



*Dan Schweitzer*

I was originally impressed that square dances in countries like Japan and Germany are called in English -- well yes, they did lose WW-II. But, really, just translate "box the gnat": "den Gnat schachteln" Wow, would that ever be helpful in Munich -- they'd know right away to reach out their right hand! Ya, right.

Clearly the names don't provide much in the line of clues for execution. Maybe knowing their origins helps.

So, consulting the source I usually use for all my facts, I've uncovered the following little known derivations for call names.

Eight Chain Four – This step was developed in a prison yard by Bruno Zwert (5 years for wearing a sleeveless shirt at an August square dance in Laramie), Bulldog Baxter (2 years for drinking a Cosmo before square dancing in Pagosa Springs), his brother, Blacky, (6 months for wearing a falsified name tag), and Buster Boone (1 year for failing to smile even once at a Timberline Topper dance). The men were in leg irons (8 chains) and called their step "Eight Chain, Bruno, Bulldog, Blacky, Buster" -- callers balked.

California Twirl – This step was named for the late gunfighter Slick McGue. Slick, of Bar Harbor Maine, always displayed fancy pistol work when he drew. This habit explains two of the terms above: "twirl" and "late."

Alamande Left – Because this is such an important step, a naming committee was formed in 1887. A long, hard debate ensued. Near the end, Al Carmichael and his wife gave up and went home to milk the cows. When the committee chairman got up to announce the verdict, he first noted that Al and Mandy left.

I could go on, but, unfortunately this wonderful knowledge doesn't help us decipher calls in the heat of a tip.

No way around it, the names don't help. Logic doesn't help. History doesn't help. Only blind repetition drums responses into our feet.

So, ta da, we finally get to some helpful information for improving our dancing: Dance. With that in mind, Timberline Topper dances are the first, third, and fifth Saturdays of the month in the Frisco Community Center. You will, of course, smile there -- you don't want to end up doing hard time like Buster Boone.

By the way, anyone know the Japanese word for "Thar"?

PS Told you the TT New Year's party would be great. Tip: Don't ever miss a chance to dance to Scott Byars.