



A Brief History of the Arkansas State Square Dance Federation And More Prepared by Daryl Stout, ASSDF Editor, Webmaster, Circulation Chairman This file was last updated on Jan. 30, 2026

The logo on the left was the ASSDF's original logo, and the logo on the right is its new logo, designed by Ben Schoenkase.

The ASSDF was formed in 1949, by Otis A. Higgins and Richard Dick. Max Smith was appointed in 1949 to plan and promote the first Federation dance; and was elected to serve as the first president in 1951.

At one time, there were over 75 clubs all across the state. In early 2026, there are around a dozen, with only 2 left in the Little Rock Metro Area. See the "In Memoriam" file for names of callers, cuers, taws (their spouses), dancers, and clubs, that are "gone, but not forgotten".

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First, here are a list of past presidents of the ASSDF, from 1951 to the present. Note that many of these dancers have passed away...but while they're gone, they're not forgotten.

1951 Max Smith

1952 Dan and Aileen Keeley

1953 Marion and Lavaun Curtis

1954 James Merritt
1955 Emmett and Clover Knight
1956 Jimmie and Helen Straughan
1957 Gerald and Patsy Schroeder
1958 Fred and Sarah Loescher
1959 Joe and Connie Buddenburg
1960 Tebe and Mary Little
1961 Jerry and Judy McKissack
1962 Lloyd and Hazel Wilson
1963 Ken and Jean Golden
1964 Bill and Jean Massey
1965 Ray and Shirley Wheelington
1966 Mike and Dot Kuykendall
1967 Harold and Sammy Woolverton
1968 Earnest and Florine Floyd
1969 Bud and Carolyn Pearrow
1970-1971 William and Jeanette Lisko
1972 Jerome and Delores Nunnally
1973 Ronnie and Gretchen Watson
1974 Raymond and Juanice Jones
1975 Percy and Virginia Vining
1976 Birkett and Barbara Wylie
1977 Tom and Pauline Phillips
1978 Emery and Linda Railey
1979 Ralph and Evelyn Firsick
1980 Warren and Beverly Rodgers
1981 Howard and Lorraine Backus
1982 Morris and Brenda Russell
1983 Jim and Carol Francis
1984 C.D. and Carol Williams
1985 John and Leta Porter
1986 Ken and Marge Hazelwood
1987 Joe and Mary Brumett
1988 Al and Pat Virden
1989 Don and Norma Hogue
1990 Jim and Lois Ferguson
1991 Vince and Judy Vinciguerra
1992 Butch and Carolyn Whitten
1993 Gene and Pat Housdan

1994 Bob and Paula Fontaine
1995 Butch and Carolyn Whitten
1996 Mark and Bessie Grumbine
1997 Frank and Joyce Taylor
1998 Clyde and Elaine Baum
1999 Billy and Betty Gilliam
2000 Bob and Jean Neidecker
2001 Bob and Edna Johnson
2002 Larry and Fay Echlin
2003 Wayne and Laura Wade
2004 Vince and Judy Vinciguerra
2005 Alvin and Ellen Gentry
2006 Larry and Fay Echlin
2007 Ned and Gert Cole
2008 Art and Lou Watada
2009-2010 Wayne And Lura Wade
2011 Brenda Griffin
2012 Art and Lou Watada
2013 Ted and Phyllis Keeney
2014 Larry And Faye Echlin
2015 Brenda Griffin
2016-2017 Scott And Angela Blackshear
2018-2019 Royce And Cathy Beesley
2020-2023 Ted and Tonia Hofmeister
2024-2026 Tom and Kim Fox

Over the years, The Good Lord has given me the talent to write poetry, and I have written the following poems:

- 1) For the ASSDF on its 40th anniversary in 1989.**
- 2) To the late callers J.D. "Pappy" Kerr, and "Wild Bill" Wilder.**
- 3) A tribute to the National Square Dance Convention ® (NSDC).**

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"Lordy, Lordy, Look Who's Forty" – Written By Daryl Stout

**"Lordy, Lordy, Look Who's Forty", on this great occasion;
The one and only Arkansas State Square Dance Federation!!**

**The ASSDF itself, is rich in history;
Just like square dancing it promotes for everyone to see.**

**It has changed since it began in 1949,
With many dancers taking part through the years of time.**

**From just a few clubs way back then, to many clubs today;
Colorful as the falling leaves on an autumn day!!**

**There were many times of happiness, but sometimes, there was pain.
But through these struggles, it recovered, to yellowrocks again!!**

**It's news and happenings every month in "The Modern Square";
With square dance specials all around...the who, the what, and where.**

**The Festival Dance every year, with both squares and rounds;
And seeing many friends again, where yellowrocks abound!!**

**And, looking back now, at its past, and what the future brings;
Like square dancing, it promises many exciting things!!**

**So, join the party, dancers all, and square up for the fun;
The ASSDF's birthday is for everyone!!**

**Lordy, Lordy, look who's 40; let's start the celebration
Of the one and only Arkansas State Square Dance Federation!!**

**

“A Tribute To J.D. Kerr” – written by Daryl Stout

One of the best loved callers in Arkansas square dancing was J.D. “Pappy” Kerr. He started calling in 1960, and called until health issues forced him to retire in the late 1980's. While he was calling, he taught several others across Arkansas to call as well. Since I was privileged to dance to J.D., I wrote a poem in tribute to him, and what he meant to square dance calling in Arkansas. Sadly, his wife, Billie, passed away several years ago...and J.D. died a few years later.

**Excitement filled the square dance hall
Whenever J.D. Kerr would call.
We'd always rush at the chance
To go where J.D. called a dance.**

**He called great Basic, Mainstream, and Plus
At every dance without a fuss.
He made you listen, without debate;
Catching when you'd anticipate!!**

**No matter the level of the floor,
He'd have the dancers begging for more.
With just a small group of calls in line,
He'd call a dance that would blow your mind!!**

**Through these years, we've had a ball,
Dancing to his patter and singing calls.
He'd never leave you on the spot
When he'd call ICE COLD or GO RED HOT!!**

**He taught many folks over the years
In learning this activity with good cheer.
Like him each week in the hall,
He taught several folks to learn to call.**

**Sadly now, those days are past,
But the memories will ever last.
Remembering these days, happiness rules,
Even when his calling was “dirty pool”!!**

**And so, J.D., your square dance friends,
Thank you for memories that never end.
We miss your calling, with no regrets,
We wish you and Billie the very best.**

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“A Tribute To ‘Wild Bill’ Wilder” – written by Daryl Stout

Another one of the best loved callers in Arkansas square dancing was a caller named "Wild Bill" Wilder. He started calling around the same time that J.D. "Pappy" Kerr began calling. Health issues in late 2013 forced him to scale back his calling. Since I was also privileged to dance to Bill, I wrote a poem in tribute to him, and what he meant to square dance calling in Arkansas. Sadly, his wife, Barbara, passed away only a few months before Bill did.

**When "Wild Bill" Wilder called a dance, it was such a joy.
His baritone voice, took the music; of every song, employed.
Whether it was a pattern call, or singing call done there.
It was an experience, that many dancers shared.**

**He'd weave a pattern like a quilt, with every pattern call.
With the choreography, he just had a ball.
Then he took the singing calls, with melodious tone.
The squares danced to the great voice, that was all his own.**

**Whether "Rubber Dolly" there, for his patter choice;
Or for "Green Green Grass Of Home", with his singing voice.
Or even with some other record, that he'd pick to play.
He made every square dance fun, all along the way.**

**For over fifty years, he called, with many dancing tips.
Focused on each call command, from his tone filled lips.
And the many clubs he served, as caller through the years.
In Arkansas and elsewhere, yes...he brought good times and cheer.**

**Hoedowners, or Twin City Stars, or other clubs that danced.
Or even on Mount Nebo there, we'd jump at the chance.
To square up, to what would be, a good time had by all.
Whether he did patter there, or a singing call.**

**He called on special weekends, too, both in and out of state.
He'd call in mornings, afternoons; evenings, nights, so late.
A new journey every tip, it really was a treat.
"Allemande left your corner now!! I'm going to go eat!!"**

**He made dancing a fun time, when the squares broke down.
When "Yang! Yang! Yang!" he would say, echoed all around.**

**Laughter then would fill the room, at what just occurred.
Even though we thought some calls were totally absurd!!**

**Even when he taught a class, to bring new dancers in.
He lovingly instructed, in what meant so much to him.
First Basic, Mainstream, and then Plus, so many calls to learn.
But, yellowrocks did there abound; at each tip, and turn.**

**For many years, his faithful taw, stood by his side there.
Barbara meant so much to him, and danced in many squares.
Both now in The Eternal Square, both sorely will be missed.
The memories of both of them, would fill a ton of lists.**

**While he and his taw are now gone, the memories remain.
The laughter and the good times there, help to ease the pain.
If there ever was a list, for a Callers Hall Of Fame;
“Wild Bill” Wilder would surely be, there among the names.**

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“A Tribute To The NSDC” – written by Daryl Stout

Lastly, here is a poem in tribute to the National Square Dance Convention ® (NSDC), followed by a list of cities where it has been held. Billed as “The World’s Greatest Square Dance Event”, it’s held in a different city the 4 days up until the last Saturday of June each year. The NSDC is considered the pinnacle of a dancer’s career. This poem is dedicated to Ted and Tonia Hofmeister, Chairpersons, 2025 NSDC, and to all who’ve ever attended, or worked with The National Square Dance Convention ®.

**1) The National Square Dance Convention (R), or NSDC.
Four days of dancing, workshops, fun; so much there, to see.
Known to all as "The World's Greatest Square Dancing Event".
But this poem can't fully tell, what it represents.**

**2) Though dancing in four days before, June's last Saturday.
In a US city there; much more work, in play.
Planning starts there several years, before a bid is made.
Quite a lot of planning, work; there to make the grade.**

3) Chairman couples who did lead, past NSDC.

National Executive Committee, NEC.

Into regions of the country, to review and guide.

So, the event will be a matter, of hard work, and pride.

4) A dancing group that's headed by a married couple there.

To oversee the ton of work; to be done, with care.

Facilities for dancing, transportation, lodging, too.

All evaluated there, process of review.

5) All the work is volunteer, for the hobby's good.

So event can be successful; as all work, there should.

With promotion from convention bureau in that town.

It's the dancers working there, activities abound.

6) Four years out when dancing group, wants there, to be host.

"The World's Greatest Dance Event"; inland, or on coast.

A bid presentation done, at NSDC.

Carefully reviewed there by, all with the NEC.

7) Then, at the closing ceremonies, on Saturday night.

Announcing of the winning city, suspense is so tight.

For the winning city there, work really now begins.

So much to do now to prepare, that it makes one's head spin!!

8) Fund raising dances, promotions, and the souvenirs.

For the costs to pay the bills, not get in arrears.

Local, state, and regional, clubs, work in the task.

Many workers needed there; so many things, to ask.

9) Early Bird pre-registrations, with seed money, there.

Saves cost for the registrants, in fun that they'll share.

These revenues, they also do, pay the bills, incurred.

An event to be proud of, that's what is preferred.

10) Then, just over one year out, the Pre-Convention Dance.

A sampling of what is in store; all planned, not by chance.

Besides the dancing, the chance to, get involved, and serve.

To stay there on event path; and not off it, swerve.

11) Not limited to Square Dancing, for its activities.
Other forms of dancing, too; which are sure to please.
Round Dancing, Contra Dancing there, Line Dancing exists.
Even Handicapable; you won't want to miss.

12) Then, you have the seminars, workshops, and the forums.
To learn of things in this great hobby, taking it by storm.
Parade Of States, the Fashion Show, The Wednesday Night Event.
Just like Christmas morning there, with gifts and presents.

13) Showcase Of Ideas there, displays from all around.
Information on that state, souveniers abound.
Items that one can collect, from countries and from states.
Things that visitors can see, tourism so great.

14) Whether single, married there; whether young or old.
You'll find so much there to see, so much to behold.
The pinnacle of dancing life, in this hobby grand.
Of fellowship and yellowrocks, dancers from all lands.

15) Callers, cuers, prompters, and instructors will attend.
Strangers that you haven't met, become new found friends.
Reunion of so many folks, last for many years.
You'll hate when it's time to go home, and may shed some tears.

16) More information is there in National Squares Online.
Published each month, but July; info is so fine.
All you'd want to know there from next NSDC.
Once there, the hardest choice to make, is what next, to see.

17) One thing not to overlook; issue of safety.
Don't overdo it, know your limits; do all carefully.
First Aid for those who do too much, and not take a break.
Ignoring how you feel there; a bad choice, to make.

18) Before convention, Callers School, they make each dancing fun.
Whether there for many squares, or at dance, just one.
Pre and Post Convention tours, to destinations wide.
Fun there not just in the hall, but on the outside.

19) Then there, a dance syllabus, and the program guide.
For all things of the event, so much there, inside.
In some cases, a bus pass, from lodging to the halls.
No fighting of the traffic there, or vehicles, to stall.

20) Where you spend your dancing time, that's yours to decide.
A map of facilities, and dance halls, inside.
Don't feel obligated to, just stay in one hall.
Look to see what's offered there; though you can't see it all.

21) The ceremonies opening, start Wednesday afternoon.
To the sounds of hoedown music, with its joyful tune.
The Wednesday Night Dinner, Snow...before the dancing starts.
The entertainment planned for those, who've come there, to take part.

22) Then, three days activities, from morning into night.
After breakfast, dancing through, almost till midnight.
Though some halls take dinner breaks, most there go, non-stop.
No matter your dance level there, you'll feel like you're on top.

23) Basic, Mainstream, Plus, Advanced, Challenge, DBD.
All part of the square dancing, there that you can see.
Patter calls and singing calls, or teaching workshops, there.
To refresh your memory; or new calls, learn, prepare.

24) All calls are done in English there, no matter where you go.
For some dancers, it's the only, English that they know.
Whether told to go Red Hot, or then, go Ice Cold.
Reach out and touch your partner there, with your hand, to hold.

25) Round Dancing phases run the gamut, phases one through six.
Apart Point, Together Touch, so much one can't nix.
No matter where you may there dance, here upon the Earth.
You can't put a value on, what the hobby's worth.

26) Showcase Of Rounds, to watch these dancers, there upon display.
NSDC Archives, and events of yesterday.
Clinics at the dancing levels; with hex, progressive squares.

If under 18, A Youth Hall; with their friends, to share.

27) Then, the vendors, who are selling, dancing goods and wares.

For you can't imagine all, the stuff you will see there.

Outfits and accessories, you won't believe your eyes.

Everything that's offered there, surely to surprise.

28) Then of course, all dancing does, work up an appetite.

Plenty of food options there, from morning into night.

But, alcoholic beverages, none are there, allowed.

This is event for young and old, families in the crowd.

29) If dancing all day into evening, you want more to do.

The After Parties, in the halls, with more fun to view.

Or go back to your hotel, or camping for the night.

To start it all once again, there at morning light.

30) For many folks, the yearly trip, to this fancy place.

By car, bus, train, plane, they travel; in vacation space.

Besides, the dancing, there are tours, offered there, to see.

For what the city, state, offers; in its history.

31) So many things there one can do, things that one can find.

The spectrum of all what is there, surely blows the mind.

Attendance varies widely there, whether great or small.

You'll find so much fun exists, in the dancing hall.

32) But, just as quickly as it starts, it's time for it to end.

Yet, you'll cherish memories, of your new found friends.

Whether dancers, callers, cuers, all hope again, to see.

Making plans for the next year's great NSDC.

33) From its humble start back there in Nineteen Fifty-One.

Whether you've attended several, or this is your first one.

Experience it for yourself; so much to do, and see.

The National Square Dance Convention (R), the NSDC.

34) Though I personally did make, several of these things.

Memories I won't forget; the happiness, those bring.

**Now working behind the scenes, not on the dance floor.
It's the workers who are part, of the hobby's core.**

**35) And for all the dancers, workers, there in event, ranks.
As when the dancing's over there, all say a hearty "thanks"!!
For the hobby, all that's done...it is time, well spent.
You'll see why it is "The World's Greatest Square Dancing Event".**

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Originally, large crowds from the US, Canada, and around the world, would flock to these cities for 4 days of dancing, workshops, forums, and more. At the 1994 NSDC in Portland, Oregon...there were nearly 22,000 dancers in attendance. The next year, in 1995, in Birmingham, Alabama...attendance dropped 50% – and has been going down ever since. Some years, there weren't even 2000 registered or in attendance. To make matters worse, with the arrival of the CoronaVirus (COVID-19) in late 2019 and early 2020, numerous square and round dance festivals were canceled...because of strict health department guidelines (social distancing, masks, etc.)...and it even forced the cancellation of the 2020 NSDC, which was to be in Spokane, Washington...the ONLY NSDC to have been canceled.

**

**1952 Riverside, California
1953 Kansas City, Kansas
1954 Dallas, Texas
1955 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
1956 San Diego, California
1957 St. Louis, Missouri
1958 Louisville, Kentucky
1959 Denver, Colorado
1960 Des Moines, Iowa
1961 Detroit, Michigan
1962 Miami Beach, Florida
1963 St. Paul, Minnesota
1964 Long Beach, California
1965 Dallas, Texas
1966 Indianapolis, Indiana**

1967 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1968 Omaha, Nebraska
1969 Seattle, Washington
1970 Louisville, Kentucky
1971 New Orleans, Louisiana
1972 Des Moines, Iowa
1973 Salt Lake City, Utah
1974 San Antonio, Texas
1975 Kansas City, Kansas
1976 Anaheim, California
1977 Atlantic City, New Jersey
1978 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
1979 Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1980 Memphis, Tennessee
1981 Seattle, Washington
1982 Detroit, Michigan
1983 Louisville, Kentucky
1984 Baltimore, Maryland
1985 Birmingham, Alabama
1986 Indianapolis, Indiana
1987 Houston, Texas
1988 Anaheim, California
1989 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
1990 Memphis, Tennessee
1991 Salt Lake City, Utah
1992 Cincinnati, Ohio
1993 St. Louis, Missouri
1994 Portland, Oregon
1995 Birmingham, Alabama
1996 San Antonio, Texas
1997 Orlando, Florida
1998 Charlotte, North Carolina
1999 Indianapolis, Indiana
2000 Baltimore, Maryland
2001 Anaheim, California
2002 St. Paul, Minnesota
2003 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
2004 Denver, Colorado
2005 Portland, Oregon

2006 San Antonio, Texas
2007 Charlotte, North Carolina
2008 Wichita, Kansas
2009 Long Beach, California
2010 Louisville, Kentucky
2011 Detroit, Michigan
2012 Spokane, Washington
2013 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
2014 Little Rock, Arkansas
2015 Springfield, Massachusetts
2016 Des Moines, Iowa
2017 Cincinnati, Ohio
2018 Kansas City, Missouri
2019 Atlanta, Georgia
2020 Spokane, Washington (CANCELED DUE TO COVID-19)
2021 Jackson, Mississippi
2022 Evansville, Indiana
2023 Mobile, Alabama
2024 Milwaukee, Wisconsin
2025 Shreveport, Louisiana
2026 Waco, Texas
2027 Loveland, Colorado
2028 Daytona Beach, Florida
2029 ** TO BE ANNOUNCED **