

Square Dance Section

September 1950 - December 1988

By Naomi (Nan) Ament

Square Dance Coordinator 1988-89

The FWC Square Dance Section began in September 1950 in the old Waterman Gymnasium, with Dave Palmer as the caller until his retirement in 1985. Young faculty members were strongly attracted to this recreational type of informal dancing and several of those early members still dance with the group. All age groups are represented. Young, vigorous, faculty members and spouses or friends are still actively courted for memberships today. (For that matter, at least one courtship in the group matured to marriage!)

During the early decades the monthly dance would have about 16-17 dance squares (8 people in a square). As more and more FWC interest groups developed, and community recreational and arts groups flourished and multiplied, the membership has gradually decreased to about half that number. The dance sites changed to Tappan Junior High and then to our current location, Forsythe Junior High. A seasonal dessert in a few members homes, before the first dance, begins the year. A midwinter special pre-dance dessert and a March potluck dinner at the dance site help provide special energy, and there is always a mid-dance

refreshment break, which also gives time for casual chatting and friendship development.

On the retirement of Dave Palmer, the section conferred upon him an honorary degree of Ph.D., Doctor of Philosophy of Square Dance, in a special ceremony at the December 1985 dance. The citation records much of the spirit of the section as well as his spirit: dedication to the loftiest principles of teaching with utmost patience, understanding and good humor, under trying conditions—on occasion his students were unable to distinguish their left hand from the right. He was "adept at bringing order from chaos. His golden voice and melodious guitar will long be remembered. He and his wife Lee were made lifetime honorary guest members of the group.

Dave Palmer shared the 1985-86 year's calling with David Park Williams, the founder of the Cobblestone Farm Country Dancers. Mr. Williams was the principal caller the next year, a time for adding some nineteenth century contra dance steps to our repertoire. In 1987-88 we had several different callers, from whom we chose Ed Henson to be our principal caller for 1988-89.

During these 39 years there have been 35 different section leaders. Four women served two terms, with the following time intervals between leadership years: Florence Westrum, 30 years; Jean Harris, 21 years; Ginny McKeachie, 20 years; and Vicki Swain, 16 years. We are all young of heart

in our relaxed, happy square dance group, and enjoy our monthly dances as an anticipated rejuvenating elixir.