

Top Railers

On February 17, 2006, the Top Rollers will celebrate their 50th Anniversary as a square dance club. The following is a history of the club over the past fifty years.

Top Railers Square Dance Club History

The roots of the Top Railers Square Dance Club goes back to 1951, when Buford and Sylvia Evans started square dancing at the old Greenwood Grange in Zarah, Kansas, dancing the old "hoedown" style of square dance. In 1954, Buford and Sylvia, along with several good friends, bought records to learn the popular "western" style of square dancing. Buford's calling started at St. Marks Methodist Church in 1954, and with much practice was soon calling a tip each dance night for the now defunct Twilight Slippers.

On February 24, 1956, with the help of his friends, including Gideon and Daris Ann Caldwell (the first Presidents of the club) the Top Railers Square Dance Club was organized as a "caller owned" club, and had their first dance at the Johnson County Community Center (later called the Soroptimist Club) in Mission, Kansas. Gideon wrote the simple by-laws under which the club was organized, and it was an artist at the company owned by Gideon that drew up the design for the Top Railers badge. The large Top Railers banner that you see hanging at each dance, was also made by this company. The club tablecloth was made later by Loretta Marlowe. The original colors for the club were a very dark navy blue and gold, but was changed in time to black and gold, as it was too hard to find the right shade of navy. In 1957, the group helped in the organization of the Buttons and Beaus Square Dance Club.

In June 1956, the Top Railers Square Dance Club was admitted to the Heart of America Federation of Square Dancers, with the Ballanets, Twilight Slippers and Jim Dandies acting as sponsoring clubs. From their admission to the Federation, the Top Railers have been active participants in Federation activities. Buford Evans, the club's caller, remained a staunch supporter of the Federation until his death, and promoted square dancing through tutoring of up and coming new callers, and providing yearly lessons for new dancers.

The Top Railers, who began dancing every other Friday night, but later changed to the first and third Friday of the month, danced at the Johnson County Community Center in Mission for twenty-eight years before moving to St. Mark's Methodist Church in 1984. The Top Railers also danced at the Overland Park Presbyterian Church, and in 1989 found their new home at the Roeland Park Community Center, where they continue to reside.

In 1959, there was a local TV station that aired a program featuring square dancing a part of the show. The Top Railers, along with their caller, Buford Evans, appeared on this show at least four times demonstrating square dancing during the thirteen week run of the show.

In April 2001, our beloved founder and caller, Buford Evans, lost his battle with cancer. In September 2001, with the consent of Sylvia Evans, the Top Railers were reorganized as a membership-controlled club, and the club remains such at present. In September 2001, the Top Railers selected Mike Schaff as their new caller. Mike, along with his wife Kaye, was a member of the Top Railers, and had been tutored by Buford for some twelve years prior to becoming our caller. Mike's great love of square dancing and calling were evident in his willingness to donate his time to exhibition dances and providing free lessons held at the Great Plains Outlet Mall. In April 2002, a club meeting was held for the purpose of electing a new caller for the 2002-2003-dance season, due to the illness of the current caller, Mike Schaff. Members were given ballots, which contained the names of proposed callers, and upon completion of the voting; Greg Edison was selected as the new caller for the Top Railers.

On July 2, 2002, the Top Railers Square Dance Club suffered another loss of a wonderful caller, when Mike Schaff, like Buford, lost his battle with cancer.

On September 20, 2002, Greg Edison called the first tip of the new season as the caller for the Top Railers. The Edison's became active in the club by participating in club-sponsored activities,

one of which is the annual camping festivities at Pomona State Park. Greg also donated his time as a caller to promote square dancing by providing dancers music during exhibition dances at the Overland Park Parade in 2002, and 2003. Greg, along with his wife Rosie, remained as our caller and taw until his retirement in September 2005.

In May 2005, the Top Rainers voted to ask Stan Brooke and wife Sharon to become our new caller and taw for the 2005-2006-dance season. Stan and Sharon accepted the positions, and became active in our club during the officers meeting held on July 23, 2005. On September 16, 2005, Stan Brooke called his first tip as the new caller for the Top Rainers Square Dance Club.

The Top Rainers membership has declined over the past several years, but we are fortunate to have Bob Brumitt (current Treasurer), and Etta Conner (Telephone Chairman), who are celebrating forty-five years as members of the Top Rainers, still active in our club today. In addition, we have twelve couples that have been active members of the Top Rainers between twelve and twenty-nine years. As we go into our fiftieth year as a square dance family, let us all try to keep the ideals and enjoyment of square dancing that Buford and Sylvia Evans brought to life in the foundation of the Top Rainers Square Dance Club, a true legacy to them, as well as, our previous and current callers.

