

**BOB & JANETTE KEMPER**  
**OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE**

Bob and Janette Kemper were recruited for a square dance class in the early 1960s by caller Bob Baker, who has been quoted as saying the worst thing he ever did was teach Bob and Janette a round dance called "Left Footers One Step." After completing that class, they enrolled at KSDA for round dance lessons by Campbell and Genny McCord.

Bob served as an officer and was a board member for the Rambling Rebels and was on the board of KSDA before becoming very involved in round dance teaching, cueing, and organizational work. Bob & Janette started the Ridge Rounders in Oak Ridge and formed the Vols and Dolls exhibition round dance group. They cued for the Rambling Rebels, the Belles and Beaus, the Rainbow Twirlers, the Little T Squares, Ted Frye's club, and other clubs, often with no compensation and frequently paid admission just for the opportunity to have round dancing available to the dancers. They have taught and cued at numerous festivals and conventions.

When the Tennessee State Association of Square and Round Dance Clubs was being formed, Bob was instrumental in organizing Area V and became the Area Vice President. He was one of the six signers of the official charter of the association, and assisted Don Wilcox with the application for the IRS 501(c)4 status. He was Education Chairman and introduced informative seminars and panels on various topics at the meetings and conventions. In 1978 they were elected State President. He and Janette started the Tennessee State Directory and a newsletter. They were the chairmen for the 1983 State Convention. They have attended and participated in 15 State Conventions, teaching, cueing, programming both squares and rounds, handling the education program, designing and printing the program, and participating in panels.

In the greater Knoxville area there were many clubs that did not belong to an area organization. So once again, Bob dragged Janette to visit these groups to present the idea of an area association. They were met with surprising results, both for and against. However, the idea prevailed and the Council of East Tennessee Square and Round Dance Clubs was officially formed and is doing well today.

Legacy, an organization of leaders of the square dancing movement, was created with the goal of bringing some sort of continuity to the activities. One idea coming from this group was the need for an association of round dance teachers. Bob again dragged Janette off to meetings which resulted in the creation of Roundalab, of which they were charter members. They were also trustees of Legacy. They have been very active in both groups, serving as officers and chairmen.

The Dixie Round Dance Council was created in the early 1960s and Bob and Janette became active in this group about 1966. Bob held the offices of president, secretary, and

newsletter editor and introduced the policy of having all dances cued. They hosted one meeting in Oak Ridge.

On the subject of National Square Dance Conventions, they have attended 29 conventions. They taught new round dances, many of which were their own choreography, cued in square and round dance halls, moderated and participated in educational panels, served as round dance education chairman, contra chairman, trail-end dance and after-party chairmen, and presented several dance clinics. They worked on the 1980 Memphis National Convention for five years.

To them, one of the most memorable events that they directed was the invitation given in Milwaukee to attend the 1980 Memphis National Convention. A 65-foot Tennessee map was spread out on the floor of the main hall. "Minnie Pearl", "Davy Crockett", and "Dolly Parton" placed huge letters on it to spell Tennessee. A train with blinking eyes led a delegation of 350 Tennesseans, all dressed in the orange and white outfits with black train appliques, around the room to publicize the theme of "Take the Night Train to Memphis". It was a thrilling and breathtaking sight to behold. Some of the costumed dancers square danced to the theme song and the Vols and Dolls Round Dance exhibition group performed to songs about Tennessee.

The Kempers were the first Vice President for the Southeastern Area of the United Square Dancers of America. They worked hard on the committee to make square dancing the National Folk Dance and in this capacity were honored to be chosen to cue round dancing on the patio of the U. S. Capitol and at the Congressional Square Dance Reception in the Rayburn Building, a Congressional Office Building. They filed testimony on two subjects at a Congressional Subcommittee Hearing and were featured on television.

The best is last: The great thrill of being on the 1983 Square Dance Float in the Rose Parade at Pasadena. It was an unforgettable experience. The California dancers entertained the float dancers royally, and it was a fascinating journey thru the streets of Pasadena with a group of wonderful new friends. Pages could be written about this experience--perhaps another time.

After meeting in an engineering class at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Bob and Janette discovered they had been in the same first grade class at Peoples Street Elementary School in Atlanta, Georgia. They had 54 wonderful years together before Bob passed away in 2002. Those years were greatly enhanced by the fantastic world of square dancing.

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