who had surrounded me. They wanted to know why and how – a newcomer – was able to host the 25th. They were from Edmonton. It was a great success because of many hours of volunteer help. They just needed a leader. My first, and apparently not the last. If someone had told me that I would be chairing another two Conventions in the future, I would have told them they were nuts.

The first decision a leader has to make is whether or not to do it and then follow your dreams or plans. Next is to seek the assistance of those who share your dreams or plans. Organize. Work the plan. Keep your eye on the goal. Be willing and able to change the plan if required to suit the goal.

I did not realize then, that my attendance at many other National and Provincial Conventions would prepare me for what lie ahead as a leader. At each event, I looked for all the positive aspects of each and asked myself how I could improve upon what I had observed. It was just a matter of putting the plan in place. My terms as President of Calgary & District Square & Round Dancers Association (C&D) and attendance at C&D meetings also helped me to achieve later goals. I was not without fault but learned each lesson. At the National Conventions in Vancouver, Calgary, and Spokane, Washington, I observed the degree of planning and organization that was required to make each a great success. The difference between a National and Provincial Convention is simply size and a few extra plans along with many helpful volunteers. It just takes someone to lead the parade – others will join you and others will enjoy the parade!

I started square dancing in 1964 with the Swinging Singles, and for the next 10 or 20 years did not dance frequently but did attend some of the Conventions. It never occurred to me that one day I might Chair or volunteer to organize a



Convention. If memory serves me correctly some of my early convention attendance was in 1984 in Grande Prairie as I remember the long drive up there and back. Until now, there are about four or five Provincial Conventions that I did not attend. I do recall dancing at the National in Vancouver twice and twice at the National in Spokane with 18,000 other dancers.

Who else has Chaired three Provincial Conventions in Alberta? In 2012 I Chaired the 44th Convention in High River and then again in 2016, the 48th Convention in High River. Both had high attendance with dancers from other provinces. At the 2016 Convention the

Trail In Dances featured Gary Winter and Jerry Jestin who were paid by the sponsoring District and not the Convention.

Throughout these years, and at different times I still managed to have time to be a drummer for a local dance band and owned and operated a disc jockey business with a staff of 12. **Need something done – get a busy person.**

A LITTLE SOLO HISTORY

Source: Footnotes, October 2015 - Column "The Solo Corner" by Kathy Rooney



Imagine my delight when, a few days ago, a casual conversation with a retired square dancer backed up my first article regarding our ostracism when losing a partner. Nothing is more authentic than personal experience. **When this long-time dancer lost her husband, she was "allowed to take money and kept the books", but when her work was done, while the dancers were do-si-doing, she went home.** Dancing wasn't an option.

The man she eventually met and married was a bit more welcomed. He got to dance with the caller's wife, who had been sitting on the sidelines until he was widowed. Don't get me started on the plight of caller's wives and dancing, mostly in the straight-laced past.

Over the years several things brought gradual change. The aging of the dance population created widows and widowers who still felt close to this social group. Attitudes softened as more people saw that they, too, could be in the same situation someday. Also, square dancing gradually dwindled as dancers aged out, bringing more value to those of us who had no permanent partners. Better a dance which included a few solos, than no dance at all or one that didn't pay the bills.

Over the decades greater society became more accepting of single people. They were becoming a much higher percentage of the population, as more people chose careers and even single parenting, along with traditional marriage. This acceptance gradually spread to most of our clubs.

When South Sound Singles started their club in Tacoma in the 1980's they garnered over 300 members the first year. **Life was still tough for solo dancers and this new innovative club took the pressure off.** Solos found a great place to meet other dancers and to find acceptance as solos.

These many years later, their club has gradually lost their large following, since **many clubs now open their membership to solos.** There's still a tendency to let them to do the work, then sit on the bench during the dances, rather than include them, but it's been a steep learning curve and not everyone is onboard. Shy solo dancers have a tough time integrating when squares are forming, and that goes for either gender. Keep that in mind if you have solo club members or guests. They deserve to dance, particularly when they help with club work or are your guests.

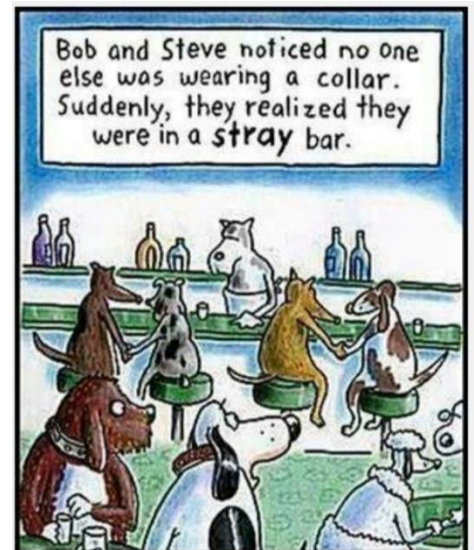
ODE TO SQUARE DANCE CALLERS -by Harold Haskell, Maine, USA

Have you ever stopped to ponder, about the ones who stand up yonder,
calling out the lively Square Dance Calls?
How they got to be so clever, by the sweat of their endeavour,
in the confines of their lonely basement walls?

Of the endless repetition, to perfect their smooth rendition,
to bring to you the calls you like to hear?
Of the practice that's required, often weary, often tired,
but still determined that they shall persevere?

They must buy a good-sized shipment, of some highly-priced equipment,
and literature and records by the score!
And they must bear this heavy load, to square dance halls along the road,
to get you out there dancing on the floor!

And don't forget their family life, the ones forced to listen to the strife,
and to the noise that all practice brings.
So when the dancing night is done, and you've had a night of fun,
remember all those most important things.



I read recipes the same way I read science fiction. I get to the end and think, "Well, that's not going to happen".

*Editor's Note: Retired Calgary caller, Art McMullen died peacefully on October 8, 2025 at the age of 88, surrounded by loved ones. <https://www.choicememorial.com/obituaries/Arthur-Edward-McMullen?obid=45896829>
The following article was written a few years ago by Art & Collette McMullen about their experience in the 1988 Calgary Olympics Opening Ceremonies.*

CALGARY 1988 OLYMPICS OPENING CEREMONY

- by Art & Collette McMullen, Chair Couple, OCO Square Dance Liason Committee

Both summer and winter games are a sports extravaganza organized by The International Olympic Committee and are hosted by one country. This year, 2018, the winter games take place in South Korea. In 1988 Calgary was the chosen venue for those winter games.

In March 1986 the Executive Producer of Ceremonies, Paddy Sampson, visited Calgary to begin planning for all the ceremonies, Opening, Closing, and Medal being the most well known. Paddy, "since this was Calgary", had envisioned a square dance segment in the opening ceremonies and he asked the appropriate committee to investigate the possibility. Joe Brager, a Ceremonies Committee member, contacted us, Art and Collette McMullen, who were former presidents of Calgary Callers as well as Alberta Square & Round Dance Federation, to enquire if the dancers would be interested. At that time we approached the Calgary and District Dancers Association presidents, Ted and Shirley Bergeron, to help determine if this endeavor was possible. These two couples met with Paddy Sampson and Joe Brager to explore what the Ceremonies Committee had in mind. The Calgary Callers Association was contacted to determine if they would be supportive, and dancers were contacted by a survey through all the clubs in the district. The result that came back to us was a resounding YES; a large majority were interested and willing to be part of the event.

The need for more help in the organizational end was now obvious; thus the OCO Liaison Committee came to be and was expanded to include 5 more couples besides the McMullens and the Bergerons, making a total of seven.



OCO Liaison Committee: (L to R) **Front row:** Caroline O'Dell, Thelma Fookes. **Middle row:** Lilian Wilson, Hugh Wilson, Bette Berglund, Shirley Bergeron, Ted Bergeron, Dorothy Hood, Collette McMullen. **Back Row:** Al O'Dell, Ron Berglund, Tom Hood, Art McMullen. **Not Present** - Arnold Fookes.



(LtoR): Wilf Wihlidal, Collette & Art McMullen, Ron Berglund.

Paddy Sampson requested the inclusion of many more young dancers, such as high school students, so an OCO Youth Committee was formed to work with the schools. In late 1986 and early 1987 new dancer classes commenced at five schools, with several Calgary Callers doing the teaching and approximately 120 couples participating. These classes continued until the end of May 1987. Seventy of these couples ultimately went on to join the regular square dancers in the training sessions that began in September.

In March 1987, applications were accepted from the general square dance community to participate in the Opening Ceremonies. Approximately 1600 dancers applied! At that time the committee asked Wilf Wihlidal to develop the choreography for the event. He, in turn, invited Ron Refvik to assist in the task, and with comments and suggestions from Jacques Lemay, the Opening Ceremonies Artistic Director, the two callers choreographed a beautiful depiction of modern square dancing which culminated with the dancers forming the Alberta Wild Rose on the field. The Ceremonies' Music Director, Tommy Banks, composed and recorded unique, yet traditional, music that ranged from a big band sound to country and western with a few philharmonic frills thrown in.

Wilf and Ron, in conjunction with Paddy Sampson and Jacques Lemay, decided that 120 squares (960 dancers) would be used. These dancers were sorted into 10 groups having 12 squares in each. Training sessions for each group began in early September 1987 in what became known as the OCO Rehearsal Hall, a large warehouse in south-east Calgary. These sessions continued on almost a weekly basis until early December, 10 weeks in all. Numerous callers from the Calgary Callers Association did the teaching. During this period 5 mass rehearsals also took place. One of them (November 1) was held in McMahon Stadium whereas the others were in the Rehearsal Hall.

Training resumed in early January 1988 and continued for one week. Beginning January 17, every weekend was filled with one or two mass rehearsals, 8 in all. An estimated average of 40 hours (including Feb. 11 and 12) was given by each dancer to these mass rehearsals in preparation for the big day on February 13.

In early December each dancer was measured for his/her costume. These fittings took place mostly in the huge costume making facility. Many, many square dancers sewed, pinned, etc. to create all the costumes, not only the ones for square dancers. The square dance costumes were one of four colours: yellow, green, orange or pink. These colours were chosen to provide the colours required to form the Alberta Rose in the Grand Finale. In each square #1 couple was yellow, #2 green, #3 orange and #4 pink. At the end of the dancing, each dancer had to know where to go on the field to add his/her pixel of colour to the Alberta Rose, which was at the centre of the Grand Finale. Dancers were encouraged to keep their costumes after the event.

The commitment of square dancers to this endeavor was truly outstanding, and without a doubt, the Opening Ceremonies show was spectacular. The square dance segment was all it was expected to be, with each dancer giving their all. It was enjoyed by the 60,000 people in the stadium and the estimated 1.5 billion TV audience.

To each and every participant we, the Chair Couple of the 1988 OCO Square Dance Committee, still say.....**THANK YOU, THANK YOU. How wonderful you were!!!**



Grand Finale with the square dancers forming the Alberta rose in the centre.

This is after the dancing – the last thing was to face out to the spectators and salute them all hands up. It shows the magnitude of the field and the mass of squares as well as the color.



About the Authors Art & Collette started square dancing in the 1976 – 1977 season and after graduation in the spring they attended as many club dances, conventions, jamborees and festivals as their busy lives allowed. With 4 teenagers attending school and university, and Art's commitment to the University of Calgary, there wasn't much free time. Nevertheless, they committed to regular dance nights and were very enthusiastic. Ultimately, Art decided to try "calling" and became both a Square Dance Caller and Round Dance Cuer. He was the Caller and Cuer for 4 Calgary Clubs for many years. When the OCO Ceremonies Chairman, Paddy Sampson, asked if they thought the square dance community might be interested in participating in the Opening Ceremonies of the 1988 Winter Olympics, they accepted the challenge to survey that group, and were rewarded with a resounding "YES" from the Calgary Callers, the Calgary Dancers Assoc. and all the dancers. Art & Collette, along with their committee of 6 more couples continued on for the 2 years until the Ceremonies commenced.

ADDING SOUND EFFECTS TO SQUARE DANCE CALLS

Each time 'Flutter Wheel' is called, one of the dancers I know responds with "Butter Butter". Someone else I know says "Whoop Whoop" to the same call. Sound effects - a fun way to add an element of surprise and elicit some smiles. Most of us are familiar with "Wheeeee!" for 'Ferris Wheel', "Whoosh" for 'Slide Thru', and "Yahoo" when meeting in the middle of the square. But there are many more!

- All 8 Circulate - "All-8, all-8."
- Bend the Line - "Get Bent."
- Chain Down the Line - "Chain me down, chain me down."
- Dive Thru - "Dive, Dive" OR "A-oo-ga" (sub. diving noises).
- Dixie Style to An Ocean Wave - "Hi Dixie."
- Double Pass Thru - "DPT".
- Hinge - "Creak."
- Up to the Middle & Back - "Mo-o-o-o-o."
- Pass the Ocean - "Splash."
- Reverse the Flutter - "Pow! Pow! Pow!"
- Right & Left Thru - "Thank You" then "Your Welcome."
- Scoot Back - Men Scooters "Grunt"; Ladies "Squeal."
- Shoot The Star - "Bang!"
- Spin The Top - "Spin the Top" then "He's No Top."
- Swing Thru - "Schwing!"
- Trade By - "Bye."
- U-Turn Back - "Ba-a-a-a-a."
- Veer to the Left/Right - "Vera!"
- Wheel & Deal - "Wheeling" then "Dealing" OR "... and Sque-e-e-al."
- Zoom - "Z-z-z-o-o-o-o-o-m!"

Then there are some calls that can come with extra actions, too:

- Allemande Left - Clap hands.
- Ferris Wheel - End turns center under arm during turn.
- Double Pass Thru - Three quick claps.
- Pass the Ocean - Clap hands.
- Promenade Halfway - Inactives Do Si Do with opposite; or inactives make a circle, do two hip bumps with opposite.
- Right & Left Grand - Balance and slap left hands when meeting someone with the right hand.
- Square Thru Four - Inactives do 2 California Twirls or two Half Sashays.
- Sweep ¼ - Sweep the floor with free hand.
- Touch ¼ - Touch forehead with free hand (and can say "Doh!")

For more (and for all the dance levels): visit www.dosado.com, click 'HUMOR' and find the article by Paul Asente.

Next time you're in a square, add a few new sound effects and actions, and see if these catch on.

ACTUAL SIGNS . . .

- RESTROOM: Toilet out of order. Please use floor below.
- LAUNDROMAT: Automatic washing machines - please remove all your clothes when the light goes out.
- SECOND HAND SHOP: We exchange anything - bicycles, washing machines, etc. Why not bring your wife along and get a wonderful bargain?
- HEALTH FOOD STORE: Closed due to illness.
- CONFERENCE: For anyone who has children and doesn't know it, there is a day care on the first floor.
- BROCHURE: If you cannot read, this leaflet will tell you how to get lessons.
- REPAIR SHOP: We can repair anything. (Please knock hard on the door. The bell doesn't work.)
- OFFICE: After tea break, staff should empty the teapot and stand upside down on the draining board.

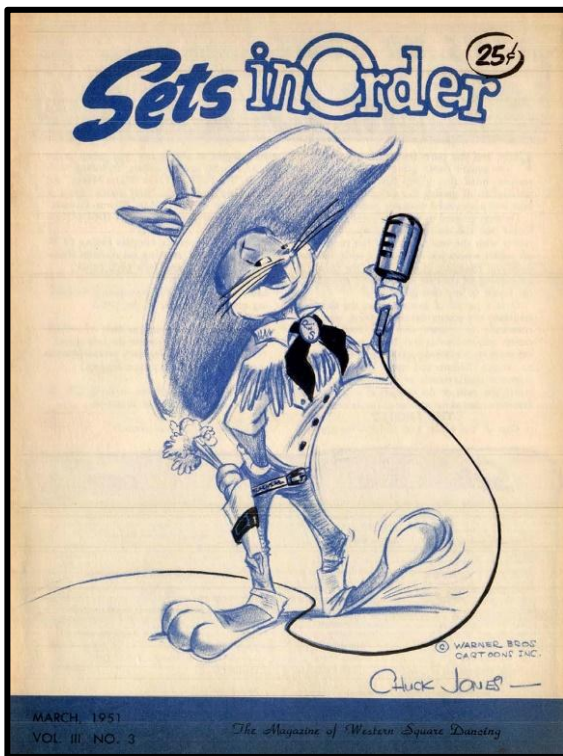
GLIMPSE FROM THE PAST

This is an excerpt the book *"As I See Saw It –Bob Osgood"*, reprinted with permission from the author and square dance caller, Paul Moore. Jim Mayo, First Chairman of CALLERLAB, provided the following review comments: "This is truly the only book about the whole of Modern Western Square Dancing and it is certainly the most complete (and accurate) book that will ever be written about this huge activity." Paul had access to all of the material that crossed Bob Osgood's desk at Sets in Order / American Square Dance Society. For additional information, contact Paul Moore at paulmoore@wildblue.net or look for this 600+ page book on Amazon.ca (\$26).

FAMOUS CARTOONIST AVID SQUARE DANCER

In the late 40's, Chuck [Jones] and his wife Dorothy discovered square dancing, and he became an avid supporter. But before we knew Chuck, he had already had an illustrious career in film.

Characters upon whom Mr. Jones has set his stamp include Bugs Bunny, Pepe LePew, Marvin Martian, Henery Hawk, Elmer Fudd, and Michigan Jay Frog, the singing siren of greed whose appearance in "One Froggy Evening (1955) has been twice canonized: first as one of those five greatest cartoons ever created, and more recently as the logo of the new WB television venture. He also won three Oscars for his films. He produced and animated "How the Grinch Stole Christmas", "The Dot and the Line", and the "Phantom Tollbooth".



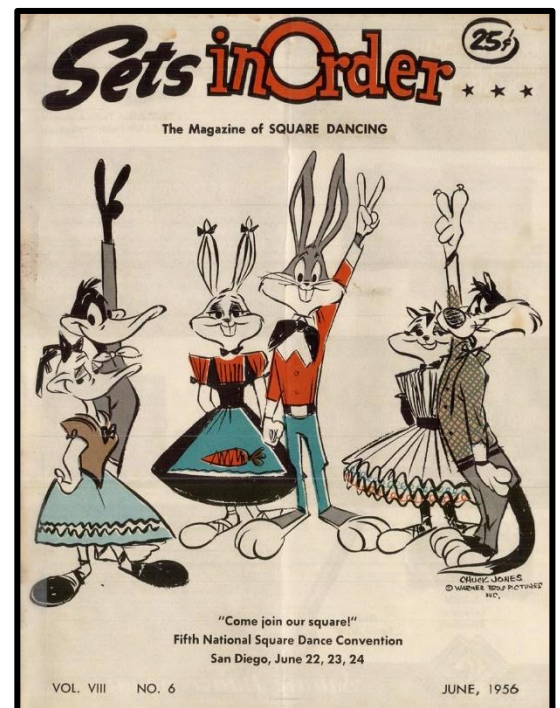
We loved Chuck for his work in the movies, but even more Chuck and Dottie were square dancers who made our lives richer. Rip n' Snort (RIP) dances ended about 10:00 and then we had refreshments, and as long as Chuck and Dorothy were Presidents there was an after party. As part of his show, Chuck would draw creatures and tell captivating stories about them.

In 1950 Chuck submitted his first of what would be many columns about square dancing to 'Sets in Order' (SIO). It was called "A Cartoonist Takes a Look at Square Dancing", and in typical Jones style, he poked at some of the central foibles of square dancing, especially among the women. Then, due to popular demand (started up by his wife) Chuck followed up two months later with equally funny and biting satires of the men.

The columns ranged from the serious to the humorous to the outrageous. You can tell that while writing a column something went through Chuck's mind

and he could not resist telling about it, with an illustration. Still Chuck kept to his description of what he was going to write about: the same type of stories he told at the RIP's after parties. For example,

"Back in the old days before deodorants and things like that, they used to use a bag full of pine needles to sweeten the sheets because there was a shortage of soap powders and water and washing facilities they didn't wash the sheets as much as they used to so they used these sweeteners. As the beds got down to a smaller size they found out they didn't have to use a big bag of pine needles or potpourri or whatever they used. They finally came out with the Murphy bed, and the Murphy bed evolved into a portable bed which you could roll around on rollers. They found out that they could get away with a bag just about half the size, and this was the origin of the call 'Rollaway With a Half Sashay'."



HOW DANCE PROMOTES BRAIN HEALTH

American Academy of Neurology, Brain & Life Newsletter, Feb/Mar 2025

Excerpts from Article by Stacey Colino

By the time Bette Loomis was diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment in 2015, she had been experiencing considerable forgetfulness and getting lost in familiar places for nearly two years. Her doctor prescribed galantamine, a medication used to treat cognitive decline, which she still takes. In 2023, at the suggestion of her nurse practitioner, Loomis decided to try an unusual intervention: **She joined a study at Emory University in Atlanta that was investigating the effects of adapted Argentine tango on older adults with neurologic disorders.** Three times a week, Loomis participated in tango classes that included Emory students as well as older adults; the program lasted a year—and Loomis loved it.



“Trying to remember the steps was tricky, but a lot of times the Emory kids had trouble too,” says Loomis, 79, a retired nurse practitioner who lives in Atlanta. **“It was invigorating, and it helped my memory, coordination, movement, and balance. It made me feel mentally sharper, and it made me happy.”** After the yearlong tango program ended, Loomis’ scores on cognition tests went up considerably.

It's no secret that regular physical activity like dance is beneficial. **Dance also has a variety of positive effects on brain function.** “It's like exercise, but it demands a cognitive load on top of that,” says Madeleine E. Hackney, PhD, associate professor of medicine at the Emory University School of Medicine and a research scientist at the Atlanta VA Medical Center. “You learn a lot of different steps and put them into play, which challenges your attention and memory. There's also spatial navigating in relation to other people and places.”

Besides challenging memory and thinking skills, along with mobility and coordination, “dance requires integration of different parts of the brain,” says Elinor Harrison, PhD, a professional dancer for 30 years who is now a movement science researcher and lecturer in dance at Washington University in St. Louis.

Because dancing can improve balance, coordination, motor skills, and proprioception (being able to determine where your body is in space), it can **benefit people with impaired movement related to Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis (MS).** A study in a 2024 issue of the *European Journal of Sport Science* found that **people with MS who participated in dance classes—including moving to rock music or learning the basics of ballroom dancing or Latin American dances—twice a week for 12 weeks demonstrated significant improvements in mobility, attention, and working memory.**



“Through dance, people with Parkinson's may be able to bypass compromised areas of the brain and access intact areas,” says Anjali Gera, MD, a movement disorders neurologist at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago, who has given dance classes to her patients with Parkinson's disease. “When they are in class, they are walking and turning much better without that slowness and hesitation we often see in the office. Exercise such as dance may slow down the progression of Parkinson's disease. Medications don't do that.” According to a study in the 2021 issue of *Brain Sciences*, people with Parkinson's disease who participated in dance classes once a week for three years had less motor function decline compared with a control group that experienced the expected progression of symptoms.

Brain Boost

A study published in the *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity* in 2022 compared the effects of six months of 90 minutes of ballroom dancing twice a week with 90 minutes of treadmill walking twice a week among older adults who were at risk of developing dementia. “People in the dance group performed better on tests of executive function and memory and had reduced loss of volume in the hippocampus [a part of the brain responsible for memory and learning],” explains Joe Verghese, MD, FAAN, co-author of the study and professor and chair of neurology at the Renaissance School of Medicine at Stony Brook University in New York.

These findings build upon those from a seminal study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2003. Researchers examined the connection between participation in various cognitive and physical activities and the risk of dementia in adults over age 75. **Among all the physical activities, dancing was the only one associated with a reduced risk of dementia.** This may be because “dancing is a complex physical activity with various cognitive, social, and physical

components—the components all work together,” says study co-author Dr. Verghese. “It involves learning new movement patterns, which create new connections in the brain and strengthen existing networks.”

“With dance, you have a lot of cross talk between the right and left hemispheres of the brain, which strengthens the connection between them,” says Marie Collier, MD, FAAN, a neurologist with Sevaro Health in East Brunswick, NJ. For example, dance requires analytical and logistical thinking, which occur in the left hemisphere, as well as creativity, appreciation of the music's rhythm and melody, and spatial cognition, which are controlled by the right hemisphere. As a result, Dr. Collier says, “you have this whole-brain functioning.”

Dancing also may protect the brain by promoting the release of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that helps with the growth and survival of neurons, says Dr. Collier. Besides enhancing neuroplasticity (the brain's ability to form new connections and pathways in response to internal or external stimuli), BDNF protects against neurodegeneration, she adds. A study in a 2018 issue of *PLOS One* compared the effects of a six-month dance program (a mix of line dancing, jazz, rock, Latin American dance, **and square dancing**) and conventional fitness training (including riding a stationary bike, lifting weights, and stretching) among older adults. **While both interventions increased the participants' fitness levels, only dancing led to significant increases in blood levels of BDNF and volume in key brain areas, as seen on MRI scans.**



Other benefits of dance include improved attention span, short-term memory, and multitasking. In a 2023 review in *BMC Geriatrics*, researchers examined the effects of dance therapy in 10 studies involving 984 participants ages 55 and older with mild cognitive impairment. The researchers found that dance therapy was associated with improvements in global cognitive function, memory, executive function, attention, language, and mental health.

In recent years, researchers have looked more deeply into dancing's effects on the brain, sometimes in real time. (There's a field called the neuroscience of dance.) Julia Basso, PhD, director of the Embodied Brain Lab at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, began using mobile electroencephalography (EEG) in her research: Dancers wear caps that contain electrodes and backpacks that house the control units and battery packs. Dr. Basso also combines mobile EEG with somatic physiology sensors to get a better sense of the brain-body connections as people dance.

As for ballroom dancing and other forms of partner dancing, Dr. Basso found that they “enhance interbrain synchrony between two individuals—their brain rhythms start to coordinate with each other.”

Feel-Good Factor

Even a single dance session has been found to improve mood, says Dr. Basso. “It has to do with the release of dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin,” she says. Like other forms of physical activity, dance reduces stress and stimulates the release of endorphins, brain chemicals that relieve pain and enhance feelings of well-being. It also improves confidence and self-esteem, says Dr. Hackney.

This is true for anyone who dances, but for those with neurologic disorders it may be especially important. “It can give people a sense of agency over their movements,” says Dr. Harrison.



When the Emory study ended, Bette Loomis asked for and received special permission to resume the classes this year. “I love to dance, and I have more energy after doing tango,” says Loomis. “It makes me feel good physically and mentally.”

- What do you do when you see an endangered animal eating an endangered plant?
- If a parsley farmer is sued, can you garnish his wages?
- Would a fly without wings be called a walk?
- Where do forest rangers go to “get away from it all?”
- Can vegetarians eat animal crackers?
- Atheism is a non-prophet organization.
- If a turtle doesn't have a shell, is he homeless or naked?
- If the police arrest a mime, do they tell him he has the right to remain silent?
- What was the best thing before sliced bread? How is it possible to have a civil war?



July 15 -18,
2026



EXCERPTS from National Festival Newsletter #2:

Good progress has been made in preparing for our Festival. Our Organizing Committee has met regularly and been expanded to ensure all bases are covered so that they planned and executed on good time.

We have succeeded in reserving sufficient hotel room bookings to cover the anticipated number of dancers. We are actively working to find locations for RVs as these are in high demand and often booked well in advance. We shall share our information with you as soon as we can finalize it.

It is only 10 months to the event and over the next month most clubs in Canada and the USA shall be resuming regular dances. Now is the time to remind your members that registration is open. Registrations are expected to include not only dancers from Canada and the USA, but also from Australia, Germany and China. Our American friends have been very patient with us while we search out the best way to make it possible for you to pay for your registration. Please stay tuned.

Because we are providing for multiple levels of square and round dancing as well as clogging, dancers who shall have completed their first year of instruction (whether at introductory or more advanced levels) shall find themselves welcome. For dancers in their first year, this is an opportunity for them to be inducted into a new expanded, enjoyable celebration of their progress.

Our committee is planning events to engage youth and to give solo dancers a chance to meet before the dancing starts. So if you are partnered or solo, young or not-so-young, and a round, square, or clog dancer, the 2026 Canadian National Festival in Penticton is going to be peachy keen, just for you.

We wish to remind you of some critical dates.

- Firstly, **Early Bird Registration Fees are offered until December 31st, 2025**, after that date the fees will increase by \$25 per registrant. Registration forms are on our website <http://squaredance.bc.ca>. Look for the Festival heading.
- Secondly, **there are differing expiry dates for each hotel with which we have agreements** for reduced rates (which reflect 2024 not 2026 pricing). After the expiry date their pricing will be that in effect next year. All the hotels are within the 3 or 4 star level. Details for each can be found on the website. There are also many motels in Penticton, but we have no arrangements with them. The region is a tourist summer mecca, so early booking is strongly recommended.
- **We are actively looking into other activities** which may be of interest and which will fit into our programme. These include, for example, dancing in the lake or trail walking or visiting the radio astrophysical observatory. More information will become available as planning continues. Keep checking back onto the 2026 National website for the latest updates [Home - festival2026.squaredance.bc.ca](http://Home-festival2026.squaredance.bc.ca)

Encourage your friends to register to join you in the fun of next summer's festivities.

Kind regards from 2026 National co-chairs,

Wendy Krueger and Dennis Sutton