

History of the Whirlaway Westerners' Square Dance Club

The *Woodhaven Square Dance Club* was formed in the fall of 1955. Mary Mason was largely responsible for the initial organization. We danced the first session in the basement of the old Woodhaven School. Instructors were Lorne and Mary Henwood. We danced to records.

The following season, because the old Woodhaven School was slated for demolition, and the auditorium on the new school was not ready, we danced for a time in the old Woodhaven Community Club. This building was formerly the clubhouse at the Bourkeville Golf Course and was moved out to make way for the St. James Collegiate and Y.M.C.A. buildings. The club was located in the banks of Sturgeon Creek between the new Woodhaven School and the footbridge. Later on that season, we moved to the auditorium of the new school. The club hired Al and Wanda Rutherford on this second season, and they remained with us for three years.

In February of 1959 we moved again, this time to the new Woodhaven Community Club. At this time the club was dancing every second Friday. In order to have weekly dances, Roy Haslund offered to program dances on the weeks that Al and Wanda weren't there. The following season, Roy became the regular caller for the club.

Our membership was boosted in 1963 when we were joined by members of the Assini Boys and Girls, who had been dancing at the Kirkfield Park Community Club,

In 1971, when our membership was low as a result of illness and of members being transferred out of Winnipeg we joined forces with the Couples Club at the Assiniboia Christian Centre on Portage Avenue West. Our name was changed to the Assiniboia Centre Westerners. The present name of Whirlaway Westerners Square Dance Club was chosen when the club moved to Bannatyne School in the mid- 70's. In 1979 the club moved to Athlone School. As the club's 25th Anniversary drew near, plans were held to hold a reunion in the fall. This event took place in September, with the 25th Anniversary Jamboree held in in November 1980. After a brief stay in Brooklands School and St. Bedes Church that fall, we were able to move into Lincoln School Auditorium.

After ore than thirty years of association with our club, Roy and Cora Haslund retired in 1991. The club invited Joyce Johnson to be our new caller for the main club and the beginner class. In the mid- 90's, Ron Johnson agreed to take over the beginner classes.

A significant moment in the 1990's occurred when the Federation asked all clubs to develop a Constitution and set of by-laws. A constitution committee chaired by Rick Anderson developed the rules, which the members approved.

The 44th Jamboree, held in the fall of 1999, was likely our last. In 2000, the club decided to discontinue holding the yearly Jamboree at the Civic Centre. A special evening of dancing and remembering was held in November honouring our retired dancers, many of whom attended.

As we welcome the 45th year of dancing as a club in the year 2000, we recognize the individuals who have contributed in many ways- as executive, as helpers, as members - to allow us to continue to square dance into the next century.

Joyce Johnson retired in 2003. Ron Johnson became the club caller in 2003. Ron Johnson retired in 2004. Trevor Grier became the club caller in 2004.

The 50th Anniversary of our dance club was recognized with a delicious catered roast beef supper. Afternoon and evening dancing completed the party at the Civic Centre on April 30th, 2005 Jack Burns created the Whirlaway song, which he titled "Come Home to Whirlaways". With the 160 members and guests attending, it was a celebration of renewing old friendships and forming new. This was a wonderful event, a tribute to all who had worked so

hard over the years to keep Whirlaways thriving.

In the last ten years, energetic leadership developed some unique, fun events. An entertaining Sadie Hawkins Dance was enjoyed by many. Imaginations outdid themselves creating humorous corsages. Our club welcomed visitors from all over Manitoba and North Dakota to enjoy a special afternoon/evening dinner and dance at the Hitchin' Post. Another outstanding night occurred with an Olympic themed dance. A Western Chili night continues to warm our stomachs and hearts every fall with Dave and Sybil Gardiner cooking their delicious recipe. As President from 2008-2010, Camille Grosbrink (Potucek) hosted a very successful Elvis Presley dance with Corey Rempel impersonating "The King". At least eight squares enjoyed this evening. During this time, Whirlaways broke a record with stealing ELEVEN Club Banners in one year. This was unique in Square Dance History. In 2013, we hosted our first Saturday evening Plus Party. The following spring, we honoured our own Academy Award winners with a formal evening where guests walked the Red Carpet, were interviewed by the paparazzi while cameras captured every moment. Each dancer was given a name tag which became significant during the Award Ceremonies. 10 categories of awards honoured the special achievements of those present. Each winner was accompanied into the limelight by an elegant escort. To complete the theme, Trevor chose singing calls from popular movies. An outstanding lunch was Award Winning in its own category!!!! What an exciting evening!

As we approach the celebration of another milestone, we are humbled by the contributions of so many willing volunteers throughout our 60 years. Our history of fun and friendship set to music will continue well into the future. We look forward to celebrating this very special achievement. You are all invited to join us!!!!

"Come Home to Whirlaways" on Sunday, October 4

Submitted by Carole Grier, Co-President of Whirlaways