

History of the Swingin' Singles Square Dance Club (Now Singles & Doubles Square Dance Club)

It all began when Ethel Zimmerman visited her daughter in Boise, Idaho in July of 1973. Since her daughter knew her mother liked square dancing, they made inquiries of where there was a club. She visited the "Single Swingers" and met the president who introduced her to other dancers, and Ethel had a great time. She now had a dream. Since that club had met at the YWCA, she wondered what the YWCA would have here in ST. Louis. She talked to all the other single dancers she knew, and they all agreed it would be a great thing to have their own club. She called the YWCA in Clayton and talked to Pat Cooke who was greatly impressed. To be able to get the hall there, all of the lady members had to join the YWCA and the men became associate members. After working hard on getting the news to all interested points, the big night came on November 3, 1973. Frank Schroeter was contacted and agreed to call for them. The ladies brought refreshments and the "Y" furnished the coffee. The evening was a huge success with more than 100 attending. Frank Schroeter called alternating "tips" to take care of all levels of the dancers present.

During January of 1974, they formed the club and called it the "Swingin' Singles with 24 members, 11 men and 13 women. The Swingin' Singles Club danced on the first Saturday of each month at the County Branch of the YWCA at 140 North Brentwood Blvd. Now they dance twice a month on the first and third Saturdays. On January 27, 1974 a class was started by the singles and built under the leadership of Ethel Zimmerman, who has since moved to California. The classes always had an abundance of ladies, so to assure them of their chance to dance, a number system was used and still is. Frank Schroeter was the instructor and beginner class caller until he retired due to health reasons. The last dance that he called for the Singles was on March 18, 1978. We thank Frank for his great patience in helping our club grow. Lou Potts consented to be our class instructor and continued until his work schedule changed. Mike Corns is the present class instructor.

The very first officers of the club were: President, Bernard Zoborosky; Vice President, Ethel Zimmerman; Recording Secretary, June (McDade) Kroeck; Treasurer, Del (Smith) McGinty; and Corresponding Secretary, Barbara (Oberjuerge) Powell. Several of the singles have also found their love while members and are now happily married. On May 25, 1981 the first baby boy, Ben Gildehaus, was born to two singles who met and married while members of the club. Ben will be looking for a partner in 1999. Any offers???

It happened on Friday the 13th, the Singles took their first banner home – that of the Double Dixies. They were also booked for exhibitions and danced on the Admiral which was an annual event given by the Federation and thoroughly enjoyed by all square dancers.

Tom Owings served as the second president of the Singles, followed by Joe Gildehaus, Mike Cromer, and Joe Lonsdorf III. The dance hall was changed to the Glendale Lutheran Church on Sappington Road and Manchester Road on May 6, 1978.

The Singles hosted the Federation Picnic on June 1, 1980. They had a charity project at the picnic of which the proceeds were donated to the Cancer Society. At this time they have won the raiding plaque for the third consecutive time.

On February 20, 1982 we moved to our present hall, Webster Groves Christian Church, 1320 West Lockwood Avenue at Berry Road. Carolyn (Heady) White was president at that time. The Singles acquired their "We Done It" award through the efforts of Joe Ohmoto and Art Miller for getting the dancers together to accomplish it. Our thanks to Joe and Art for a job well done.

On April 2, 1983 with Jim Vacca, President, we had a record-breaking crowd of more than 242 present. Our Tenderfoot Dance, one of our big events, was held at Marvin School on Saturday, April 30, 1983, with more than 233 new dancers in attendance. Jim Vacca, our president, was asked if he would be chairman of the 37th Annual Festival and the Singles would be the host club. The response was great, and committees were formed and plans were made for a very successful festival. Everyone who was asked were very pleased to be part of the annual event.

With Don Tabor as our president, something new has been added to our club. On September 17, 1984, a round dance class sponsored by the Singles under the direction of Gene and Del McGinty, round dance teachers, was formed.

The Singles work hard at everything they set out to accomplish and are proud to be the host club for the 1985 "Square Dance Heritage" Festival.

Compiled by Rosemary Parker and Pauline Nocifora with the help of Mike Cromer (1985)*

**Pauline is a member of Singles & Doubles in 2024. The name of the club changed to Singles & Doubles in September, 2006 when Don Kramme was president.*

4/59/24

Singles & Doubles Square Dance Club

It is 2025, and Singles & Doubles in Webster Groves, MO is updating our club history. The first edition of Swingin' Singles covered 1974-1984.

In 1985 Swingin' Singles (later to become Singles & Doubles) hosted the Square Dance Heritage Festival in St. Louis with Jim Vacca and Pauline Nocifora as chairs. This Festival was held yearly in Missouri or Illinois. In 1994 Pauline was named the "honored dancer" at the Festival in Belleville, IL. In 1998, Swingin' Singles again hosted the event with Fran Baur, Jim Vacca, and Eunice Gray as chairs.

Our first "We Done It" (representing visits to each area club at least two times) occurred in 1992. We celebrated our 43rd WDI in August, 2024. Nelda Gilliam, raid chair from 2001-2024, led 28 of them.

In 1993 the 42nd National Square Dance Convention was held in St. Louis. Over 18,000 dancers from all over the US and other countries had a fabulous week at the riverfront. At that time, there were over 50 clubs with over 100 members each in the St. Louis area. Swingin' Singles helped celebrate; Pauline Nocifora was Vice Chair of Ways and Means for that event.

In 1995, Governor Mel Carnahan declared Square Dance to be the official "Missouri Folk Dance".

In 2005, our club suffered from a lack of volunteers to staff officer positions, a very common ailment of all clubs and one of the leading reasons for the disbanding of a club. In this dilemma, Don Kramme stepped forward and assumed the presidency which allowed the club to continue. With the ongoing lack of officer candidates, Don continued to guide the club for 13 years until his death in 2018. Without his leadership, the fate of the club would have been much different than the growing club it has become.

In 2006, other Metro clubs had evolved to allowing single members, and our club also welcomed both singles and couples. So the club name was changed from Swingin' Singles to Singles & Doubles.

Gene McGinty was our club cuer until his retirement in 2011. Gene's legacy was a large number of round dancers who had attended his lessons. After his retirement, the Club has hired cuers on a dance-by-dance basis to lead the round dancers between square dance tips.

Mike Corns served as the long-time instructor for our student classes until his death in 2016. Since then Wayne Primeau has instructed our classes which have been held yearly except for the 2020-2022 Covid restriction.

Over Labor Day weekend in 2013, Singles & Doubles served as the host club for the 43rd "Dance-A-Rama" for the National Singles Square Dance Association. 307 dancers attended our trail-in dance preceding the NSSDA weekend. Milton Murry chaired our efforts, with other Singles & Doubles members volunteering for dance setup and staffing the registration table and hospitality room.

Through the years, club members have held weekend trips, hayrides, float trips, and annual picnics as well as participated in Metro picnics, Valentine Dances, Jamborees, Grandparent/Grandchild introductory dances, and Benefit Dances. Members also attended state and national conventions. A number of very successful pavilion dances were sponsored by our club. Club members have actively participated in exhibition dances at the Muny, St. Charles, Manchester, Overland, Festus, Kirkwood, Collinsville, and others to promote square dancing in St. Louis. And members have performed as singers, dancers, and actors in various productions at dance break time. Several club members have been active in Metro events as well. Most recently Bill and Mary Doyle served as co-chairs for the 2024 Jamboree.

From 2010 to 2018 we held an annual Cosmic Dance with glow sticks and low lighting. Micky Lee initiated and led those fun dances. Bo Semith was the only caller who would accept the challenge of calling in a darkened room where the dancers were often just shapes with glow stick-constructed necklaces, bracelets, belts, etc. So obviously, Bo was our only caller for all 9 years.

For many years we have held "Back to School" themed dances in August. Beginning in 2011, Glenda Townsend repurposed them so they became benefit dances to raise funds and supplies for various school-related causes. From 2011-2018, Glenda chaired this effort to help schools hit with disaster in Joplin, MO, Moore OK, and Grandview, MO as well as projects helping several St. Louis area schools. Supporting our host church's food drives are also favorite club projects.

Many of our dances have themes: Anniversary Dance, Valentine's, St. Patrick's, Spring, Memorial Day, Veteran's Day, Hawaiian, Halloween, After Thanksgiving Trot Off the Turkey, Christmas, 50's, Rock and Roll, and others. Our hostesses provide lovely decorations and oversee the food tables. The set-up crew transforms the space into a themed square dance hall. John and Martha Black lead in these areas.

The club held annual Christmas dinner/dances, sometimes potlucks/sometimes catered. In recent years this has become an event open only to members. For a few years we also had quarterly potluck dinners and club meetings before a dance.

In 2014 we opened social media pages and a club website. This has helped introduce our club to a wider audience for obtaining students for our beginner classes and for advertising dances.

After the death of President Don Kramme in 2018, Pat Corman led the club for three years. During that time a club vision was created which recognized financial stability, gaining and retaining members, and grooming members to accept leadership positions as the three foundation stones of a sustainable club. With that vision as its target, the club increased its membership and maintained its financial stability while gaining a reputation for fun dances.

Joe Hagen became president in June 2021. Joe led the club through the very trying period of the pandemic. Our hall was locked down, and the club voted not to relocate to another venue. And so the club was dark from March 2020 until May 2022. Joe organized a "social at the park" to keep up spirits in 2021. The uncertainty of the times and the many opinions of the severity of the pandemic during this time made it one of the most difficult periods for the club's survival.

As with any organization that has existed for over 40 years, our club had many storage tubs of records, pictures, and keepsakes. And their storage was becoming a problem. In 2023, the State Historical Society of Missouri asked to store them at the UMSL library as part of their collection of Missouri square dance memorabilia. All of these records can now be viewed there. This turned out to be very timely as our dance facility was closed the following year, and the storage of our records would have been a large problem.

Singles & Doubles celebrated our 50th anniversary in January 2024. We have had excellent classes led by class coordinators Eunice Gray, Susan Allen, and most recently Mary Vanicelli, taught by Wayne Primeau, and helped by many angels. Leading our club since 2022 is President Adrian “Butch” Hedtkamp, with many members sharing officer duties. While continuing to focus on the three cornerstones of a sustainable club, Singles & Doubles has developed a very active visitation program which also benefits other Metro clubs.

In July 2024, we moved from Webster Groves Christian Church (where we had danced since 1982) to Webster United Methodist Church on Bompart Avenue. We are very grateful to both churches for their hospitality. We look forward to many more years of great square and round dancing.

Updated by Lorraine Hackman, 2025

Swingin’ Singles Presidents

74-75	Bernard Zoborosky
76	Tom Owings
77	Joe Gildehaus
78-79	Mike Cromer
80-81	Joseph Lonsdorf III
82	Carolyn Heady
83-84	Jim Vacca
85	Bob Thorton
86	Richard Riggs
87	Sandy Soll
88	Paul Lamfers
89-90	Ralph Hasekamp
91	Judy Tryniecki
92	Roger Jobe
93	Joe Prieskorn
94	Dale Pritchett

95	Bill Adcock
96	Chuck Bennett
97	Rita Stubits
98	Fran Baur
99	Jackie Rall
00	Milton Murry
01	Milton Murry and Judy Tryniecki
02	Milton Murry
03	Jim Mienert and Jackie Rall
04	Milton Murry

Singles & Doubles Presidents

05-18	Don Kramme
18-21	Pat Corman
21-22	Joe Hagen
22-	Adrian “Butch” Hedtkamp

1/10/25