

The Fabulous Hip Boot Boys

The idea for the Hip Boot Boys first originated with a New Year's Eve dance on December 31, 1986. Back then, the Swinging Singles and Cloverleafs used to hold a joint New Year's Eve dance which was hosted by either club in alternating years. It was encouraged that people put on skits during the dance for everyone's entertainment. Jerry Carmen and Greg decided to call a tip where we would put on costumes and call ourselves the Hip Boot Boys.




At that time there was a company called Red Boot records which produced square dance records. They had a group of callers in their employ which were known as the Red Boot Boys. They used to travel around the country appearing at special dances in order to promote their records. Having attended several square dance dinners during the previous year and noticing that the participants tended to “pile it on” when discussing their dancing abilities, Greg came up with the name “Hip Boot Boys” due to the fact that when square dancers got together and tried to play “one upmanship” with one another, it would get quite “deep” in there requiring the use of hip boots.

The skit was well-received and everyone had a good laugh when we came out dressed as 1950s hoods, wearing our fedora hats, sunglasses and white tee shirts with cigarette packs rolled up in the short sleeves. We did some humorous singing calls and told some jokes. Greg had always thought that a square dance caller was primarily an entertainer, so this little skit played right into what his notion of what square dancing should be like. A few days later, when Jerry got together with his friend Bob Schlenker, and told him about the skit, Bob really liked the idea and suggested that we form a group and take the act “on the road”, so to speak. We decided to adapt “stage names” for the characters that we were playing. Bob Schlenker became “Slick,” Jerry Carmen was “Squiggy” and Greg became “Bubba.”

In order to add a bit of mystery to our arrival on the scene, it was decided to make up some flyers to be put out at various dances announcing that “The Hip Boot Boys were coming to Rochester as part of their “national tour” No details were given as to the identity of “the Boys” – only that they were touring the country in their luxury motor coach. Some flyers were made up showing a 1940s touring bus and a list of previous stops on the nationwide tour. After the flyers were distributed, Bob Schlenker had a thought: He wondered if we could get an actual bus somehow – “That would be great if we could roll up in our own bus!” Greg suggested the next best alternative, he called the Regional Transit Service and asked if we could take some pictures down at the bus barn on East Main Street using their various busses as props. They said “No problem – come on down!” and so after making up a large banner proclaiming THE HIP BOOT BOYS, down we went with our cameras and tripods on a sunny Sunday afternoon. The results of our publicity stunt are shown below:



SWINGING SINGLES
PROUDLY PRESENTS
The
HIP BOOT BOYS
IN CONCERT - FOR A NIGHT OF



\$2.50 PER PERSON
- PAWS - LEVEL

MONDAY APRIL 3, 1989 8:30^{PM}
PENFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH
1862 PENFIELD RD. (RT. 441)

HERE'S WHAT THE CRITICS SAY:
"Just Wonderful ... The greatest singing voices I've ever heard!"
- SWINE HEADERS' WEEKLY
"We won't say whether they're good or bad; We don't want to offend our advertiser."
- AMERICAN SQUARE DANCE PHOENIX
"More fun than a dozen Whoopie cushions."
- VARIETY
"You've got to see 'em to believe 'em."
- BULLOCK, MISSOURI "DAILY SENTINEL"
"A great performance ... Worth twice the price."
- THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

After we had put on a few dances, Bob Schlenker came up with the idea that we should put on a Hip Boot Boys summer weekend at a campground in the western New York area. Bob knew of a campground located near Prattsburg, a small town north of Kanona, N.Y. We ran several weekend dances there with an opening dance on Friday evenings, workshops and round dancing during the day on Saturday, a Saturday evening dance followed by a party, where Bob would often do his hilarious "Foot Doctor" routine, and finally a Sunday morning dance before everybody went home.

We also did a couple of summer weekend events for the Cayuga Cut-ups which were held at Wells College on Cayuga Lake. We typically did the Saturday evening dance and officiated at the post-dance party. These events were normally held on the hottest weekend in August in a non-air-conditioned hall.

25th ANNUAL CAYUGA CUT-UPS SUMMER WEEKEND 1991



FEATURING SUPER FULL-COVERAGE PROGRAM...

By comparison...
worth twice the price!

☆☆☆☆☆
MORE EXTRAS...
"Gong Show"
Check the block to get entry form to showcase your talent!
FUN & PRIZES!



Kim Ribicoff West Springfield, MA Chip Kelleys Macedon, NY Hip Boot Boys Kanona, NY
Ray Taylor Buffalo, NY
Pete & Carol Herberts
Steve & Joyce

It was also during this era that we were asked to call at the "FLAC fest," an annual square dance event held in the Southern Tier. We were asked to do a couple of tips at the beginning of the program. After we were finished calling, we decided to stay at the dance, since we had driven all the way

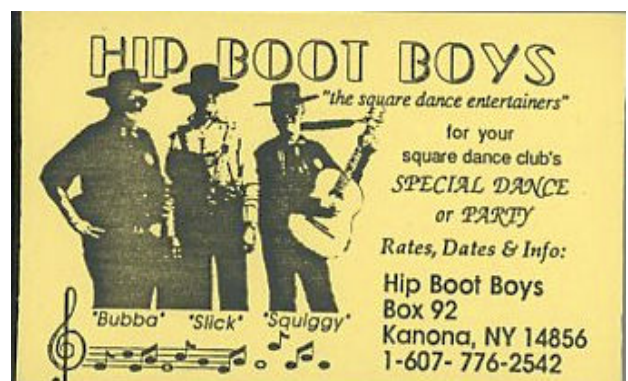
down to Horseheads for the event. However, there was one little difficulty; none of us had anyone to dance with! Once again it was Bob who came up with an idea: "Why don't we dance with one another! We can trade-off on taking the girl's part!" Trouble was – every time we got into a square; the three other couples would leave. So much for "friendship set to music"!



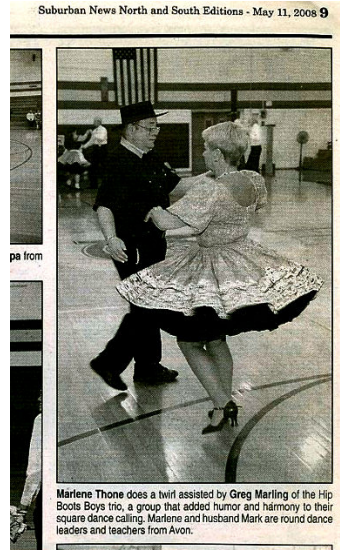
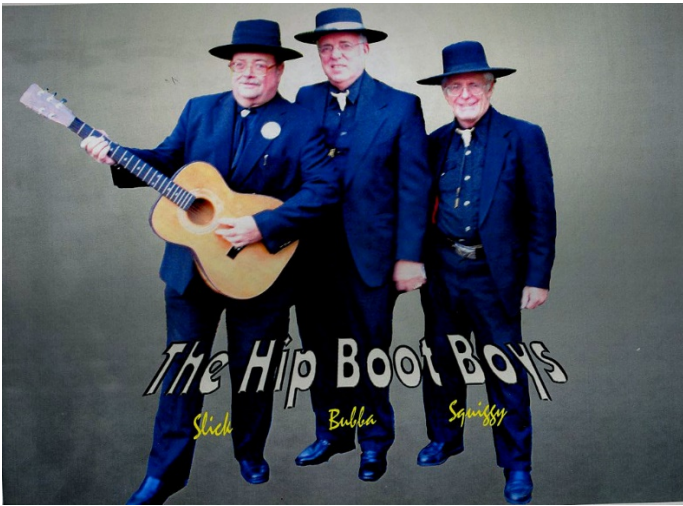
It was shortly after this time period that Greg decided to drop out of the group and out of square dancing in general. Too much time as a club officer, a caller, and going to endless meetings had taken their toll. He would return in 2003.

In 2001 Greg began dancing at Village Squares with Jerry Carmen as the caller.

Several people who Greg had known from back in the days at Swinging Singles were dancing there and it was a fun time with Jerry. As time wore on, it was suggested that we have a reunion of all the Hip Boot Boys. During his absence, Ron Brown had been recruited to be his replacement in the group. Bob Schlenker had dropped out, and it was just down to Jerry and Ron. Greg hadn't called in a number of years, but he thought: "Why not give it a try?" Calling to Greg is kind of like riding a bicycle – once the music started, all the old routines, figures and song lyrics jumped right back into his head. Shortly after the big reunion, Greg was invited to re-join the group. Since Ron had originally replaced Greg, he had taken on the name "Bubba", and since Bob Schlenker had left, they needed someone to play the part of "Slick." Thus, Greg went from being the original "Bubba" to being the new "Slick" while Jerry remained as "Squiggy". Got that?



Bob Schlenker, Greg Marling, Jerry Carmen, Ron Brown



Over the life of the group, the Hip Boot Boys have called at dances throughout New York State and Pennsylvania. We have performed regularly at the New York State Fair and at two national square dance conventions. Bob, Jerry and Ron had the honor of singing the National Anthem at a Red Wings ballgame with thousands in attendance.

It is our belief that people enjoy dancing to good music accompanied by harmony and humor. Most people enjoy dancing because it is a form of entertainment, and we enjoy hearing people humming one of the tunes that we have presented as they are leaving the dance to return home.

The Hip boot Boys often did mini concerts (singing regular songs usually 4 to 6 songs) during a break in dancing. For several years Greg, Jerry and Ron called New Year's Eve dances for sponsoring clubs. Sally & Peter Emmel coordinated the effort.



Scheduling issue with Ron: when he was double-booked and couldn't attend a dance in Pennsylvania, the HBB adapted by prerecording some songs and Jerry made up a fully dressed "Ron" cutout.

Bob sang the high parts, Jerry the low parts and "Ron" (pre-recorded) sang the lead.



Here are the HBB calling at one of several Dance-O-Ramas at which they were invited to participate.

Sadly, Bob Schlenker and Jerry Carmen have passed away.

It should be noted that Greg and Ron continue to carry on and entertain as the 2 remaining Hip Boot Boys. For the remaining clubs out there – think about booking the Hip Boot Boys as we ease back into square dancing after the disastrous 2 years of COVID.