

by ED FOOOTE in *Northeast Square Dancer*, February 2016

HOW TO SAVE YOUR SQUARE

YOU can save your square! **YOU** individually can be the person to keep your square going and keep it from breaking down. Here's how to do it.

1. TAKE HANDS WITH THOSE STANDING BESIDE YOU. This must be done immediately after completing every call. Not only does this help you see the new formation of the square, it helps others see it too. If people can see their starting formation, then they are much more likely to complete the next call. Weak dancers tend not to take hands. (This is one reason they are weak.) If they break down, they will take you along with them, so it is in your best interest to take their hands, even if they do not offer them. Important: When hands are joined, elbow must be bent. If arms are outstretched when hands are touching, the set is much too large to operate smoothly.

2. KEEP YOUR HEAD TURNED TOWARD THE CENTER OF THE SQUARE. This gives you the big picture, it lets you know exactly where you should be, where trouble spots might be starting, and whether you should speed up or slow down your steps in order to keep everyone together. The majority of the time your head will be turned to the right, since many calls are presented in a counter-clockwise flow which has the square moving to the right. But looking to the left will also be necessary. Weak dancers use tunnel vision. They just look straight ahead and hope they will survive the next call. It only takes 2 or 3 dancers in the square who have their heads always turned toward the center to keep the square going. Decide that **YOU** will be one of these people. Bottom line: Your head should be constantly in motion while you dance, always looking for the big picture. Do this and **YOU** will save your square.

3. KEEP THE SET SMALL. Basic rule: The smaller the square, the fewer the breakdowns. There are several ways to keep the square small. (A) Take hands after every call. (B) Bend your elbows when you take hands. (C) Take small steps. This will force other people to also take smaller steps, and thus the square becomes smaller.

4. ALWAYS HAVE YOUR SQUARE LINED UP WITH THE WALLS. Sometimes a set will become slightly offset from being lined up with walls; now a Cast Off or other turning motion may cause some people to become disoriented, which can cause them to break down on the next call. If the caller says: "Promenade, don't slow down, heads (or sides) Wheel Around," it is almost guaranteed that the square will not be lined up with walls. Solution: Take it upon yourself to make slight adjustments on the next 2 or 3 calls to get the set aligned with walls. This means either slightly overdoing or under-doing some calls. This will cause others next to you to do this also, and thus the set slowly

becomes aligned with the walls. If the caller pauses after calling the “Wheel Around” before giving the next call, you can try signaling the square while it is standing there to adjust slightly to align with the walls. The dancers will go along with you, because most don’t know anything about walls and will follow anyone who seems to know what they are doing. Note: If the caller sees you making an effort to try and get the square aligned with walls, he/she will know you are a good dancer and will watch you for the entire dance. It’s a nice feeling to know that the caller needs you to successfully complete his/her program.

SUMMARY: If you do everything listed here, YOU will save your square. You will also become recognized as a good dancer who knows what is going on.