

ROUND DANCING AT THE BUCKEROO CLUB

A Brief History

(Some of the information on the history of round dancing was secured from an informal conversation with Curley Reynolds, May 26, 1974. The rest is from our memory and we do not guarantee it to be 100% factual! The Engdahls, May 28, 1974.)

Sometime during the mid-1950's Curley Reynolds started offering round dance lessons to all Buckeroos just after the completion of the yearly square dance lessons. This was offered to all members at no charge. Curley was not paid by the club--he volunteered to do this. When The Group of dancers was able to waltz, two-step, box, etc., they were then invited to join the Monday night group. They learned the current dance of the month and whatever other dances they were interested in learning. Also for a time, Curley taught the round dance of the month for a half hour previous to the regular Saturday night dances. This died after a time due to the lack of attendance and the difficulty of being able to learn a dance along with the confusion of the arrival of square dancers. During this time, the round dance group was a large group, but the club membership was also high. As Curley volunteered his services, the club paid for the round dance records and provided the barn for the group to dance in. During this time, Curley and his wife Georgia attended some of the Asilomar institutes in California and the Lake Quinalt institutes in Washington to upgrade their round dancing and square dance calling.

During 1959 Georgia had surgery and was no longer able to be Curley's partner in round dancing and for a while Winnie Travis was his partner. Sometime during the early 1960's Curley gave up teaching round dancing and turned the job over to Norm and Inez John. They kept up the good work started by Curley, teaching classes yearly at the Barn, conducting the Monday night round dances classes and occasionally having a round dance party on an off-Saturday night—the guests being from around the state. Norm and Inez, along with the Greens, attended round dance clinics around the state to learn new dances and upgrade their teaching and dancing skills.

In November, 1970, Inez suddenly passed away. Bob and Jo Green stepped in to help Norm teach the Monday night group, and, for a time, Winni Travis was again called in to be a partner. Bob and Jo Green learned to round and square dance as Haylofters and joined the Buckeroos in 1965. They taught a round dance class at the Barn during the winter of 1971-72 and also during 1972-73. They were not paid for this instruction, nor were the Johns, and the class was free to all Buckeroos and \$1 per couple for guests, or non-Buckeroos.

In 1973 it was decided that the round dancers should pay for the use of the Barn and it was decided that the instructors should have some reimbursement. As a result, Buckeroos were charged \$1 per couple a night when learning the round dance of the month, with 50% going to the club and 50% to the instructors. Instruction costs for

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learning round dance basics was set at \$2 per couple with the same 50% division. No instruction class was held under this policy during 1973-74. Also, the board decided in 1973 to pay the round dance instructor \$10 per Saturday night to teach the round dance of the month from 8 to 8:30 p.m. and to cue from the stage as necessary.

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Some general information on round dancing:

We did ask Curley a few pointed questions concerning round dancing and square dancing. He felt very strongly that they must go together – that one enhances the other. Personally, he did not agree with the philosophy that both should be introduced to beginners at the same time, even though in the 1950's and 1960's this theory was promoted. He felt that to introduce both round dancing and square dancing and to give lessons in both to the average beginner would frighten him off in a hurry. However, he did feel that after several square dance lessons some simple mixers should be introduced so that everyone would be exposed to and would become aware of round dancing. (This is essentially what Wayne was saying a few months back at our board meeting.) He also felt that there are some people who could learn to square dance and could enjoy the activity, but could never learn round dancing so that they would enjoy it. He felt that his theory had been verified over a period of years. With square dancing being so much more complex today, he felt even more strongly that round dancing should not be introduced until later.

On May 27th, 1974, I telephoned Lloyd Ward at Eugene to get information on how that area goes about promoting round dancing. Lloyd is the president of the Cascade Callers Association and he and his wife Elise are round dance instructors. There are at the present time only 2 round dance instructors in that area – the Wards and Virginia Jackson.

Lloyd said there were only about 4 club callers who promote round dancing in the Eugene area. They are Cecil Tolleson, Jack Cooley, Ivan Midlam and Iva Koehn. They interest their square dance beginners in round dancing and teach them the basics and the dance of the month.

Lloyd said that Cecil Tolleson of the Ball Promenaders were concerned about the lack of interest in the round dance activity. They decided last winter to introduce a few simple mixers when the class was about half-way through their square dance lessons. Some of the older club members who were helping the new class members became interested and it evolved that Cecil began teaching a round dance basic class an hour or so before the square dance lesson. This was held on Sunday nights so that starting early was no problem and there was no extra charge. The Wards volunteered to help the Tollesons with this instruction. Lloyd said they ended up with a good group of round dancers who were having fun and planned to continue dancing on Tuesday nights. How the financial arrangements were made for this extra Tuesday night dancing, Lloyd did not know – he would check with the Tollesons on this. Lloyd's philosophy was that each type of dancing compliments the other and that people who became part of both activities were the ones who became the strong club members and stayed with the activity for a longer period of time.