

Our Grand Square History



Peg and Doc Tirrell

In April of 1959, *Grand Square*, the official publication of the NNJSDA, was born with the Association's second president, Bob Keck, doing the lion's share of the writing and set-up. This triannual 8½ x 11 publication was filled with local and national square dance news. In 1963, Bill Geler became editor, and the *Grand Square* went from being mailed individually to every dancer to distribution via the club delegates.

The number of pages in *Grand Square* increased with square dancing's growth. When Bill resigned in 1965, the NNJSDA presidents, Peg and Doc Tirrell, searched unsuccessfully to find a replacement. Unable to let this valuable publication die, Peg moved from northern reporter to editor, and Doc became part of the team. Charlie Bogart, a local square dancer who was also a printer, volunteered to help turn the newsletter into a true magazine.

A corner of the Tirrells' living room became an office. Charlie was their mentor, supplying them with specially marked paper on which to type articles and create ads, critiquing, and then running the presses. The northern and southern reporters and an advertising editor completed the staff. Hot wax made adding art work and corrections easier, and a file of "clip art" was started.

As the NNJSDA expanded, a western area reporter, an associate editor, and a distribution coordinator were added. Manny Amor and Clete Polk volunteered their artwork humor; traveling dancers brought back stories and articles to share. The NNJSDA displays at the National Conventions included the *Grand Square*. Poster contest entries became issue covers. The manual typewriter was eventually replaced by an electric model. However, it wasn't until 1985 that Peg received help with the typing from Donna Anderson, Dot Loewenstein, MaryAnne Mosseau, Kathy Porter, and Shirley Sherlock. The production staff proofread, hot waxed in ads, made corrections, and inserted clip art before the final issue went to the printer. From this hardworking group, the Tirrells recruited their successors, Kathy and Charlie Porter, who brought *Grand Square* to a new high.

Peg and Doc Tirrell treasure the sign they were given for their front door – "WORK HAZARD! Stay around here long enough and you'll have to work."

Peg Tirrell

The Porters, 1990-2000

In 1987, Kathy Porter joined the staff of *Grand Square* and, in 1989, Charlie Porter became responsible for the ads. In 1990, after spending nearly three years traveling from Staten Island, NY to Cresskill, NJ and toting a memory typewriter to work on the issues, the Porters became editors of *Grand Square*. Although Kathy and Charlie both worked full time, they were committed to taking *Grand Square* into the computer generation. The NNJSDA bought a Mac computer, software, and printer that were ultimately donated to a school after almost 10 years of use.

Kathy and Charlie Porter

The Porters made many changes with their first issue, all of which are still part of the current editions. The biggest addition was the Calendar of Advertised Dances, which elicited rave reviews from the dancers. They also instituted indexes for advertisers' ads and the articles that appeared in each issue. The issues were standardized so that the NNJSDA presidents' letter, the calendar of events, and ads appeared on the same pages in every issue.



The *Grand Square* was made all the better by its fine staff including Karen Kushla, Lois and Leo Bichler, and many others who served for 10 years.

Reducing the publication frequency from five to three issues a dance season reduced the printing costs for the NNJSDA and the cost of ads to the clubs, and enabled the Porters to continue as editors. After a long search for new editors, the Porters retired in 2000, thrilled that two very capable couples, Barbara and Norman Kanter and Jan and Louis Thompson, would assume the reins.

Although Florida residents for the past five years, the Porters still enjoy reading every issue of *Grand Square* cover-to-cover.
Kathy Porter

The Kanters & the Thompsons, 2000-present

Barbara and Norman Kanter and Jan and Louis Thompson inherited a wonderful publication from the Tirrells and the Porters. During the present editorship, the most dramatic change has been the digitalization of the *Grand Square*'s production. Thanks to Rusty Ball and Lise Greene's countless hours of hard work and perseverance over the past two years, the *Grand Square* is now completely assembled on the computer. Thanks to Ken Robinson, anyone may download the *Grand Square* online at www.NNJSDA.org.



Barbara Kanter, Jan Thompson

Although there were headaches galore, what has resulted is a superior final product. Our readers enjoy more high quality photographs thanks to our digitalization. With Lise Greene as official reporter, the biography series highlights people active in the NNJSDA. *Grand Square* received recognition at the National Square Dance Convention, winning second place in the contest for best publication in the country. Our dedicated proofreaders over the years have included Mary and Sal Alessi, Bernadette and Stan Bevan, Catherine and Jim Douglas, and Ruth Edison and Ron Kapnick.

The Kanters and the Thompsons continually aim to make the issues more dancer-friendly and useful. The club article headers in all issues now include the club's website, zip code, contact name and phone number, and cell phone number for dance night. Revisions have been made to the Calendar of Advertised Dances to include ABC drop-in dances and to standardize the listing of the dance program offered by each club.