

West County Spinners History As Of Today (2012)

It all began in the spring of 1981 when two fellas who worked in the Tool Design department at Mc Donnell Douglass Aircraft Company decided to try to get a square dance club organized in the St. Louis West County area. Earl Kinsey had learned to call dances while he was in the military service overseas. Roy Winter, Jr., a teammate, was encouraged by his wife to pair up with Earl in this endeavor.

The fellowship room at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church located on Mason Road just south of Olive Street Road in Creve Coeur was the only facility found to be available. Monday nights became the weekly dance schedule as all other evenings were being used by other organizations. Established area clubs warned that we'd never be able to succeed because most dancers preferred to attend dances held on weekend evenings, i.e., Fridays and Saturdays. However, we had no choice so decided to see if we could make it work.

Our first roster listed a membership of 12 couples, counting the Kinseys and Winters. Earl was the caller for the Missouri Promenaders at that time and he encouraged several of the members of that club to become "angels" for our fledging group. By the early part of 1982 we had enough members to become a bona fide square dance club. A constitution was drafted, naming Earl Kinsey as the official caller, and we joined the Greater St. Louis square dancing community. An official name for our club was chosen from several suggested ones, we learned about Raids and Retrieves, how to share the responsibility of providing weekly refreshments, the need for a club banner and what, at that time, was considered appropriate wearing apparel. When we added round dancing, Jo and Joe Carnivale were named as our official cuers. The major principle for establishing the West County Spinners was to provide an atmosphere of friendship, fun and acceptance of all. It is our hope that all who attend our dances feel welcomed no matter the level of their mastery of the "calls". We want everyone to feel relaxed and find ample opportunities to laugh and thoroughly enjoy their time spent dancing.

Over the years our club has gone through many changes, from not sponsoring a new dancer class for several years to making the new dancer class one of our most important endeavors. In 1988, the Carnivales moved to Texas, and Ollie and Donna Loehr became our official cuers. At the end of 2004 Ollie retired from cueing and Pat and Joe Hilton, though not officially named club cuers, agreed to cue rounds at most of our dances. In 2007, Earl Kinsey passed away. We added several professional square dance callers to our regular schedule and learned these dances were too well attended to be held in St. Timothy's fellowship room. As we added more professional callers we had to find other available facilities more and more often. Also the unfortunate trend of clubs folding over the past ten years or so significantly grew our membership to the point where St. Timothy's fellowship room could no longer adequately accommodate most of our dances.

Trinity Lutheran Church's gymnasium, one of the alternative halls we used most frequently had been obtained for us by one of our members for several of our larger dance dates. In 2007, after much negotiation with Trinity, we reluctantly left St. Timothy's, our home for 25 years, and relocated to Trinity Lutheran Church in Chesterfield, our present dance location.