

Grand Square 48.1 – September 2005
Donna Poyer and Mike Szekula



These two faces are a familiar sight to anyone who attends NNJSDA dances. But it's a wonder that Donna Poyer and Mike Szekula ever find time to actually dance, given all the hard work they do behind the scenes to keep the Association and their own club alive and well. They currently serve as presidents of the NNJSDA.

Mike spent his childhood in Marcella (Rockaway Township), close to Egbert's Lake where old-fashioned style square dances were held on Saturday nights with a four-piece band.

Although he knew about square dancing from the age of 13, he did not take lessons until his former wife suggested doing so many years later. They joined Lakeland Squares in 1976, and later the Kittatinny Rangers.

Donna lived in Lyndhurst before her family moved to the Hackettstown area. She enjoyed Eastern style square dances at the Mountain Lake Casino with her boyfriend. They married, but she became a widow at a young age with full responsibility for raising two sons and working to support the family. When a friend suggested taking square dance lessons, she relished the chance to "escape reality" for the 2½-hour classes. She joined the Kittatinny Rangers in 1988 and was immediately appointed class coordinator. Since then, she has always held at least one office in the club, and Mike has held a number of positions as well. They served as club presidents last season.

Donna and Mike especially enjoy the national conventions, experiences they share with good friends from around the country. The California convention was particularly memorable as they were joined by friends from South Carolina, Texas, and China. The group of eight drove down the coast and did "touristy" things for a week, and then went to Disneyland to march down Main Street and dance!

Mike earned a degree in electrical engineering from Northeastern University in Boston and worked at Picatinny Arsenal for 38 years before retiring five years ago. Donna graduated from West Chester University in Pennsylvania with a degree in education and certification to teach high school biology. However, her career path has taken her instead from waitressing to serving as an assistant teacher in a Montessori school to driving a school bus.

Mike has two daughters and Donna is immensely proud of her two sons – Jeff, who has a spackle business in South Carolina, and Chris, who works with a land surveyor in New Jersey. The "little ones" now at home include eight cats, two dogs, a six-foot-plus red-tailed boa, one hedgehog, twelve chickens, three bantams, and five guinea hens – fresh eggs, anyone? Their home sits on four acres that require many hours of upkeep in mowing the lawn and caring for the flower beds. During spare moments, Mike enjoys keeping the computer "busy and fixed." Donna likes to correspond with friends and travel. Don't be surprised if she tells you, "Yes, I'll go with you ... where are you going?"

When asked what would be their one fondest wish, Mike answered with typical brevity, "Good health and happiness for everybody." Donna would like for there to be "no unhappiness or sickness anywhere, no power struggles, no money-hungry people ... just everyone could get along in peace and harmony." They both see square dancing as one way to promote such harmony. As Donna concluded, "It certainly opened up many doors for me, and it has given me many new friends. All the people in square dancing are great, and I applaud each and every one of you!" We, too, applaud Donna and Mike for their tireless efforts in ensuring a great time for all NNJSDA dancers.

Lise Greene