

Call of the Month: Shape Changers, part 2 by Barry Leiba

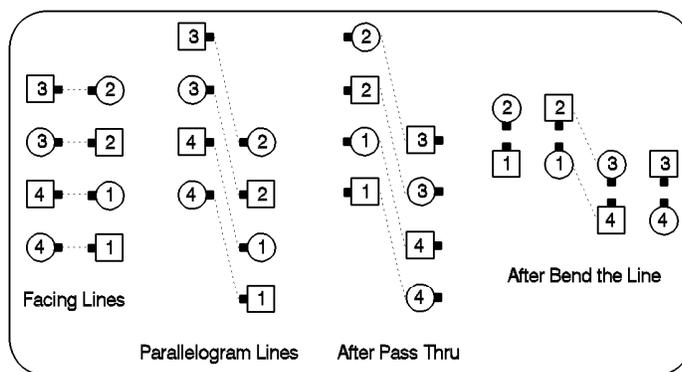
Thanks to Karl Jaekel, of Rocky Mountain Rainbeaus, for pointing out an error in the December column. When I set up point-to-point diamonds for CONNECT THE DIAMOND I inadvertently made them *facing diamonds*, and I hadn't meant to do that. I had the girls CAST OFF 3/4, but I should have had them HINGE and U-TURN BACK (or, at C2, SHAZAM). That would have set up the right-handed point-to-point diamonds that I'd meant to have.

Back in July, we talked about *shape changers* — calls that change which spots on the floor the dancers occupy. I promised that we'd look a little more at shape changers, and that we'd see why they're important at various levels of square dancing. We'll do that this month.

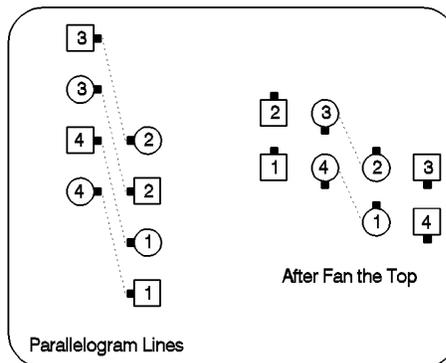
First, let's do a quick review. The spots on the floor that the dancers occupy are called *footprints*. We aren't concerned about the direction the footprints face; we only care where they are. A call is a *shape changer* if and only if the footprints occupied after the call is done are not the same as the ones occupied when the call started. In PASS THRU, for instance, the dancers take each other's footprints, so the call is not a shape changer. HINGE, on the other hand, is a shape changer, because the footprints change. Remember also that shape changing and formation changing are two different things. A call such as TOUCH 1/4, which changes facing lines to right-handed columns, changes the formation. But TOUCH 1/4 does not change the shape; the footprints remain the same, and the 4-across, 2-down *shape* of the formation remains the same.

It's that last part that's the key to the whole idea of shape changing. Is our formation *wide*, or is it *tall*? That's one way to look at 2x4 formations, and if we started off wide and ended tall, we've changed the shape. How many dancers are in a row in our formation? If we started off in a 2x4 formation and ended up in a 1x8 (such as after CAST OFF 3/4 from a right-handed column), we've changed the shape. The first important point about shape changing is that awareness of it gives you help in knowing what formation you'll end the call in. That's **help**, not a crutch, because the ending formation of many calls depends upon the starting formation, and there are calls that are shape changers from some starting formations but not from others (can you think of some? We'll talk more about that later).

The real importance of knowing about shape changing comes at the Challenge levels, when you must work with distorted formations. For instance, in the C2 concepts of PARALLELOGRAMS and OFFSET LINES it's important to know what a call has done to the shape, not just to the formation itself. In PARALLELOGRAMS, we have lines (or columns) that are shifted so that the people "in front of us" in the line are actually on a diagonal (see the diagram). In OFFSET LINES the people "next to us" are shifted on a diagonal. Note what happens when we PASS THRU (not a shape changer) and then BEND THE LINE (a shape changer) from a parallelogram. The first leaves us in a parallelogram; the second converts the parallelogram to offset lines. For simple calls like those, there's not much of a problem figuring out where you should go. For more complicated calls, we have to remove the distortion so that we don't get lost, and when we're done we have to know how to put the distortion back.



Let's try the call FAN THE TOP from our facing line parallelogram. First, make note of the offset - which direction is the formation shifted? Now everyone step to a tidal wave (you have to move diagonally to get to the people "in front" of you). The centers of each side CAST OFF 3/4 while the ends of each side move up, and we end in waves. But now we have to put back the offset. If we correctly remembered that the right half of the formation was shifted 50% down, we can shift the ending formation that way and end in offset waves. But note that it's much easier to do that on paper than it is to do it while you're dancing. When you're dancing you have to remember that the side near the caller is shifted toward a particular wall, and that's usually done by picking a diagonal of the room and orienting yourself against it. It takes practice, and even then it can be quite



difficult. But knowing whether the *shape* has changed will help, by telling you whether to look for a parallelogram or offset lines. You can see why Challenge level dancing got its name; many of the phantom and distorted formations are quite challenging indeed, and they require a good deal of spacial awareness and experience to master.

Now for a bit of a quiz. I said earlier that some calls are shape changers from some formations but not from others. Can you name any? In particular, what are the lowest-level calls you can think of that do that (and what are the starting formations)? I'll give you my answers next month.