

Dress Code?

How many of you like to wear the traditional square dance costume, petticoats and all?

How many do not?

How many wear both, depending on the event?

Introduce myself:

I have been square dancing since I was in high school, when the square dance costume was in style. That's right—these costumes are from the 1950s!

I have also created square dance costumes professionally—for pay or barter. My time doesn't allow it now, but at one time we bartered square dance outfits for tree felling, home-made mozzarella cheese from a dancer who owned a deli, and our will. I still own over 30 outfits, although I don't usually wear them now to dance in.

The word costume is appropriate: the word costume means

“Clothing one wears for a particular activity” that they are not usually wear away from that event. Like going shopping, etc.

Other definitions are:

Clothes traditionally worn in a particular place or during a particular period in the past.

Clothes worn to make a person look like somebody or something else, especially in a theatrical performance.

Howard Richman says we need to “look accessible” to the public when they see us dance. That means wearing clothing they can relate to. Howard also says square dancing is a “performance of sorts”.

How many of your clubs are dwindling? How many of you have heard or said that we need new, younger blood to keep the club alive? How many of your older club members have stopped dancing?

How many people of the pre-baby-boomer generation have you seen wearing clothing with ruffles, petticoats, belts, or even skirts at all? How many young men wear long sleeves voluntarily when they are not working?

I have only one more comment:

The main reason I don't wear the swinging skirts and crinolines anymore is that I have developed a back problem. I discovered that if I wear the 5 pounds of skirt and petticoat, the first time I swing them in a tip, my back goes into spasm and I am off the floor the rest of the evening!

We all like different foods, and no one says we all have to like to eat the same thing. I learned to try very hard not to make judgments about why someone does not dress like me, like the same things I like, dance the way I do. We are all different.

And if what we wear square dancing doesn't appeal to each dancer or potential dancer, we will continue to be a very exclusive recreation that appeals only to a very few persons. We literally can't dance without 7 other people. We like to say that losing even one dancer loses someone a corner, and the square a tip.