

## Lotawana Sailors History

In the fall of 1972 several couples from the Roadrunners Square Dance club that lived at Lake Lotawana and some members of the Lake Lotawana Sportsmen Club met with Gary and Margy Mahnken at the Sportsmen Club to talk about forming a square dance club. Plans were made to have lessons on Wednesday nights. We had over four squares and with a little help from some Roadrunner couples the name of the Lotawana Squares was chosen and Maurice and Betty Livingston were voted in as president. Now we have graduated our first class of square dancers and there was lots of enthusiasm.

Our first dance was held on Sunday, April 15, 1973. We had ninety visiting couples and many callers. Everyone felt that our club got off to a good start. Now we had over 16 couples and were eligible to be federated. The Federation visited our club and we were federated into the Heart of America Federation of Square Dance Club September 9, 1973. Sponsoring clubs were Roadrunners, Hee Haw Squares, and Spinnin' Wheels. We were a young and enthusiastic club that did a lot of visiting. We had our first smorgasbord at our December dance as a money making project. In January of 1975 we had our first group picture taken and by 1976 our club had 41 couples and 11 singles. We were growing and participated in many venues from working concession stands to raise money to dancing at a county fair, We were all young and full of enthusiasm; and by 1982 we had grown to 100 couples and were probably the largest club in Kansas City. In April of 1983 we held another smorgasbord to celebrate our 10th anniversary. In that time we moved around some to accommodate our crowds, leaving the Sportsmen Club, which we had outgrown, and went to Blue Valley Activity Center in Independence and holding our lessons at Walnut Gardens Church. By 1993 our club was 20 years old and mixed in with our money raising events we received the Vigorous Visitor Banner from the Federation each year. In 1994 our membership was declining and we moved back to the Sportsmen Club at Lake Lotawana with 49 couples, of which some were not active. By 1996, with complaints of the driving distance to the Club we moved to the American Legion Hall in Blue Springs, a beautiful facility with air-conditioning. At the beginning of the dance season we had 25 couples. That year we attended the Missouri State Dance Festival. In 2003 we became members of the state West Central District; in 2005 we added Joyce Shelley as dance line leader. The club continues to enjoy good attendance and membership is stable with 20 couples many of whom have joined from clubs closing.