

TED AND MABLE KLEINSASSER
ALCOA, TENNESSEE

Ted Kleinsasser, a Meteorologist from South Dakota, and his wife Mable, came to the Knoxville-Maryville area in 1941 as the “weatherman”, a position he held for twenty three years.

In 1945, searching for some socially acceptable form of recreation for his two teenage children, he saw a Methodist publication telling about a special form of folk dancing -- good “old fashioned” Western Style square dancing. He first taught himself and then his two teenagers and their friends. At that time there were twenty-five basic calls.

His children and their friends soon spread the word about this fun activity and more youth groups began asking him to teach them. Realizing how much fun square dancing was for him, Ted wanted to extend his teaching to an adult program. His first adult class in Alcoa had a very large enrollment. He was requested to start a class in Norris and 99% of the town enrolled, and completed, the class!

He was becoming more well-known in the area and was asked to do a five day a week live television show about square dancing. What an advertisement for good, clean fun!

In 1956, with backing from the City of Maryville, he had registration forms printed, advertised the time and place for FREE Western Style Square Dance lessons and 672 people were registered. Three classes were started from this registration. That is 84 squares!

In 1957 he presented his program to the Knoxville Recreation Bureau and they were so impressed they agreed to support him in his effort. They helped arrange for newspaper advertising, printing of enrollment forms, etc. and he was on his way. The enrollment was so large he had to split into two classes. For several summers, he called square dances on the roof of a parking garage.

From 1957 through 1959, Ted taught more than 2,000 dancers in the Knoxville area, each class lasting ten weeks. He was either calling or teaching six nights a week; and all lessons were FREE.

It was Ted’s greatest desire to teach enough dancers and generate enough interest to bring the National Square Dance Convention to the Knoxville area. That dream has not yet materialized, but many of the dancers he taught have expanded their interest and have become square dance callers and round dance cuers themselves. From 1945 through 1959, he has taught over 7,500 dancers in the Knoxville-Maryville area. That is an average of 67 squares per year; quite an impressive record for FREE fun.

In 1959 Ted was hospitalized and his illness was such that he was forced to end his square dance teaching. Through his love of square dancing and through his students, he has brought fun and lasting joy to all square dancers in this area. Square dancing is still going strong and many of his first students are still dancing.

Ted and Mable, who was always at his side, reside in Alcoa, Tennessee -- still dreaming of the National Square Dance Convention being held in Knoxville. Thanks, Ted, and many Yellow Rocks to you both!