

Catherine and Jim Douglas

In 1951, Catherine and Jim met for a blind date at a barn dance when they were graduate students in Wisconsin. One wedding, two children, and two+ decades later, they started attending an annual barn dance at their church in New Jersey. After two+ decades more, the barn dance caller announced a square dance class – for which they signed up the very next day. Catherine and Jim graduated in 1995 “at the youthful age of 69” and joined Lakeland Squares.



Having recently retired from careers in pharmaceuticals and on Wall Street (Jim) and office work (Catherine), “square dancing opened up a whole new life for us,” said Jim. “Meeting new people, traveling, visiting new places, socializing, having fun and exercise – square dancing was a perfect bond joining all these interests.”

To preserve the pleasant memories of good times, the Douglases began recording their square dance travels. The record shows that they have danced in all 50 states plus Washington, DC. They have also danced in Canada, Wales, England, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Australia, and New Zealand. Counting up the clubs, they discovered that they have visited 244 different ones throughout the world.

The numbers continue: 100+ conventions, festivals, etc.; 375+ dangles; 10+ Century Books containing 1,065 names so far; and 300,000+ travel miles. Locally, they have completed 10 Patron forms – most of which contain a signature from *every* NNJSDA Mainstream and Plus club, not just the required minimum.

As members of Evergreen, a 2,000-member international reciprocal bed and breakfast club, the Douglases have stayed in 100 homes in 39 states, Canada, and England. All the hosts added valuable insight to their local cultural experiences. In return, they have hosted many Evergreen members in their Bloomfield home.

Highlights of Jim and Catherine’s square dance travels:

- Dancing with the southernmost club on the planet (46 Degrees South Dance Club in Ivercargill, New Zealand).
- Clubs in Jackson, Mississippi and Stockholm, Sweden holding special dances to accommodate their schedules.
- Dancing with three clubs in England – Pieces of Eight in Southampton (named for a parrot who knew only one phrase), where the road to the caller/host’s home was a runway for a World War II airport; Mayflower Steppers and Pilgrim Promenaders in Plymouth, the port from which the Mayflower sailed to America.
- Being invited by their Evergreen square dance hostess in Australia to stay for a month after their first afternoon visit; the three attended four square dances together.
- Dancing with six clubs in New Zealand, their favorite destination in the world.
- Dancing at the Canadian National Convention in Halifax last summer in a square with the Lieutenant Governor (representative of the Queen of England). She had been personally invited by Jim when they met a few days earlier at the 225th anniversary of the founding of his birthplace (River John, Nova Scotia). “This was a cherished square dance moment that will be long remembered,” said Jim.

For Catherine and Jim, “square dancers have become our unintended extended family.” We are glad to have such enthusiastic “relatives”!

Lise Greene