



The Glen Goers Square Dance Club

In 1966 a square dance workshop was held in Glencoe. There had not been a square dance club in Glencoe since 1953. In 1967 the workshops became the Glen Goers and a full schedule shows up on the calendars. His Plato club (five miles distant) had gone off the calendar after 1963 and the Hutchinson club (fifteen miles distant) after 1965. The Glen Goers schedule included a night for beginners, a night for regular dancing and a night for round dancing. By 1970 a night for intermediate square dancing and a night for beginning round dancing were added. In 1968 he dropped his clubs in Mankato and Willmar and his schedule begins to thin out keeping him a bit closer to home. By the end of the 1971-72 calendar the only other regular commitments were to a New Ulm round dance session and Knucklehead gatherings.



The Glen Goers in November of 1968. This picture appeared in the Glencoe Enterprise when they hosted an area square dance festival at St. Pius School on November 21, 1968.



In 1969 the Glen Goers had a surprise birthday celebration for Jack (April 10, 1908) at one of their April dances. The April 24, 1969 Glencoe Enterprise reported the following.

Glen Goers Sponsor Surprise for J. Roach

“The wonderful spirit of Square Dancing certainly prevailed at the surprise birthday party for Jack Roach, long time square dance caller for 22 years.

The theme, “Do you remember when” got off to a good start when a group of the original Plato square dance club started by Jack in 1950, promenaded into the St. Pius gym

singing happy birthday. This was followed by Plato dancers singing a German song, Hi-Le, Hi-Lo, which brought a burst of applause from the 90 couples registered from 29 towns. Jack called an old time square dance to a floor filled with dancers.

The decorating committee posted Happy Birthday signs on the gym walls. Colorful tags in the form of insects had Jack "Roaches" name printed on the wings and were pinned on each square dancer. Mrs. Roach was presented with an orchid and Jack with a boutonniere. A birthday guest book was signed by each person attending the party and presented to Jack at the end of the evening."

Although the Glen Goers went on for many years, Jack's regular involvement with them came to an end in 1972 when he and Mabel purchased a trailer and began spending winters in Florida.

Plans for a different way of life really began to become a reality in January of 1971. In 1967 Jack had given up his position as physical education instructor at Glencoe High School and took a junior high social studies position that had opened up with the retirement of one of his long time colleagues. He had also started the Glen Goers and in 1968 eliminated the long trips to Mankato and Willmar. The year 1967 also brought Mabel's mother from Minneapolis to live with them in Glencoe. She passed away in January of 71. She had a burial plot at Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis so following the funeral they traveled to Lakewood for the interment. While there they decided to purchase plots for themselves, right next to Mabel's mother. They also decided to make a trip to the Department of Education building in St. Paul and see just how much Jack's Teachers Retirement pension would bring them. They decided that day that Jack would retire from teaching at the end of that school year.

Many of their square dance friends had already retired and with trailers or mobile homes, spent their winters in either Arizona, Texas or Florida. When Jack's mentor Lynn Woodward retired in 1964 he and his wife traveled the country in their Airstream trailer visiting and dancing with their square dance friends. So it was that with these decisions Jack and Mabel embarked on a new way of life and purchased a Kayot Forrester trailer. Jack retired at the end of the school year in 1971 and they began experimenting with how they would live on the road. Short trips were made for square dance events like a Knucklehead gathering in Thunder Bay, Canada to test out their system. Over the winter months of 1972 and 73 they made trips to Arizona and Texas to spend time with friends and see whether the climate suited them. They felt that Florida was the best place for them to be and from that time on wintered in Homestead, Florida, just south of Miami. Jack also had an aunt who lived in Miami. They would typically leave Glencoe for the weeklong 2,000mile trek to Florida after the 15th of October and begin the return trip after the 15th of April. While in Florida Jack would teach dancing in the trailer park where they lived as well as beginners classes he would start in the community. He and Mabel enjoyed dancing with many of the area square dance clubs like the Flying Squares at Homestead Air Force Base, the Florida Crackers and the Salty Dawgs. In 1973 they traded their Forrester for a 29 foot Airstream trailer and made Homestead their winter home until 1980 when they decided they would stay home to await the birth of their first grand child.