



CHIEF OF CHATTER Claudia Littlefair

I'm pleased to introduce a new column in this issue, called *"The Lighter Side of Darkness"* by Dee Jackins. Dee shares her humor with us as she describes what it is like to be visually impaired in a sight-reliant world.

For most of us, the dance season is well underway. Did your promotional efforts pay off? What would you do differently? The biggest question now is: How will you continue to advertise even though new dancers cannot join until a later date? I hope you'll find some helpful ideas in the next article. If you have any of your own to share, please send them to me so I can put them in the next newsletter.

SIGNS SPEAK VOLUMES

One of our chief marketing problems is that the majority of people do not know we exist! They believe that square dancing happened sometime in the past. CALLERLAB, the international association of callers, coined the phrase: **"Nobody's talking about it because nobody's talking about it!"** Most of our advertising takes place during early fall for 4 to 6 weeks. That means there is next to nothing about our recreation for 85% of the year.



Merv & Sandy Meyers, caller/cuer couple from Kamloops, have used their vehicles as "portable billboards" for the past two years. They have two sets of magnetic car door signs, so they can put them on whichever vehicle they are driving. When they purchased



their van in 2014, they made the decision to put on some permanent advertising. Wherever they travel, people "read" their vehicles.

This fall they took the signs one step further. They put up a large banner on the front of the Community Centre.

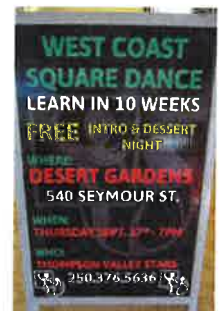
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They put up a double-sided sandwich board sign in front of the building.

Their home happened to come with a ready-made, large signboard in the corner of their lot. The previous owner had built it to advertise his business, and left it behind when Merv and Sandy purchased the home. It was perfect for putting up another banner, especially since it faces a major road





The result? 28 people came to their free dance, and 19 joined up for lessons. Each attendee filled out a survey about what influenced them to attend (some ticked more than one answer):

- Community Calendar – 4
- Friend Recommended – 12
- Demo at “The Bay” – 3
- Banner at Community Centre – 2
- Newspaper Article – 8
- Own Web Search – 4
- Banner on Home Lot – 1
- Van Decals – 1

Not only did the signs make the public aware that we exist, but they also worked to bring people in.

What Happens After Lessons Start?

Even though our dance season is underway, it is to our benefit to continue to “advertise” our presence.

- Put out a sandwich board in the dance parking lot, with a message like “Modern Western Square Dance Tonight”. It’s easy to do and effective.
- Write articles on an on-going basis for the community newsletter or paper to let non-dancers know about us. A topic suggestion could be how much fun the new dancers are having.
- String up a banner on the side of a building that faces a main roadway, for a negotiated rental fee, which declares our presence to anyone using that road.
- Collect food once a month for the food bank, or any other service project, to become known in the community.



Probably the worst we can do, is what we usually do - nothing! Instead of repeating this, look for ways your club can continue to market itself throughout the year. **Let’s get everyone talking about it because WE are talking about it.**

ABOUT THE MEYERS

Sandy & Merv Meyer, caller & cuer couple for ‘Thompson Valley Stars’ club in Kamloops and Chase, BC, are very passionate about square & round dancing, having traveled as far south as Spokane, west to Hawaii and north to Fairbanks, Alaska to dance, call & cue.



Merv started square dancing in 1982 and has been calling & teaching square dancing for 17 years in the Thompson/Shuswap region. He has previously called and taught for ‘Kamloops Square Dancers’, ‘Chase Square Dancers’ and ‘Ashcroft Cactus Squares’.

Sandy started square dancing in 1978, dancing until 1986 when she took a 22 year break, happily returning in 2008. During her break she took up ballroom dancing for 12 years, played in the ‘Kamloops Symphony Orchestra’ for 5 years and in year 2000, she joined the ‘Kamloops Rube Band’, playing percussion (which she still does). Sandy loves cueing, and started this in 2009. She & Merv choreograph many of their own round dances.

Every year Sandy & Merv host a ‘Banana Island Canoe Trip’ in August, where they paddle down the South Thompson River, stopping on Banana Island to square & round dance. They have also been the featured caller & cuer for the Prince George ‘Snowflake Dance’ in November, on 4 different occasions. They love doing singing-call duets; calling a square dance and cueing a round dance simultaneously, using the same music; and recently Sandy has taken up yodeling square dance calls. (She used to sing in a Rock ‘n Roll band).

They are both enthusiastic about promoting square and round dancing and were presented the ‘SILLERY AWARD’ in 2014 by the BC Square & Round Dance Federation, ‘In Honour & Recognition of Outstanding Service to the Square Dance Community’.

Sandy & Merv invite you to attend the annual ‘Chase The Fun’ event in Chase, BC on Father’s Day weekend,