

Your subscription to "The Modern Square" EXPIRES SOON. Please renew promptly to support both the ASSDF, as well as square/round dancing in Arkansas. Make your check or money order (\$20 a year) payable to ASSDF, and send it to the Treasurer (see below). Questions or a change of address should go to the Circulation Chairman (see below). The ASSDF thanks you for your renewal.



**Treasurer: Jennifer Pogue, 3124
Timberlake Drive, Royal, AR 71968**

**Circ. Ch.: Daryl Stout, P.O. Box 55655,
Little Rock, AR 72215**



**From: Daryl Stout, Circulation Chairman/Webmaster, Arkansas State Square Dance Federation
To: Callers, Cuers, Club Contacts, ASSDF Officers, and the National Square Dance Directory
Re: Changes To The Modern Square, Issues With Renewals, and the ASSDF Website**

You're receiving this letter, because you are either a caller or cuer for an Arkansas Club, the Club Contact Person, an ASSDF Officer, or with the National Square Dance Directory. If you're both a caller/cuer, and the club contact person, or an ASSDF Officer with a club, you only received one copy of this letter. Please advise your club of the contents of this letter...I apologize for its length.

First, I know that many WON'T be happy with what's in this letter, but the ASSDF is basically "going broke"...and one of its purposes is "the publication of The Modern Square". The truth is that we're losing subscriptions at a rapid rate, and getting very few ads...so, we can't "kick this down the road"...we MUST decide on its future at the ASSDF Fall Festival Delegates Meeting, which will be at Betty's Country Dance Hall in Caddo Valley, Arkansas (just south of Interstate 30 at Exit 78), on Saturday, October 14, 2017 (time to be announced, possibly in the morning). The choices will have to either be voted on, or implemented by the ASSDF Board, if The Modern Square is to continue with a print edition. Please note that I will ONLY be able to attend the ASSDF Delegates Meeting, and will NOT be staying for any other part of the festival, due to medical issues; but I will be happy to continue serving as Circulation Chairman/Webmaster.

As noted, the ASSDF is losing paid subscriptions at a rapid rate (70% a month – for every 10 Reminder Cards that are sent out by the Circulation Chairman, only 3 come back for renewal). With the current rate of renewals, as well as purchase of ads (both are nearly non-existent), the ASSDF is "going broke", because of the ever increasing costs of the postage and printing of The Modern Square. The Postal Service REQUIRES the following for the ASSDF to keep its current Periodicals mailing rate:

! A MINIMUM of 50 PAID subscriptions; of which at least 70% of those must be PAID. The "free subscriptions" are for Callers and Cuers as a THANK YOU for their work, to prepare a program for a club dance, lessons, or both...the National Square Dance Directory, for their online database (they ceased doing a print edition years ago, likely due to costs of postage and printing)...to the Circulation Chairman to replace lost copies, or if a dancer misses the database deadline...and to the Periodicals Clerk at the Business Mail Entry Unit in Little Rock, to prove to the U.S. Postal Service that the ASSDF is complying with their regulations.

! Publication no less than quarterly (4 times a year). The organization can publish monthly or bi-monthly, if they desire. Obviously, the more times published, the higher postage/printing costs.

With the September, 2017 database, we fell BELOW 100 paid subscriptions, with 97 paid and 18 free. We LOST 7 paid and 1 free in September, dropping to 90 paid and 17 free for October. If no renewals come in through February, we'll LOSE 9 in October, leaving 81 paid, and 17 free for November. We LOSE 19 in November, leaving us 63 paid, and 17 free for December. The November database has to be sent in PRIOR to the ASSDF Fall Festival October 12-14, 2017. Five more expire in December, putting us at 58 paid and 17 free for January. We LOSE 3 in January, putting us at 55 paid and 17 free; and LOSE 10 in February, putting us BELOW the minimum.

At that point, the ASSDF will LOSE its Periodicals Rate, and have to pay around \$1.20 in postage for every copy of The Modern Square, paid and free. If we drop to 50 paid, and still have 15 free, that will still run the ASSDF nearly \$1000 a year in postage...and that does NOT count the cost of printing each month.

If the ASSDF does NOT have the money to pay the postage, there is absolutely NO POINT in the ASSDF printing the publication; as the Postal Service will “trash” any item without proper postage. Or, they'll require the recipient to pay a postage due fee, before they will deliver it. That will likely require the subscriber to go to their local post office to get it; and some of these are only open limited hours Monday through Friday, and closed on weekends and holidays.

If the subscriber does not pay the postage due for the item in a timely manner, it'll be sent back to the Circulation Chairman (who has to pay both Postage Due fees), and it'll appear the item was “undeliverable”. At that point, the subscription is SUSPENDED, no matter how much time is left on it. Then, the subscriber must start with a fresh subscription, at the current rate, and missed copies of back issues may NOT be available...even if they had material in them!! That would also be the case, if the “free subscriptions” are ENDED, one of the options noted below.

Basically, here are our options for The Modern Square – all of this is in consultation with Tanya Johnson, the Periodicals Clerk at the Business Mail Entry Unit of the U.S. Postal Service in Little Rock:

! When the number of paid subscriptions drops to 50, the ASSDF then MUST pay the HIGHER First Class Postage Rate of around \$1.20 per copy...no matter how many paid and free copies there are. However, First Class Postage DOES have HIGHER DELIVERY PRIORITY than the current Periodicals Rate, which is a lower cost.

! Reduce the frequency of publication from monthly to bi-monthly (every other month), or to 4 times a year (quarterly). The Post Office will NOT let a publication be mailed for less than that.

! END the “Free Subscriptions” to the callers, cuers, the Circulation Chairman (who already has a paid subscription), and to the National Square Dance Directory.

Note that each of these can still obtain a copy or copies of The Modern Square, by purchasing a regular subscription like everyone else. I'm looking at ENDING of the free subscriptions, with the December, 2017 issue. The ONLY “free subscription” that must remain is the one that is REQUIRED to the Postal Services Periodicals Clerk. If we dropped to 10 total subscriptions, 7 of those would still have to be “paid”...but then, my question is “why even bother printing it??”.

! INCREASE the price of the subscription, currently \$20 a year, but that may be changed...and that would likely drive more subscribers away.

National Squares Magazine, which is published in the interest of the National Square Dance Convention, was originally a print edition, published 4 times a year, with a \$7 yearly subscription rate. A few years ago, because of the increased postage and printing costs that are affecting the ASSDF (and other publications), they ENDED the print edition, refunded the unexpired paid subscriptions, and went to e-Edition (online) only, in PDF format (requiring the Adobe Acrobat Reader); but they made it monthly, and FREE to anyone to download from their website.

! END publication of the print edition, and go to e-Edition (emailed or online) ONLY. That would end the cost of postage and printing...but it would leave those who can't get, don't have, or don't want a computer, or internet access "out in the cold".

Right now, the ONLY way for one to get an e-Edition is to ALREADY have a PAID subscription, and send your email to the Editor of The Modern Square (the email address is in the publication, and on the ASSDF website at www.assdf.com). Your email is used ONLY to send the PDF file of the e-Edition...nothing else. You can NOT get an e-Edition by itself at the present time.

Note that having BOTH a print edition and a separate e-Edition would require providing of additional paperwork on the part of the Circulation Chairman...and possible additional fees to the Postal Service. There would also be MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS of the "paid" and "free" issues, for both printed, and e-Edition.

If we do go to a separate, or only, e-Edition, the questions are:

\$ Do we charge for it, or make it free??

\$ If we charge for it, what do we charge, and how long is the subscription??

\$ With current print subscriptions, how do we pro-rate that to the e-Editon??

\$ Does the ASSDF have the money to "refund unexpired paid subscriptions"???. I personally would be very surprised if it did.

! END publication of BOTH the print edition, and the e-Edition, and begin "shutting down" the ASSDF (including the website – more on that later in this letter). That would effectively "kill" square and round dancing in Arkansas...and I doubt any of us what that to happen.

Next, on the Reminder Card (noted at the top of this letter), it CLEARLY notes that you are to make the check or money order payable to ASSDF, and send it to the Treasurer...with notice of a "change of address" sent to the Circulation Chairman...and addresses are provided for both. I can't make the directions on that card any clearer in English.

Yet, some dancers are sending it to my physical address (required on page 1 of The Modern Square by the Postal Service) instead of the Treasurer. I had to purchase a Post Office Box, due to "sticky fingered nosy neighbors" at the apartment complex where I live. If I'm out helping my 91 year old Mom during the day (I do all the driving, shopping, and other things for her), and the check is sent here, some of the "undesirables" out here could pilfer the box before I get home, and alter the check. That means your payment would NEVER get to the Treasurer, you'd be "out that money", and have to write another check, plus your identity could be stolen from the check!!

Or, dancers are making the check to “Modern Square” or to me personally. If it's made to Modern Square, I might be able to add “ASSDF” to it, for the bank to accept it for deposit...but the Reminder Card CLEARLY STATES that the check/money order should be made to ASSDF. If you make it to me, I'm just going to send the check right back to you, I will NOT notify the Treasurer, and your subscription/renewal will go UNPROCESSED.

And, if the Postal Service loses it (the ASSDF is NOT responsible for lost, stolen, or misdirected mail), it could take some time before you realize there's a problem, and contact the Circulation Chairman. Since I took this job 10 years ago (and I'm content to work behind the scenes, instead of being on the dance floor), not even 2 dozen people have contacted me about a possible problem with their subscription!! What you do OFF the square/round dance floor is YOUR BUSINESS. It's not my job to contact you to find out WHY you didn't renew.

I am reachable via email, Facebook, voice mail (please leave a message, I will call you back at the time you note, as I have unlimited long distance to the contiguous 48 states), or postal mail to my Post Office Box. But, if you aren't willing to do any of that, it appears that nothing is wrong with your subscription...and I can't help you. And, the excuse that “I didn't have time” doesn't work. Except for the dates of our birth and death, all of us have 1440 minutes in a day...we make time for what we want to do, whether we admit it or not!! It's all a question of “priorities”.

As for the ASSDF website, I admit that compared to states surrounding Arkansas, the site itself is “lame”. But, my HTML knowledge is VERY BASIC. The site did NOT have a webmaster for several years after the original webmaster, Joyce Taylor, died; and so outdated data was on it for a long time. Then, it took a lot of work for me to get the outdated data to then be removed from squaredancing.com – and to set up the new website. When I'm visiting a website, no matter the topic, I don't want to be having to look for the proverbial needle in a haystack. I want to find the needed information that I want, in short order, and be on my way.

Plus, NOT everyone is on Broadband High Speed Internet. DSL is half the speed of Broadband in many areas, and in some locations, all they have is dial-up internet (28800 baud or lower). Or, the internet signal is so poor, that it takes forever for a page to load. Along that line, if you load up a page with fancy graphics, animation, media (audio/video, etc.), “cascading style sheets”, etc. that cause the page to “seemingly take forever” to load...these who are NOT on Broadband High Speed Internet will visit your site ONLY ONCE...and tell everyone what a LOUSY website it is, and what a LOUSY organization exists that runs it. Never mind those who are visually impaired, having to use speech synthesizers and text readers to navigate a website.

I can check with Verio Webhosting, to see if their “advanced website publishing options” will allow me to do more with the ASSDF website, but it'll cost me a monthly fee, in addition to what I pay every 3 years for all the security and other features, plus the web domain fee. I've chosen to “eat all my costs” with the jobs of Circulation Chairman and Webmaster for the ASSDF (I'm a volunteer, like everyone else), because the ASSDF is “going broke”. Yet, there's no point in my checking into this, if the ASSDF isn't going to be around, because of a lack of support.

In short, please make every effort to be at the ASSDF Delegates Meeting October 14, in Caddo Valley. The future of both the ASSDF, and of The Modern Square, may depend upon it.

Daryl Stout, Webmaster/Circulation Chairman, ASSDF www.assdf.com