



by Wayne

(from Denver Area Square & Round Dance Council Bulletin, April, 2006)

The past three months have been so exciting for the Timberline Toppers. We pulled together the largest class in the history of the Club and graduated 38 students on March 16<sup>th</sup>.

Here's how we did it. First, we hammered home to our members the need to get names, names, and more names complete with mailing addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses. Our goal was for each member to provide at least four candidates for lessons. Some gave us none while many gave us lots more than that. We asked members to think outside the box on who to invite, not just close friends but also people they came in contact with such as store clerks, tradespeople in the home for repair work, your dentist and doctor, etc. We also emphasized the need to get younger folks with families to come if possible, though we had little success with this. We tried to emphasize that, just like sales, getting people to lessons is a numbers game. We hoped to get one out of six invitees to take lessons, meaning we needed about 120 names to get 20 folks to lessons. As we got names, Janie Briney, our Co-President, built a database with all their info in it, including the member referring each person. Janie, an artist, also designed an eye-catching poster and we had club members put these out, again in as many locations as possible. To kick off the lessons we had an open house complete with chili, salads, bread, and desserts, compliments of the club. About

a month before the open house, we sent out personal invitations to everyone in the database. Then we followed that up by having the referring member call each invitee on several occasions to try to get their commitment to come to the open house. We also contacted our local paper and their entertainment reporter did a great story on the history of square dancing and the Timberline Toppers and the upcoming open house. It came out two days before the event and really piqued the interest of a lot of folks.

About two days prior to the open house, we had members give us the expected number of guests of those they had invited. From that we expected to have a show rate of about 70 percent. As it turned out we had about 80 say they were coming, and we had about 80 show up for the open house. The food was tight, but we had just enough. With our members present, we had 120 plus folks on the floor when the dancing started.

Bear was gracious enough to come and call for the dance, and as you can imagine, he really got the crowd fired up and we danced for well over an hour while he taught them 10 moves or so. During the breaks, we talked about lessons and handed out info as they left for the evening.

Open house was on a Tuesday; lessons started the following Thursday. Again we were hoping for about 20 folks, but 43 showed up. Over the next two weeks, only one dropped out while four visiting Canadians were there for just three sessions, but hoped to continue lessons in Toronto. We asked for payments in two installments; much to our surprise, all but four paid for the full set of lessons up front. Dennis O'Neal, our vice president, decided a few months ago that he'd like to try calling and wanted to try the lessons. He

understudied with Don Rouse and spent many dollars and many hours each day to prepare, and he did a superb job of teaching. Bear's groundwork the first night and Dennis's masterful job of teaching, we believe, are why we kept almost all the students to graduation. We also had great support from the Club with angeling, although we were short on space (we just never expected the turnout we got and didn't book enough rooms at the Senior Center).

We have a great lineup for our dancers in April with the fabulous Bear Miller on Sat, April 1<sup>st</sup>, and Don "The Hat" Rouse on Sat, April 15<sup>th</sup>. The April 1<sup>st</sup> dance will be at the Frisco Recreation Bldg, 110 Third Ave, where we danced until about three years ago. The April 15<sup>th</sup> dance will be at our normal location, the Senior Center in Frisco, with plus from 7-7:30 followed by mainstream until 9:30. On April 29<sup>th</sup>, the fifth Sat, we're blessed to have Rick Gittelman calling and cueing for our Plus/Round dance; rounds from 7-7:30, followed by plus until 9:30 with RBT, also at the Senior Center. The first Saturday is always ice cream social night, a special treat each month. We're only about an hour west of Denver, so come on up and dance with the friendliest club around.

### **Post script (April, 2008)**

**Since this article was written in 2006, the Timberline Toppers have had two more notable classes with 58 and 16 new dancers joining the Club. It's not an accident, its work and dedication. The membership has grown from approximately 20 to 120 members today. Our dances have grown from one to two squares of members to eight to ten squares of members. During this period we have home grown a caller (Dennis O'Neal) and have two more members learning to call and instruct new dancers.**

**We believe this type of growth does not have to be limited to one club. We believe that we can bring this type of growth to any club in the Council, to your club. We believe we can help to grow the square dancing community in our area.**

**As the Enterprise would go from one mission to another (TV series – Star Trek) they would engage the warp drive, and the Captain would say, "Make it so."**

**We can "Make it so."**

**Marcia and Jim Langdon**

**P.P.S. Since 2008 we have continued to be able to control our class size and recruit large classes.**