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# The Olde Tymer

*The Newsletter of  
Canadian Olde Tyme  
Square Dance Callers  
Association  
October 2020 Issue 68*

**Website:** <http://sca.uwaterloo.ca/cotsdca>

## Presidents Report

Bill Russell

No Association dance in November – and very unlikely in January and April. No dancing elsewhere. Not a happy time for dancers, callers and musicians. But enough with doom and gloom!

This edition of the Olde Tymer is full of history. I hope it jogs some memories and warms some hearts. Each of us has many happy memories of dancing together. I propose that we share some of them with each other:

- You can write a post or share a video (related to old-time square dance) on our Facebook page.

- Or you can email a story to: [cotsdca@hotmail.com](mailto:cotsdca@hotmail.com)

- Or you send me a card or a letter:

Bill Russell

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Toronto, ON M6C 1C9

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I am planning on putting together your stories and sharing them on a regular basis. Of course, the more I get, the more I can share (and the fewer...), so please send in your stories.

“Bill,” you might ask, “you ask us for stories. How about one of your own?” Well, here goes: When I moved to Toronto in the mid-70’s, a young lady invited me to the Friday Nighters’ dance in Scarborough, a long trip by subway and bus. Jack Hayes and a crew of musicians were playing; the church hall was pretty full; the callers were great; and all the folks were friendly, helping me go in the right direction without showing any annoyance. Then we did the Canadian Progressive Barn Dance: the version where couples side step toward the centre and back out and WWI classic tunes are played. You had a chance to briefly chat with each partner. I really enjoyed myself, and from that time on, I have looked forward to our style of square dancing.

Your turn.

Executive Committee for 2020-21:  
Your Executive returns with Bill Russell, President; Nancy Wheeler, Vice-President; Deborah Jefferson, Treasurer; and Dave Lucas, Past President. Once again, we do not have a Secretary or any members-at-large. Please consider throwing your hat in the ring. Thank you to Calvin Everitt for helping out last year.

## Vice Presidents Report

Nancy Wheeler

Hello COTSDCA Members,

1. Our Annual General Meeting will be virtual, held online (using Zoom) on Wednesday, November 25, 2020, at 7:30 p.m. Please confirm your intention to attend by sending a note to: [cotsdca@hotmail.com](mailto:cotsdca@hotmail.com). A little before the meeting time, a Zoom invitation will be sent to you with a link you can click on. If you do not have or use a computer, perhaps you can find someone who can help.

If you have been a member in good standing, but have not been able to

send in your dues this year, you are still invited to attend the meeting and vote.

2. Your Executive returns with Bill Russell, President; Nancy Wheeler, Vice-President; Deborah Jefferson, Treasurer; and Dave Lucas, Past President. Once again, we do not have a Secretary or any members-at-large. Please consider throwing your hat in the ring. Thank you to Calvin Everitt for helping out last year.

3. We are mailing out new membership badges. They are metal and attach with a magnet. We had hoped to distribute them when we saw you last April at the spring dance, but you know... If you have given us only your email address, please make sure that we have your "snail mail" mailing address. Please forward your mailing address to [cotsdca@hotmail.com](mailto:cotsdca@hotmail.com)

Thank you,

## The 1918 Spanish Flu

### THE 1918 SPANISH FLU AND THE IMPACT ON SQUARE DANCING/DANCING/MUSIC

While I had heard of the Spanish Flu of 1918 I really didn't know much about it or have any interest in finding out about it until Covid-19 hit us.

With the impact Covid-19 has had on our dancing and music so far in 2020, I thought I would do some research to see how things were impacted in 1918. It is estimated that the Spanish Flu infected 500 million people worldwide (1/3 of

the world's population) and resulted in an estimated 50 million deaths. No vaccine was available or developed and there were no antibiotics to treat secondary infections.

What was done to try and combat the illness;

- Isolation
- quarantine
- good personal hygiene
- disinfectants
- limitations on public gatherings
- masks

The flu first evidenced itself in early 1918 and by the summer of 1920 it was over. In mid-1918, many areas closed schools, movie theatres, dance halls, music theatres, and places of amusement etc., in order to limit public gatherings. In many areas however, those restrictions were reversed by the end of 1918.

Some areas were quite concerned about the development of, and interest in "Jazz" which it was thought, resulted in immoral types of dances. I couldn't find any reference to square dancing being considered as immoral. In many areas, this concern about "immoral dances" lasted through the 1920s.

In the state of Iowa, they started the Iowa State Fiddle Championships in 1920, in an attempt to take the attention away from Jazz

I really couldn't find anything definitive about square dancing at that time, other than comments that its popularity was declining—and it is still declining today!

Research by Ralph Price

## Membership Dues

### **Dues are past due**

The membership year is Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> to Aug. 31<sup>st</sup> Your renewal dues are only \$10.00 a year. Dues should be forwarded to the Treasurer.

**Deborah Jefferson**  
**13495 The Gore Road,**  
**Bolton, Ontario, L7E 0W8**

In an effort to keep your membership dues low we will be trying to send this newsletter by email from now on so we need your email address.

## The Jamming Goes On

Ralph and Sandy Price were missing the fiddle jams since last winter, so they put on a few of their own: by invitation only; outside with lots of space; and a driveway dance floor. Although there are no pictures of people dancing, it did happen: waltzes; the Jesse Polka step to polkas and jigs; and the odd fox trot. No squares, of course. They managed to do it three times, all depending on good weather. It was great to hear the music live.



The following is a reprint of Ralph Price's September 4<sup>th</sup> Newsletter that he puts out monthly

Hi Folks

Let me start with my usual comment that Sandy and I are well and we hope you are also.

Sad to say, none of the regularly scheduled events have been held or are planned for the foreseeable future. Come on vaccine!

Sandy and I have certainly been missing seeing our music friends at the jams and dances, so we decided to do something about it! We have had large music parties in our home in the past, but not possible under current social distancing guidelines. As we live in a rural subdivision and have a nice big driveway, we decided to hold a small "driveway jam", which would allow people to maintain social distancing. In fact we have done it twice since the last music bulletin and made a number of people happy as they had some fun they had been missing.



The jams were by invitation only as we wanted to keep the attendance under 20 so as not to cause too much parked car congestion on our street.

For the first jam we had 7 fiddlers, a bass, a keyboard and an audience of nine. At the second we had five fiddlers, a bass, a keyboard, a guitar and an audience of eight. While we couldn't do any square dancing, people who came as a couple were able to get up and dance to the waltzes, foxtrots and pattern dances. The singers present got to sing some songs as well.



We set up the sound system we have for doing square dance gigs and the musicians played in front of the garage; the audience sat in the shade further out on the driveway and that left room for a nice "dance floor". In fact at the last jam, the comment was made we have a "perfect" driveway and we could easily get 3 squares up in it. Don't we wish! We selected nice sunny and warm days and it was great way to spend an afternoon as we cope with the pandemic.



Think about how you might do something similar in your area. We are hopeful of doing it one more time before it gets too cold to do so.

I've included some pictures of each jam, and the "masked guitarist" is Bill Russell of the Callers Association. He came all the way from Toronto to participate.



Well, I cannot think of anything else to add.



Stay safe and think positive.



## Get to Know the Past

The Lakeshore Square Dance Club was started in the late 40's by my dad Alex Boustead in The Queensway Community Hall at Kipling and The Queensway.



New Year's 1955-56

Some of the members would learn the modern western square dances so they could attend the "Toronto and District Square Dance Association" annual dance at Mutual Street Arena May 1955.



I am showing some of the callers, all members of the C.O.T.S.D.C.A., that called at their summer location at the second farm west of highway #10 (Hurontario Street now) north of Burnhamthorpe Road where the Square One Shopping mall is now. It was an open air dance floor with no hydro. Lighting was by Coleman lamps sound system was by 12volt car battery



Caller; Alex Boustead  
Guitar; Don Gilmore  
Fiddle; Unknown  
June 1955



Caller; Jim McGlynn  
Fiddle; Floyd  
Guitar; Don Gilmore  
July 1956



Caller; Jack Chapman  
Fiddle; Floyd  
Guitar; Don Gilmore  
Bones; Eric McMillian  
July 1956



Caller: Isaac (Shortie) Bedford  
Fiddle; Floyd  
Guitar; Don Gilmore  
Bones & a Caller; Eric McMillian  
July 1956



A full dance floor, no seats to sit on, so you danced all night.

This article was in the Toronto Star on January 29<sup>th</sup> 2007

DALE ANNE FREED  
STAFF REPORTER

## Leader of the promenade

ALEX BOUSTEAD Square dancing was a lifelong passion for Toronto-born caller, who took up the pastime during the tough Depression years

"Ahhh ... meet your partner pass her by, wink at another on the sly, kiss the next one as ya go by." - Alex Boustead, in his own way, Alex Boustead was a keeper of Canadian culture.

With his smooth, deep voice and a twinkle in his eye, he'd keep the square dancer's doe-sidoeing with his fast-paced lively calls.

His calls originated with the early settlers and preserved a bit of oral culture, passed down through the decades.

"Being loyal Canadians, we wanted to preserve our traditional olde tyme dances ... English, Irish, Scottish and French, each contribute part of their dances ... jigs, reels, quadrilles, " Boustead wrote in a newsletter to the Olde Tyme Square Dance Callers Association.

He danced his entire life, through the bad times and the good. It was a life-long passion.

"If you had worries, you'd have to forget them because you can't think and square dance at the same time, he told the Star in 1989 during a break at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

Boustead died Wednesday in Belleville. He was 94.

"Square dancing was basically his life. When he wasn't calling, he was dancing, said his friend George Betts, a protégé who learned the art of square dance calling from Boustead. "He had his

own style, his own style of delivery, his own cadence."

In an effort to preserve traditional square dancing, Boustead and six others formed the Canadian Olde Tyme Square Dance Callers Association in 1954.

Boustead was treasurer for the first 10 years, a position his son Wallace was treasurer for 47 years. The association is a teaching centre for square-dance callers. Toronto-born Boustead caught the dance bug back in the Depression. During those tough years he lost his job as a machinist at Stelco. He took on any job his hometown of Stirling needed. He swept roads, cut wood and, using a pick and shovel, helped level the town dump into a park where kids could play.

In his spare time, he loved to dance.

"Dances were put on by the working man for 10 cents a time, he told the Star in 1996. "But if you didn't have the money, you were welcome to join the fun." During the Depression, there 'd be dances six nights a week, he said. "There were no jobs to speak of, and no TVs — there was nothing much to do. But you had to do something with your energy so there were a lot of square dances.

Although he didn't have a lot of money, he always managed to have a clean white shirt for the dance. "I had a friend ... who would pass along discarded white shirts. I would turn the collars and

sew them back on so that I would be presentable.

Although just 5-foot-4, he was a dominating presence on the stage as he called out the dances, said his son Wallace, 67.

His first call was Darling Nellie Gray" and he stood on a table with a paper megaphone, next to an old fellow playing an accordion.

"Sometimes I called for free, other nights it was for five or 10 dollars, Boustead wrote.

Over the years he called with various radio and TV stations and many other groups. Sometimes he and his band "the Country Ramblers would travel some 150 kilometres "bringing Canadian dancing to the people, Boustead wrote.

He had a signature look and style, showing up at every dance he called in a white shirt and bow tie or string tie.

For years he ran at least one weekly dance from September to May. During World War II he taught square dancing at Toronto's YMCA, said his son. And when the clock struck midnight, his son said, everyone knew it was time for Alex Boustead to sing "the Home Waltz.

"Until we meet again, he'd warble.

He was pre-deceased by his wife Eva. A reception in his memory was held at his son and daughter-in-law's Etobicoke home



Alex Boustead always wore a white shirt and bow tie or string tie to every dance he called. "Square dancing was basically his life. When he wasn't calling, he was dancing," said his friend George Betts.

<https://www.pressreader.com/canada/toronto-star/20070129/282235186186328>

His biggest request was that the Canadian Olde Tyme Square Dance Callers Association spring or fall dance following his death was to be a Memorial Dance and he was to be the host and all the dancers were to be his guests. So, on April 21 the spring dance came and oh boy what a night. No one coming knew that it was free and why it was free except the executive of the Callers Association. Some of the dancers knew Dad but the majority knew of

him. There were a few tears and hugs for us but everyone thought it was a wonderful way to honour Dad's memory. They were told he was one of the founding members of the Callers Association and square dancing was what he loved to do. He taught many people and ran dances for many years throughout southern Ontario. What surprised us was, some of the people he taught back in the 40's & 50's came to the dance. We received many cards and emails thanking us for a wonderful evening.

### Executive 2020-2021

President ----- Bill Russell  
[russell\\_bill@hotmail.com](mailto:russell_bill@hotmail.com)

Vice President ---- Nancy Wheeler  
[nancy7298@hotmail.com](mailto:nancy7298@hotmail.com)

Past President ----- Dave Lucas  
[oac86aggie@hotmail.com](mailto:oac86aggie@hotmail.com)

Secretary ----- **OPEN**

Treasurer.----- Deborah Jefferson  
[d14jefferson@gmail.com](mailto:d14jefferson@gmail.com)

The executive is currently seeking a willing individual for the secretary position. The meetings happen 3 or 4 times per year and are usually 2 hours in length. If anyone is interested in this job, please contact someone on the exec.

Again, we congratulate the current exec for their successful return and look forward to another great year of dancing.

Dave Lucas (Past President)

### Web Sites Of Interest

If you have not checked out the Association's website recently, you might want to see what is new:

<https://sca.uwaterloo.ca/cotsdca/>

In particular, we have added some pictures of the sheet music for many of the couple dances. Fiddlers should be able to download them and learn the tunes.

If you have found any interesting traditional square dance web sites, please pass them along to me at [russell\\_bill@hotmail.com](mailto:russell_bill@hotmail.com)

Bill Russell

### Publisher/Editor

Articles and items for sharing or comments should be sent to:

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