

Louisville Again In 2010, Our Prospective

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Happy Time Square members and friends pose at Churchill Downs in Louisville during a break from the 59th NSDC in Louisville, June 24, 2010.

Thirty-five Happy Time Squares members attended the 59th National Convention in Louisville, June 23-26, 2010. Some of us car-pooled or did caravan, while others ventured over alone. Dave & Barbara Neff and we did a caravan with travel trailers, combining ten

days of camping with the four days of square dance convention. Our route took us to southeast Missouri's Meramec State Park, continuing on to Louisville via Mammoth Cave, Paducah, and Bowling Green. The folks at Louisville's Country Inn & Suites allowed parking the trailers in their lot while we joined our club members and other square dance friends from Kansas, Missouri, and Illinois in cozy motel rooms. We found our motel location to be convenient to the Kentucky Fair and Expo Center, to local attractions, and even to Wal-Mart. Thanks to Lareeda Hickey and Barbara Neff for researching Louisville accommodations and selecting such a great motel for us!

Local attractions: Many of our group toured museums and other attractions in couples or small groups, while the entire bunch converged on Churchill Downs racetrack for a fun Friday morning. Thanks to Connie & Lloyd Northrop's research and scheduling for us.

Louisville was Rosalee and my fifth national convention, and ranks very high on our list. Each convention, of course, has had its pluses and minuses.

Driving into the complex was easy but parking lot design and so many vehicles required a bit of walking, which would not have been bad except for the heat. It was obvious that many dancers were driving and parking, rather than taking a bus. There seemed to be plenty of parking spaces, but if you came late morning, you walked further.

We thought the Louisville food court ranked only below Denver in convenience, quality, and price.

Water availability in halls ranks Louisville at bottom of the list.

Air conditioning and room comfort was sweltering Wednesday evening but adequate for the remainder of the convention.

The facility, by necessity, required a lot of walking to reach dance halls. We composed an itinerary for each day's activities, including must-dance-to callers, exhibition dancing, clogging, round and square dance workshops, and found ourselves rushed at times to make it to the correct hall in time. Second-guessing the folks responsible for room assignments, we would have preferred some changes as the number of dancers and room sizes did not always match up well.

Audio and room acoustics were generally satisfactory. Wednesday evening audio gave us problems but was okay for the remainder of the convention. Kudos to the audio fidelity at

the Blair Carmen show on Wednesday evening. The mixer guy really knew his stuff, truly amazing. The Ghost Riders band and callers in Freedom Hall had their moments of microphone squealing and dead air time.

Favorite exhibition dancing was the River City Riders from Oregon, which we watched multiple times and were entertained each time. An aside: Two of the River City dancers, Jim & Mary Jane Hunt, visited our Happy Time Squares July dance in Lawrence while enroute from Louisville back home to Portland. They became a part of Happy Time Squares' history as their presence established the very first time our guests outnumbered club members at a regular monthly dance, 78 members and 79 guests!

Favorite workshop was actually two. Jon Jones and family's Smooth Dancing was great fun and educational. Canadian Bryan Clark's Intro to Plus Dancing caught us off guard due to his teaching style of dance-by-definition, but we soon adapted and are inclined to agree with his method.

Favorite caller: We will not touch this one in depth, but we tried to make it to all our Kansas and local-area callers, some other favorites, as well as some we had not danced to previously. We got to dance to Nick Hartley, our 58th Kansas Convention featured caller, who did a great job, as he did in Salina. Then there were all the callers with the live band, some great, some less so, but all dancing fun. And, we cannot leave out the Variety Hall and newer callers, including our own Wade Morrow, who did a great job in his débuted at national convention calling. We enjoyed dancing to all of them.

We really enjoyed the "Competition Dancing." Tony Oxendine announced there were 37 squares on the floor, so apparently many other dancers also enjoyed it! Happy Time Squares entered two squares, and both were eliminated fairly early. Nevertheless, we had fun, as it was designed to be. We did enjoy our first experience with competition dancing at the 2009 Nebraska convention with Jon Jones and his dry sense of humor more than the one at Louisville, but it was still fun.

If Kansas will consider this event at our next convention, we suggest a different scoring process be considered, one which we understand is used by teenage clubs in the northwest and Canada. This method allows squares to stay on the floor for the entire event. A judge for each square carries a stopwatch. As long as the square is moving, the clock is running but if it breaks down, the judge stops the watch until they begin dancing again. All dancing stops at a predetermined time. The square with the most dancing time is the 'winner.' This method allows dancers to remain on the floor and enjoy the challenge.

To the uninitiated: 'Competition Dancing' is similar to "hot hash" where the caller, using simple and legal calls, will throw in unexpected calls, putting dancers into a frenzy by trying to correct their anticipated movement into what was actually called. Calling becomes faster and more complicated. When a square breaks down, they are allowed ten seconds to reform into correct sequence and continue, else are disqualified and must leave the dance floor. Of course, in hot hash you can reform however you can and keep dancing if you wish. A call does not need to be complicated to break down a square. Jon Jones' favorite call to splinter a square is to call "swing" from a static home position. By the time your brain processes the call and you begin to swing your partner, he has timely called the next, leaving all four couples wondering what happened, and usually laughing so hard they are hopelessly lost.

We were able to dance to only a couple of the international callers. The daily programs were overall excellent, but we could not find, if they were listed at all, a hall with "international caller hour" as we had in Denver and Wichita. If you have experienced being the only English-speaking couple in a square, with a non-English-speaking caller, you know how much fun you will have deciphering his calls, and the cues from the other dancers! Those times rank high in our fondest memories of national conventions.

Meanwhile back at our motel. Happy Time Squares hosted an ice cream social following dancing on both Friday and Saturday evenings. Our club members were joined by square dance friends staying at our motel, and one of our favorite callers who happened to drop by. Such a perfect way to end an evening!

Rosalee and I rank Louisville Again in 2010 just below the Wichita and Portland conventions, with Denver a close second. We had a great time with our local, national, and international friends and callers. It is good to be back home again.

Bob & Rosalee Rainbolt
Happy Time Squares, Lawrence