



First some history.

Way back in January, the Timberline Toppers talked 39 unsuspecting souls into signing up for a beginner square dance class. The club's technique was multi-pronged: arm twisting at after-ski parties, newspaper ads, and a free chili dinner night with Bear calling.

Two nights a week for ten weeks. On our feet for two hours after a long day of skiing. (Keep in mind, this was during a Summit County Winter with the best powder in years.) And a constant stream of new moves piled onto barely recognizable calls from earlier weeks. So how come *everyone* finished?

One possible reason: A large number of students were newly retired to Summit County and this was a good way to meet new people or get to know new friends in a different setting.

My theory (as one of the students): The subconscious memory of childhood Saturday morning cartoons.

The cartoon factor hit several times each class night, and at the regular Timberline Topper dances (which we class members enjoyed free of charge). The episodes were more or less random, except that a square in the back corner (the "black hole") seemed to be especially vulnerable.

A square would be moving (tentatively) through calls when someone would guess wrong. The "new" move seemed strange to a few other dancers, but then, aren't all these moves strange? They hesitate. Bang, bang, bang – pileup on the Cloverleaf. Everyone has this confused, stunned look. What happened?

A cobwebbed corner of the brain recalls Wile E. Coyote's confusion every Saturday morning after a Roadrunner trick – really funny. Some dancers bravely attempt the next call. A few still have that stunned look: "I was gaining on that darn Roadrunner when I followed him into a tunnel and wham! ... No tunnel?" The rest laugh – to tears, their knees weak, their bladders at risk.

"Repair your square."

To no avail. This square is lost for the rest of the tip. The images of fellow dancers with cartoon expressions overwhelm any deciphering of "Scoot Back Boys."

How can you quit something that makes you laugh so hard?

So we finish the classes, join the club, and dance. A few of us go to the state festival. A bunch of us pile into cars and outnumber the nice people at Granby. A few squares drop in at Wednesday night refresher courses, which mix in some plus moves. (Thank you Dennis O'Neal.) We are getting better. Sometimes we weave and spin through an entire tip, finding our corner right there for an Allemande Left and Promenading home in order.

Sometimes.