

U.S. Handicapable  
Square Dance Association  
9354 Johnson Rd.  
Mobile, Al 36695-9030

Jan. 24, 2008

To All Clubs,

Greetings in the New Year. Time is rolling along, and our twenty year USH Convention is approaching this coming July 24 – 26, 2008. There are several pieces of information I wish to pass on to you concerning this convention.

While this is the Eleventh USH Convention, it is also our Twentieth Anniversary Convention. In 1988, the very first USH Convention was held at the Chickasaw's J.C. Davis Auditorium. This was truly a historic and monumental event. Clubs from several states attended, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Texas and Ohio came for this grand event.

We have had dancers from as far away as Taiwan, R.O.C. attend the National U.S. Handicapable Square Dance Convention. Clubs from New Jersey and Kentucky are now regular attendees at each convention.

Since this is our Anniversary of the first USH Convention, it was decided to return to the city where it all began twenty years ago, Mobile. The Square Dealers, with Michael Feore as General Chairman, and I wish to extend a warm welcome to you to our city. We plan to make this the very best convention yet.

I have included many internet links to various websites that have information about the Mobile area. These can be found at: <http://www.ushandicapable.org/2008%20-%20Mobile,%20AL.htm>

While in the Mobile area, plan especially to visit the USS Alabama, the BB60, which is a very famous American Naval Battleship. You can tour through a large part of the ship. Also see the Submarine UUS Drum, the most decorated US submarine from World War II. By the way, the first, workable submarines were built here in Mobile, and were used in the Civil War. Mobile has been tied to the sea since it was first established in 1703. The Mobile Riverfront area is quite busy and interesting. You can board a Harbor Tour boat, the Cotton Blossom, right at the Convention Center and see the river and bay from the water.

Mobile was the last battle in the Civil War. Actually the South had already surrendered when Admiral Farragut came up Mobile Bay to attack and take the city. As his fleet passed the forts at the entrance to Mobile's bay, he made the famous remark to "Damn The Torpedoes (Cannon) – Full Speed Ahead."

Mobile is also the first Mardi Gras in America. Years later, some of the Mobile Krewes were invited to New Orleans to show them how to set up and run Mardi Gras. Some of the popular

parades draw crowds approaching 300,000 to downtown Mobile. Believe me, Mardi Gras is BIG in Mobile, and extremely popular, all year round.

The hotel you will be staying in during the convention, The Renaissance River View Hotel, is very interesting also. When I first contacted the hotel concerning our convention, in 2003, it was an Adams Mark branded property, kind of like a middle of the road class of hotel. After about a year of negotiating we reached an agreement for a contract. Once the contract was signed by both sides, we and they were locked in. A month after the contract was signed the hotel was sold to the Retirement Systems of Alabama, RSA, and everything from that point changed. The hotel was sold for about \$40 million, then the renovation started. These renovations have now reached around \$65 million, and they are close to being finished. It went from middle of the road to a Four Diamond Hotel. Cost of rooms took a huge cost gain quickly. Believe me this is a very nice property now! But the best thing is that we are locked into them with the old contract, not the new ones, and this saves us about \$60 per room, per night! Yeah!

We will be staying in the Riverview Hotel, but we will take the fourth floor skywalk from the hotels parking garage across River Street, over to the Arthur Outlaw Convention Center. There we will conduct the Thursday Night Banquet and all of our dance sessions. The Grand Ballroom is 15,500 square feet. Ceiling height is twenty two feet high. It has its own, very workable stage. It has doors that open directly out onto an Outdoor River Terrace, where usually the Cotton Blossom Side wheeler tour boat is tied up. The Mobile Convention Center has 239,900 square feet of exhibition space.

The Convention Center is an exquisitely beautiful building, with a very high percentage of wall space with windows, lots of glass. It is a striking, white, building, directly on the waterfront. But the most unusual aspect of this beautiful edifice is the major, East/West, railway tracks that run directly through the building. Yes, I said through the building, the only building like it in the entire world. To see a hundred car L & N Railway Train go chugging through this building is quite a sight!

I will be supplying more information about our Twentieth Anniversary Convention as we go ahead with planning. So, NOW is the time to get your hotel reservations made. Please make sure you tell the Reservations Clerk the USH Code, and that the rooms are \$113 per each. You must use this code or you may be charged much more for your rooms.

I will also tell you that during this Anniversary Convention I plan on stepping down as President of US Handicapable Square Dance Association. This has been a gut wrenching decision to say the least. But over the last few years my health has been a real issue at times. Because of that and that I feel that we need a much younger person at the top, and someone with energy and new ideas to help USH not only sustain its growth, but to even expand, I have thought of this for about five years now. Once I made that decision four years ago I started looking to see who of our younger leaders had the skills, dedication, respect and energy to take the torch. One person met our needs in all ways. She is Michelle McCarty, our Lady Caller from New Jersey, and she is the one I will support to be elected to become the new President of USH. I started talking to her about this almost four years ago, but did not tell her she was the one, that I did not tell her until Baton Rouge, and I think I scared the dickens out of her, there was a long silence on the

phone before she finally spoke and accepted. I have been working with Michelle for several years now, and I am even more convinced that she is the right person for us to trust our vital organization to. So, during the Board Meeting in July I will step down and hope you will elect Michelle McCarty to take over as our President. I can not put into words what this organization has meant to me and Kitty. It is so much a part of us. I know you will find Michelle very capable but also a real pleasure to work with. And, gee, we will also get daughter Brittany! What a duo.

However please do not think that we are leaving the Association, we just plan on taking on some new responsibilities within USH. I am starting to work on a video project that will be teaching dancers and club leaders how to start a Handicapable Club where there is none.

I also wish to start working on national fundraising for USH. I hope to take us to where we have a national office, with the funds to hire a small staff fulltime to work for our clubs and dancers in the future. That is my fondest wish, and I think that that is possible. I have made contact with some individuals who worked for NPR Radio national fundraising and will be traveling to Birmingham soon to meet with them and try to absorb information from them, to help us accomplish that goal. So I will step down as President this July and accept the Title of President Emeterius.

Thanks,  
Dean Emery  
President, USH