

Jim and DeDe Howard

Jim was an unexpected surprise, that was literally born into square dancing. His mom told his dad that she was pregnant at a dance that he was calling in Elk City. He grew up dancing with many of the other kids of square dancers and callers. He danced at the teen club and he learned to clog and helped start one of the teen clogging clubs with several of the other teens.

DeDe first learned to square dance at UCO in Edmond as a college credit. She had so much fun that she and her then husband decided to take lessons from a club Frontier Pride. She eventually became president of the that club. When she joined Rawhide, she became the secretary. She has been willing and able to help out where needed with in the square dance community.

Jim served in the Navy for 20 years. He got the opportunity to call in several overseas places. He taught lessons one night a week and called a dance at least one night a week for 3 years in Iceland. When his dad got sick and his mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, he got a humanitarian reassignment to OK, where he started calling for Rawhide Club in Oklahoma City. He also shared calling duties at Tinker Squares in Midwest City with his dad.

It was at this time he met his wife DeDe who danced a lot with his dad's club India Swingers. When they were married, on November 23, 1991, the square dancers were a big part of the wedding.

When transferred to California he was hired as a club caller even though he was still active duty in the Navy and going to be gone a lot. During this time, he called with and became friends with many of the Callers on the National circuit. He was also the club caller for Cornhuskers in the Los Angelis area. During all this time he continued to serve his country and practice his calling technique.

DeDe continued to dance while Jim was gone on deployment making many friends along the way. Once Jim was home, she continued to dance and help him. When DeDe was diagnosed with her eye disease it took some time before she decided that she wouldn't let this stop her from dancing. She found ways to make it easier and encouraged others to help when needed. DeDe also excelled at her job as a travel agent. She loved to help plan trips for her customers and the men and women of the military going on leave.

When Jim retired from the Navy his square dance club came to his retirement ceremony onboard the ship. They helped him demonstrate to his shipmates and Captain, square dancing. The dancers also got a dangle for dancing onboard an active Navy ship. How fun would that be?

A few years later when DeDe's family needed her, Jim's current job with the Veterans Affairs, transferred him back to Oklahoma.

Jim was hand-picked to call for National Cowboy's Hall of Fame Square Dance Exhibition club in 2001, DeDe eventually joined Jim with National Cowboy and worked to make it a wonderful exhibition group. Jim gave the keynote speech at the 2013 Nationals in Oklahoma City.

I have heard Jim and DeDe say that square dancing is not just a hobby for them. They have often said "the club that plays together stays together." And "The friendship that we have made along the way our most cherished part of our lives." Jim would tell you he is extremely proud of his square dance heritage. And Jim has made a choice a long time ago to follow in the footsteps of one of the greatest callers that he ever knew, his Dad! Jim told me, speaking of his father, "He has taught me a lot of lessons but the one that I will always remember is that "the dancers have to win" and his favorite closing line is "Don't let the Good Lord do all the work, go do some yourself.""

"If we aren't having fun then why are we doing this."