



The History of Rebel Rousers Square and Round Dance Club JULY 2024

A group of square dancers met in the summer of 1989 with a vision for a new square dance club whose members would be couples, singles and teens. They had a caller, Mike and D' Bramlett; they had a name, Rebel Rousers, and they had a dance hall, the Machinist Hall in Irving, Texas. All they needed were by-laws and members. The most important requirement was 'you had to want to have fun'. Their first dance was on Wednesday, July 19, 1989. In the fall of 1989 they changed locations with their first Witches and Warlocks Dance on the fifth Sunday in October at the Grand Prairie Community Center. With their acceptance into NORTEX and their kick-off dance on the third Sunday, a change of dance night, in November 1989, they were off and running. Guest cuers were used until the third Sunday in February 1990, when they had new cuers on the block, Christine and Theron Hixson. The club knew they had found their cuers.

Club member Carol Sutton served as the Texas Association of Single Square Dancers North Area Vice President in 1992 and 1993 and the Club hosted TASSD's 20th annual convention in 1994. The weekend was attended by over 700 square dancers and such a success that the attending dancers prevailed on the Club to host their own weekend in 1995, thus the first of five annual Rebel Manias was born. All Rebel Mania weekends were held in the Metroplex, hosted by a club with less than 50 members and attended each year by an average of 275 dancers from all over the United States. The last weekend was held in 1999 because in 2001 the Club was hosting the Single Square Dancers USA 31st Dance-A-Rama Convention Labor Day Weekend. To promote square dancing club members have traveled to Europe, Washington DC, Georgia, Utah, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Alaska, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Missouri, Louisiana and all over Texas.

The Club has always been very active in NORTEX functions. They began participating in NORTEX by being the Decorations Chair for the 1990 installation dance and have continued to serve on various committees for this dance through the years. Club members Colleen Wilson, Debbie Anderson, Sam and Mary Stephens and Kevin and Christine Hadley have been the General Chairman for this dance. Rebel Rousers members have served as Round-Up Committee Chairs for almost every chair position and have served on many Round-Up Committees. Club members having served as the Round-Up General Chair are Debbie Anderson in 2008, Sam and Mary Stephens in 2012, Kevin and Christine Hadley in 2015 and Sheila Milliron and Bobby Clark in 2018 and 2023. Many club members supported all of them as committee chairs and committee members.

The Club has attended, and continues to attend, many demonstration dances sponsored by NORTEX. In addition, they donned their western hats and greeted dancers at the NORTEX hosted Friday night dance for the 42nd State Festival at Mesquite in 2004. The Club hosted the first NORTEX Food Drive Dance, participated in the square dance demonstration on "Good Day Texas", served as a sponsor for NORTEX/NTCA Benefit Dances and as a host club for Round-Up.

Club members have served several times as the NORTEX Nominating Committee Foreman, as the Budget Chair, the Financial Review Chair and as the Lessons Grants Chair. Club members have served and are serving in appointed positions within NORTEX and have served as elected NORTEX officers of Area Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. Club members Kevin and Christine Hadley, Sam and Mary Stephens and Debbie Anderson are NORTEX Past Presidents.

The Club was honored in 1997 by being named the first and only NORTEX Fun Club of the Year. Then they were named NORTEX Club of the Year in 2006-2007 and again in 2010-2011. Several club members have been honored with NORTEX Annual Year End Awards. Single of the Year honorees: Grace Dubuque Recio in 1999, Diane Wright in 2005, and Debbie Anderson in 2011; Couple of the Year honorees Bates and Sherry Richmond in 2013; Dancer of the Year honorees: Carol Sutton and Colleen Wilson in 2014, Kevin and Christine Hadley in 2015, Sheila Milliron in 2017 and Sam and Mary Stephens in 2020. Club members Carol Sutton and Don and Mary Jo Henry have received the special honor of the Marvin and Helen Matus Lifetime Achievement Award.

Club members Bill Knight and Kathy Ellis, both high level round dancers, have served several positions for the Harvest Holiday Round Dance Festival and have served as the General Chair multiple times. After spring lessons in 2015, David and Jan Toms joined the Club and remained members until joining NTCA as a caller and cuer, respectively.

In the 2000's the Club entered the electronic age by using email to notify club members of events, establishing a website (rebelrouersdallas.com) and creating a Facebook Page (Rebel Rousers Square Dance Club).

At the June 2024 NORTEX Installation of Officers, Joan Garner and John Hurst were recognized as Dancers of the Year for 2023-2024. It was a great surprise to them! Several Club members were present for their special recognition and to support them and other Club members being installed as a NORTEX Officer or Committee Chair.

2024-2025 NORTEX Officers installed from Rebel Rousers:

Gene & Dianne Geyer, Area Vice President

Tessa Schrank and Michelle Mathis, Publicity

Sam & Mary Stephens, Technology & Special Projects

Debbie Anderson, Liaison

2024-2025 NORTEX Committee Chairs from Rebel Rousers:

Joan Garner & John Hurst, Financial Review

Sam & Mary Stephens, Webmaster.

On July 20, 2024, the Rebel Rousers hosted their 35th anniversary dance, Christmas in July. There were 119 guests all dressed in Christmas attire and enjoying the calling of Mike Bramlett and Ken Burke with Christine and Theron Hixson on the rounds. There were 25 Rebel Rousers hosting the dance and manning the front door greeting (including Santa with a little wagon full of toys), door prize tables, honey pot, food and cameras. A full Christmas meal complete with turkey, ham, brisket, dressing, gravy and a variety of vegetables with lots of salads and desserts was prepared by the Club and the guests greatly enjoyed it! Rumor has it there were no leftovers! Carol Sutton and Mike Bramlett, two of the founders of the Rebel Rousers Square and Round Dance Club welcomed the guests after the Grand March of 13 squares. It was indeed a very enjoyable Christmas in July!

As square dancing has continued to decline, the Rebel Rousers have embraced change by changing towns from Irving to Grand Prairie to Dallas to Richardson; by changing dance night from Wednesday to Sunday to Saturday; by changing halls from a large gym to a smaller room to a “modified” gym to a Senior Center. The Club has reinvented itself when it was necessary to make a change but has always maintained the Club motto: The Fun Square Dancers. Watch for their fun squares when they dance all position tag tips. The laughter it creates is the key to how much fun they are having. They make their own fun and carry it with them, spreading it to all those who are open to accepting it.

