

LOOKING BACK: HOMESTEADERS IN THE NEWS

Some selections from the scrap book

Open House – Sept. 28, 2009

The Pipestone Flyer gave us a good writeup on Oct. 8, 2009.

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Bow to your Left with the Happy Homesteaders Square Dancing Club

By Sydnee Bryant
The Pipestone Flyer

Flying skirts and lots of laughter filled the air at St. Benedict Elementary School on Monday, September 28, 2009, as the Happy Homesteaders Square Dance club held their first open house and dance of the 2009/2010 season. The Happy Homesteaders Square Dance club has been around for almost 30 years. The club formed in New Sarepta in 1981, before moving to Leduc. The group, which had about 40 members last year, congregates every Monday night at seven p.m. to dance up a storm. Five new dancers came to check out what square dancing is all about on Monday at the club's annual open house. Norm Lake, president of the Happy Homesteaders, hopes that more new dancers will come to the Monday night dances this year. "Anyone can come out; we welcome anyone," Lake said.

Lake has been involved with the Happy Homesteaders since 1989. "I had a lady friend who talked me into it and I said, 'well, I'll give it a try,' and I've been dancing every since," Lake said. People of all ages and athletic abilities can learn to square dance with a little practice, Lake said. "If they can walk and know their left from their right that helps," Lake said. "The caller tells them what to do; they learn what to do as they go. They learn one or two or three moves a night and we repeat them very often so they do learn just by being repetitive."

Male square dancers often wear western shirts and the ladies usually wear fluffy skirts and blouses, but there is no mandatory dress code for square dancing, Lake said. Each dance circle consists of eight people, arranged in a square. The four couples then go through a series of dance moves, guided by the caller's instructions. The dancers at the Happy Homesteaders club dances are guided by Dave Kurney, an experienced square dancer and caller. Kurney has been a hard-core square dancer for 21 years and square dance caller for 16 years of those years. Kurney learnt how to call square dances by watching the dancers, dancing himself and listening closely to how others called the dances.

"I haven't been to school yet but I don't think I'll bother now," Kurney joked. Kurney has also tutored others in the art of calling square dances. Sometimes a guest caller will visit the club on a Monday night and take a turn with the microphone, giving Kurney a chance to practice his moves on the dance floor.

Quite often people will try square dancing for the first time and find themselves hooked on dancing, Lake said. "Age doesn't make a difference. Come and try it. When they're starting out they don't have to worry about costumes; just come," Lake said. "We're happy to see them, especially young people. There's too many of us old folks in square dancing; we'd like to see a lot more young people come because it's a lot of fun. They get out and enjoy themselves at a low cost." Each Monday night dance costs five dollars per person and refreshments are served.

The club officially holds dances from September until April each year. There are often dances and camp-outs throughout the summer for any dancers who crave some extra time on the dance floor. The members of the Happy Homesteaders club often interact with other square dancing clubs, including their sister club, the Sandholm Square Dance Club. Kurney founded the Sandholm Square Dance Club 12 years ago and now divides his time between the two clubs. There are many square dance clubs throughout Alberta, giving square dancers many opportunities to interact with one another. Socializing with others is one of the many perks of square dancing, Lake said. "It's good to get out and visit and meet people from other clubs." The Happy Homesteaders Square Dance Club meets every Monday night from seven p.m. until 10 p.m. from September to April.

Skirts with crinolines, though fun to dance in, are not mandatory for square dancing. Photos by Sydnee Bryant.

Staffer Sydnee Bryant interviewed caller Dave Kurney and club president Norman Lake, and took some photos showing members having fun. The big photo shows new dancer Tina Rediron and long-time dancer Marie Bessette. The small photo at the bottom shows, left to right, Lori Gingrich, president Norm Lake, Tina, Marie.

At the end of 2010, Dave Kurney retired as full-time caller for the Homesteaders. We have him back from time to time and he is a popular guest caller.

Calmar Volunteer Appreciation Night – April 17, 2010

The Leduc Homesteaders and Sandholm Crossroads Dancers joined Central Alberta caller Bob McMillan to provide interactive entertainment for the crowd after the presentations at the Calmar Legion at this annual event.

The activity was well-received and we had four squares of dancers and guests, many of them from the local high school.

Unfortunately, the club was not as well-prepared as we might have been to take advantage of this opportunity. We wished afterwards that we had brought brochures or cards as handouts, and signup sheets for those interested.

Ironically enough, the photo in the Leduc Representative (Apr. 23, 2010, p. 34; photo by Heather McIntyre, QMI) showed mostly Sandholm dancers. Left to right: Unknown, Don, Ken, John Mason, Doris Mason.



Members in the News



Peter Nielsen and his wife Juliette are on our Hospitality Committee (aka “Food Folks”).

Peter often entertains at jam sessions and dances at Telford House, the local seniors' center. We were surprised and pleased to spot his photo in a story about a work-related event for the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, noting that he had provided an accordion rendition of *The Farmer's Song*.

Photo by Murray Green, Camrose Booster, Oct. 4, 2011, p. 18.