



WADE'S BLOG

Not-so-humble opinions from the Producer of Rhythm Records

It has been quite a while since I have submitted any material for my blog page. I can't say that I had no thoughts to record, just too lazy (I like to call it busy) to do so.

Some things of late, however, have disturbed me to the point of venting. I think they are as well said here as anywhere and a great deal better than accosting any of those with whom I might disagree.

I would like to talk about our National Square Dance Convention. I have attended quite a few since my first in 1971 but I have missed the last two. I skipped those two because it just was not worth my while to attend. There are several reasons causing me to make the decision to skip the event. I have a hunch that my motivation(s) match those of many others.

First, I think it is good to look at the event from more than one perspective: A full time caller that derives most if not all his or her income from square dance calling. Since the activity of calling is that person's primary source of income, he or she must look at the National as a business venture i.e. is it a worthwhile expenditure? If it is an event where you are accompanied by your family, or at least your spouse or partner, then it can be considered a vacation. If not, however, it is a business trip. If you are primarily a dancer, then the trip must be a fun only trip (vacation). If the National is a place that provides as much entertainment as, for instance, the beach, hunting trip, shopping trip, etc, then the cost is worth it.

There are many other reasons but those two apply to most of the attendees.

From the perspective of the person(s) that derives most of their income from the square and round dance activity, the National Convention, in its current form, is not a viable business venture. It has changed so drastically over the past few years that it is 1) too expensive 2) poorly programmed, 3) not nearly as much fun as it used to be.

There is nothing that can be done about the expense. Air travel, auto travel, hotel costs are not going to change except for moving upward in cost. Big deal so has everything else. If the event is worth it, it will still thrive. Which brings me to the question of why is the attendance so low?

This is where I get into "My Opinion" I know that without question, I will receive as many comments disagreeing (probably more) as those in agreement. Which brings us right

back to the new generation: We are no longer the "me first generation". Oh no, we are now the "Me Only" generation. In my opinion, the national convention, as well as many state conventions, are not being programmed with the dancers' best interests at heart. If that were the case, there would not be so many seriously unhappy dancers at the end of the conventions.

As I see it, the program chairperson's job it NOT to please all the local callers (including themselves) by putting them in prime spots in the programs. Our National Convention should provide an opportunity to showcase the very best talent available. That, my friends, is how you build an event. Unfortunately, each host program chairperson knows that, when their convention is over, they must climb back in bed with all those close by and they are, almost always, not willing to risk the wrath of those local callers.

In my opinion, they should not have accepted the job to begin with. The program chairman, in my opinion, should seek out those with a knowledge of the calling ability of all registered, use that knowledge to program the convention in the best way possible. All registered called should have the opportunity to display their talents but, the assignments should be "weighted" according to their talent and their "national popularity". It would be wonderful if all individual bias could be done away with, but, again in my opinion, it just isn't going to happen.

By continuing to use the same procedures and following the same policies, we are perpetuating the decline of our annual National event.

Now, can you blame those who have taken on the job, HECK NO. They are given no hard and fast rules to go by. All their friends know that, and they begin to call in the favor. With no guidelines, they have no choice: one national convention or lose friends. That is the only direction in which to go. It is very similar to our political arena and we know where that has taken us, no matter which side you are on.

I beseech the National Executive Committee to show some intestinal fortitude and put down some hard and fast rule that must be followed when programming a national convention. In my opinion: If you do not repair the programming situation, in ten years there will be no National Square Dance Convention.

If this is what you want, then just leave things as they are, and this event will cease to be all by itself. NEC, you have the power to fix it..... Will you?