

Chris Wildhagen

HASSDA: When did you learn to square dance?

Chris: I took lessons in 1960 with a group of other square dance brats (kids of adult dancers). We formed our own club called "The Little Doggies" of St. Joseph. I met Linda (his wife) at lessons, and we danced until I went into the Navy in 1966.

HASSDA: Did you go immediately back into dancing after getting out of the Navy?

Chris: In 1981 Linda, I and our two daughters and one dog moved back to St. Joe. My brother (Noel) called saying a former school mate of his was in town and was calling a square dance and thought it would be fun if we all went. I said "No, thanks;" Linda said "Yes," so we went.

The caller friend of Noel's wanted him to learn to call and loaned him a couple of records to practice with. Noel didn't learn to call, but I did.

HASSDA: How did your career proceed from there?

Chris: 1983 was my first class. I organized my first club in 1984. I became the club caller for Riverbend Promenaders of Atchison, Kansas, in 1987. My St. Joe Club started from a large plus class that didn't want to quit when lessons were complete. That was in 1988, and we are still going!

In 2003, I lost Linda to ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), and I quit square dancing and calling. Many caring dancers convinced me that I should get back into the activity. Now I am calling throughout the Midwest and teach at least two mainstream and one plus class each year.

HASSDA: What do you attribute your success as a caller to?

Chris: I attribute it to the influence of many great callers that I have had the opportunity to dance to. I like to think I offer a different style of calling with creative choreography. I personally enjoy many styles of music and impersonating my favorite singers from different genres.

From an Interview with Chris Wildhagen in the December 2012 HASSDA Newsletter.

