

Jim & Helen Howard

Jim Howard married his bride Helen Brackett on Christmas Eve of 1939. They started square dancing in 1948, when Helen told Jim that they were going to a PTA meeting. Jim was not too happy when he realized that it was not a PTA meeting but Square Dance Lessons. By the end of the night, Jim was hooked and after 5 lessons he had decided to become a caller. So, in late 1948, Jim attended the calling school of Pappy Shaw. Jim and Helen then started their square dance journey. For the next 75 years, Square Dancing has been and is a big part of the Howard family! Jim was a store manager for Montgomery Wards. His job was to help stores that were not doing well and make them profitable again. This led Jim and Helen to live in several places in the 1950's. By 1956 Jim and Helen landed in the spot that they would call home for the next 9 years. During this time Jim was calling for several clubs in the Elk City area, and even coming to the OKC area on occasion. A dear friend Wendel Powell had a small band and Jim convinced them to play some square dance music. Live band dancing was happening in Elk City. Jim and Helen started the first square dancing club in Elk City in March, 1956 and Helen taught belly and ballroom dancing in Elk City and opened their first studio there as well.

During this time Jim and Helen met Gerald and Sally McWhirter, Guy and Sue Gentry, and Howard and Peggy Thornton. Jim retired from Montgomery Wards and in 1965 took a job in Kansas City. For the next year Jim did not call as he was so busy in his job that he did not have time to call. In 1966, he quit the job, moved to Oklahoma City, and went to work for Guy Gentry. Also, in 1966 Jim started calling for the Fun Timers. Jim called for them until his passing in December 1995. Jim was the first full time caller for Fun Timers. And on October 16th, 2002, Jim was recognized by The Square and Round Dancers of Oklahoma, Inc and the Callers Hall of Fame for significant contribution, dedication, and promotions benefiting square dancing and square dancers everywhere.

Jim took pleasure in imparting his knowledge to new callers, one of which is his son. Jim and Helen believed that square dancing was good for you both, psychically and mentally, and that it was friendship building. They also consider square dancing their mission field.

Jim and Helen had three children Jan, Linda, and Jim. When Jim became ill in the late 80's, his youngest son Jim requested a Navy transfer from Iceland to OKC to help out while he recovered.

Let's not forget Helen, she in her own right was very influential. She taught Hulu dancing and rounds never taking the spot light from Jim but always in the picture. She made Jim a better caller. Helen was a very talented woman. She was very good with a needle and thread and made all her square dance dresses and also her daughter's clothes. Helen worked in a major company, Honeywell. Jim and Helen-- they complimented each other beautifully. On their 50th wedding anniversary, Jim and Helen performed a beautiful waltz that had everyone that witnessed it in tears, even the 5 NEC couples that attended the event.

Besides calling, Jim also excelled at sleight of hand magic and as an auctioneer. He was master of ceremonies at many functions. His stage presence was top notch and equally good off the stage. People loved to be around them both.