

GeM Sets

The GeM Sets has its beginning in the Fall of 1978. This is a caller run Club and was run by Gary & Margy Mahnken. Gary being the caller and Margy taking the money, making coffee, cleaning up, and the many other things that a caller's tax is needed to do.

Caller Gary Mahnken decided he wanted to call to a higher level club so in September he started a class in Advance. At that time there was no such thing as Advance I and II. Many people thought when you talked about advance it was something a little higher than Plus. So therefore many of the dancers had to have a brush up on plus before you teach very much advance. We had a large class of at least 8 squares and the lessons were held at the Blue Springs Civic Center and we held our lessons every Tuesday night. Cost of the lessons was \$4 per couple per lesson. Lessons progressed very well and after lessons were completed we formed the club. Jim and Marge Roseing suggested the name of the GeM Sets for the Club. This was very agreeable and Joe and Sandy Melton designed the badge. The club at first danced at the Blue Springs Civic Center and when that building was not available we danced at Franklin Smith Elementary School in Blue Springs. Cost at the door was \$4 per couple for the dance. The members paid dues.

After getting the club started in 1979 our next set of lessons were held at the Little Blue Barn in Raytown on Monday evenings. We selected the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month for our dances. On April 13, 1980 we became federated with the Heart of America Federation of Square Dance Clubs. This was a great privilege and we were thrilled to be a part of the Federation. Our sponsoring clubs were the Fas-N-8-ers, caller Claude McComas; Madison Avenue Strollers, caller Norman Madison; and the Jim Dandys, a challenge group that danced to tapes. Bill & Grace Ammon were our Fed Delegates and continued to be for many years. In 1980 the club moved to Yellowrock Barn.

Jim and Marge Roesing started lessons in the fall of 1982 and shortly after that Jim started cueing rounds for the GeM Sets.

Then Warren & Mary Lugenbeel took lessons the Fall of 1983 and then in the fall of 1984 Mary Lugenbeel became our round dance cuer as Jim no longer wanted to cue.

In the fall of 1985 we moved our dances to the Independence Reception and Meeting Hall in the Hub Shopping Center in Independence. We only danced there until February as they thought we were too hard on the floors. We then returned to Yellowrock Barn.

In the 1980's the advance level of dancing was very popular and it was not unusual to have ten squares at a club dance. We had large groups for lessons and many of them joined the club but as usual there were always people who decided that the advance level was not for them. In the middle 80's we would have as many as 40 couples in the club. Then toward the end of the 80's the membership started dropping down and the interest was not as great as it was in the early and middle 80's.

Even though advance was not quite as popular we managed to keep our membership around 25 couples. The members did not pay at the door and were charged dues which for years was \$35 dollars twice a year and everyone paid for the summer dances. The dues later was raised to \$40 twice year and everyone paid for the summer dance. The door has taken several increases \$5 and later on to \$6 per couple. In the fall of 1995 people were wanting to be less committed and it was getting very hard to get people to join so the door was raised to \$7 per couple for everyone, no dues.

In the fall of 1995 Jim and Evelyn Springs became our Fed Delegates as the Ammons had decided not to continue dancing the advance level. Then in the fall of 1996 Lee and Betty Buck became our delegates.

The fall of 1996 we were informed that we could no longer use the Little Blue Barn for lessons so our advance lessons were moved to Walnut Gardens Church in Independence. Interest in advance dancing has really been down for the last few years. Our club has gotten small and dancers don't visit like they used to. We had a nice class for the dance season 1996-97 and we are hoping the interest will improve.

Written by Gary & Margy February 1997