

A half century of twirling in Montrose

Local square dancing club still going strong after 52 years

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“Swing your partner, and do-si-do” is a phrase synonymous with the form of entertainment known as square dancing. Square dancing itself has roots that can be traced to the 1600s in Europe.

Here on the Western Slope, the Black Canyon Twirlers Club, a square dancing club, may not have a legacy that dates back that far, but it does extend to September 1959, which is when the club originated.

Over the past 52 years, a lot of locals have do-si-dosed in their colorful dance costumes. Longtime Montrose residents Tom Dougherty and wife Dot are proud club charter members and have been dancing for more than 58 years. Dougherty himself is a former Colorado Square Dance state president.

At local events, the dancers are accompanied by country music CDs, cassettes and, from time to time, vinyl records. The couples perform numerous dance movements which are directed by a “caller.” Complementary move-

ment is integral to the art of a successful dance.

Additionally square dancing offers many physical and mental benefits for the participants, enthusiasts say. The physical activity of the dance and mental acuity associated with the “calls” are some of the attraction for local residents Tom and Joyce Hartman, active club members since 1992.

A visit from Joyce Hartman’s sister prompted the Hartmans’ involvement in square dancing. After taking lessons, they, too, became enthusiasts of the dance that is hailed as Colorado’s State Dance.

With more than 50 members, the club members range from young to old. Hartman acknowledged the club generally attracts an older crowd, but he said he would love to see some younger folks carry on the local tradition. The club has kept itself sustainable and current through membership fees that are used to pay for regional callers and “quers” for the bi-monthly dances, which are held on the second and fourth Saturdays at Montrose’s Lions Community Build-



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Joyce Hartman, left, Tom Hartman, Barbara Connelly and Darrell Connelly of the Black Canyon Twirlers club practice traditional square dancing steps Tuesday. The club's next dance takes place at 7 p.m. Saturday at the Lions Community Building, 602 N. Nevada.

ing at 602 North Nevada.

The club also maintains a cooperative relationship with Delta’s Hub Wheelers Square Dancing Club. That relationship is one of the reasons why the club is able to maintain its good numbers, according to Tom Dougherty.

“The Delta club meets the first and third Saturdays, and when you get down to it, you can dance

every Saturday if you want,” he said.

The club welcomes people of all ages to observe the colorful dances. In September, square dance lessons are offered.

The club’s next dance will be held at 7 p.m. Saturday at the Lion’s Community Building. For more club information, call Dougherty at 249-8058.