

America 250 Historical Reflections—Some True-Story Background

In 1909, Milton Gregg Fager's grandparents David Milton "Milt" Fager (1875-1965) and Emma Kathryn Schmitt (1881-1967), suffered the loss of their infant daughter, Gladys Fager (1908-1909, buried Holyoke, Colorado). In 1920, they migrated by railroad with 9 of their 10 children from drought-stricken cornfields in Nebraska to beautiful farmland in the Animas River Valley, just outside of Durango, Colorado.



Milt and Emma Fager Family homesteading near Colorado / Nebraska Border @1911

They brought square dancing and some of its music with them. Tunes, such as "Under the Double Eagle" by Austro-Hungarian composer Joseph Franz Wagner (1856-1908), were among Family favorites. Adults in the Family could sing or play hundreds of songs by heart. Good humor was part of the mix. A piece of music often came to an end with someone playing, "Shave and a Haircut, two bits"—part of an 1899 Charles Hale tune often used for comic effect.

During the 1920s and 1930s, folks often gathered in Milt and Emma's farm home in the Animas Valley, and later in their home on Main Street in Durango. Some came to add to the music with their accordion (invented 1822 Berlin), or with their fiddle, guitar, piano, or harmonica (invented 1821 Germany). In 1931, Milt won 1st Place, and his youngest son, Willard, won 2nd Place (out of 15 contestants) at the La Plata County Fair harmonica contest. Family could play and sing well enough to make toes tap and the whole house dance!

Until 1938, Milt and Emma, and their children worked hard on their farm, but on Saturday nights, they loved to go square dancing at the Animas Valley Grange Hall, just down the road. Milt called square dances there; and it was there that Willard practiced square dancing with his mother and sisters. Until national public radio broadcasts were heard on home radios throughout 1940s America, it was down-home, make-your-own music that kept body and soul together.

In the late 1940s, Gregg's parents, Willard Milton "Bill" Fager (1917-2010) and Roxie Louise Williams (1929-2022), met, married and started their family in Idaho Falls, Idaho. In the 1950s, they provided square dance lessons from professionals for their oldest children, Louise and Gregg, who soon became proficient enough to dance with their parents.



Emma and Milt in their Durango CO home garden @ 1961

As members of a 1960s Idaho Falls square dance club called the Promenaders, Gregg's parents enjoyed performing at square dance contests, exhibitions, and jamborees, mostly in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado.

In 1997, Gregg composed some lyrics for a square dance tune he recited for laughs at a Sun Valley, Idaho "talent" show, held as part of his parents' 50th Wedding Anniversary celebration. Years later, he embellished his work. Ideas came from every-which-where, to include renowned 20th Century comics, comedians, and cartoon characters, not to exclude the hilarious Mel Blanc (1908-1989). Gregg's 2026 story-time version is entitled **The Allegory of Square Dance Justice**. Ready?

America 250 Founding Principles—The Allegory of Square Dance Justice

Once upon a time, not a fur piece from here, things were getting' WAY out of hand in one of them frontier settlements where civilized womenfolk were few—and so were men with brains. Saturday nights meant miserably destructive fights among sponsored feuding groups of hell-bent miners, lumberjacks, cowboys, and gunslingers. Busted-up saloons were way overcrowded. So was the jail. Bottom line: Boot Hill was growing faster than Gold Rush City—much of which needed to be rebuilt—right now! City Leaders were desperate to find a way to put an end to sponsored hatred and feuding.

Meanwhile, each convicted jailbird had to pay a set share of the City's latest total rebuild and repair costs, before being released. The more the fines, the longer the rebuild, repair and jail times. Sponsored feuding groups wanted their jailbirds out of jail—right now! So-o-o, they just flat out submitted their own business proposal to City Leaders, entitled **Square Dance Justice**. Their proposal seemingly covered most of the details, from the minimum attendance age of 18, to square dance tunes and lyrics, to band instruments and dress standards, to clobber rules and revenues, and to appointment of the Sheriff as square dance caller.

As City Leaders studied the proposal, they could not tell if bargained-for redemption would result, but they were amazed at the amount of money that sponsored feuding groups offered to pay to participate in one (or more) rounds of **Square Dance Justice**—during which their very own

vengeful jailbird, thug or ringleader could legitimately clobber a feuding opponent they hated, and could apply their portion of gate proceeds to reduce or pay off their unpaid jail fines.

Turns out, City Leaders granted the Sheriff legal authority to impose on convicted jailbirds, thugs, and feuding group ringleaders, one or more rounds of **Square Dance Justice**. City Leaders and the Sheriff were given the right to full immunity, the right to stop any round, and the right to set the amount of non-refundable entrance fee to be paid by each opponent, once they were matched and scheduled by the Sheriff. A participant could withdraw or quit (or be carried out) at any time during the square dance. Completion brought them higher pay.

On each Saturday night of each round, each even-numbered partner who had won in a Sheriff's coin toss, stepped forward, ready to square dance dressed in his own clothes and boots. Every odd-numbered partner who had lost in the coin toss, stepped forward, ready to square dance dressed like a woman wearing a provided dress costume, a bright pink pigtail wig, and cosmetics. **WOOF!**

Finally, with plenty of used musical instruments, refreshments, and other stuff in place, and with plenty of extra-large deputies in the Band, and elsewhere, the Sheriff smiled and turned on his microphone, the Band leader raised his baton, and the music and the Sheriff's call began.

SHERIFF: "Evenin' Folks. With three other couples, FORM a square. Get ready to dance to some LIVELY music. Find the rhythm, and here we GO!"

[**Musical Note:** Caller sounds out same, simple, mouth-harp-sounding tune before each stanza.]

The Allegory of Square Dance Justice—Music and Lyrics

1) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Bow to yur part-ner, Waive to the BAND,
BOW to yur corner, Right and left GRAND

2) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Hard to MOVE? Wats-wrong-with-ya MISTER?
Could it be that heavy-set-friend-a-yur SISTER?

3) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Pro-me-NADE, If-yur moov-in' too SLOW,
Better STEP-on-the-GAS, cause here we GO

4) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
MOVE those feet now, Dance real SPRY, If he's
steppin' on yur toes, give him ONE black EYE

5) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Spin-er 'till she's DIZEE-on-the-ol' dance floor,
Giv-er-1 more SPIN, thru-the base-ment DOOR

6) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Come back up, he ain't so TALL, Punch him in
the NOSE, and kick him thru the WALL

7) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Come back in and prom-e-NADE...
STOP-fur some GRUB, and some lem-o-NADE

8) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Grab a chunka' PIE an-TAKE a BIG BITE,
Put-tha-rest on her WIG, an' Squish it a MITE

9) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Por-sum icy-punch down-the-backa-his pants,
Stand back now, and watch him DANCE

10) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
SWING yur part-ner, Take her by the HAND,
Giv-er-1 more SWING, in-to the BAND

11) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Watch-her-go smash & crash-into-the-middle,
Now the GEETar's FLAT, and so is the FIDDLE

(weird notes sounding from
dead or dying instruments)
&^%\$#@!@#\$\$%^&

12) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Smack him on the head with a two-by-FOUR,
Give'im 1 HONK-in'-goose-egg, then 1 MORE

13) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Tell him now, not to be so DUMB, Kick him
in the KNEE, then kick him in the—other knee

14) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Help-yur-part-ner UP, Take'm by the ARM,
GIV'm first-AID an do-em NO fur-ther HARM

15) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Put-some BAND-aids ON, Make-yur-face-look
SAD, Tell-th'BAND-yur-sorry-for bein'so BAD

16) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Face yur part-ner, THEN-do-si-do 'TIL you
bandage one-ano-ther-from head to TOE

17) ♪...♪...♪▲♪-♪, ♪-♪-♪-♪▼▲♪.
Guards take the jail-birds back to the JAIL, OR
to-the-hos-pi-tal, if they're hurt'n like KRA-ZY

SHERIFF: "That's all Folks! To those who are Free to Go—Come Again!

BAND closes with "**Shave and a Haircut, two bits!**"

The Allegory of Square Dance Justice—The Rest of the Story

On that first-night of the first round, there was high demand for admission tickets to watch scores of feuding dance partners (half of them dressed like women), as each one danced to the Sheriff's words, which all of them had rehearsed, and to the same dance tune, all at the same time. Bottom line: Square Dance Justice was one BIG hit after another. BOOM—WHACKa—BOOM!

Turns out, most of the casualties were dance partners, ticket holders, and former school teachers, who nearly laughed themselves to death. Reports said this "cause of near-death" was "due to the deafening magnitude of hysterical laughter aroused by the mis-matched and ill-fitting dresses, boots and beards, by the hairy legs, goose eggs, bruises and black eyes, by the smeared cosmetics, the many pie-plastered-pink-pigtail wigs worn ASKEW, and by the many ice cubes spilled on a very slippery dance floor." VOOP—VOOP KA—BOOM!

Rounds followed week after week. New comical dance routines were composed. Jailbird clean-up and repair crews kept facilities in working order. Ticket prices soared. Scalpers were getting up to ten times box-office-ticket prices, depending on matched feuding opponents. Jailbirds soon paid off their fines, and were released. The Sheriff soon made enough BIG money for City Leaders to rebuild and expand the City, but the hatred and feuding did not stop.

Turns out, mega doses of loud laughter produced no lasting solution to sponsored hatred and feuding. No one stayed happy after **giving** a "good beating" to a sponsored feuding enemy. No one stayed happy after **receiving** a "good beating" from a sponsored feuding enemy. Miserably destructive fights stopped only when enough suffering prevented further feuding, but the hatred did not end. Hateful retribution was still more socially valued than charitable redemption.

Some City Leaders began to search Scripture for the principles necessary for a "best" lasting resolution. They soon recommended that all ponder the words of two prophets of God, who wrote, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10); and "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22). Further discussion led them to post a seven-digit U\$D REWARD:

"TO the person or team who discovers THAT formulary of pure and virtuous principles which—WHEN sufficiently personified in faithful obedience to God's Celestial Law—MOST effectively produces, preserves, restores, and builds within each of us—THAT gloriously clean, pure, integrating **power** of charitably virtuous character guided by continual personal revelation from God—WHICH are prerequisite to receiving the intelligence, light, and truth necessary to BEST resolve vicious problems, particularly hateful feuding."

One submission came from a united group of good, wise, and honest Church Leaders, who sought the entire reward for the City's poor and needy. Their submission looked right, but needed some testing. City Leaders prayed unto God in faith for the wisdom they lacked. As a result, nearly all felt prompted to invite the group of Church Leaders back to teach them how to keep most hard-working men from hateful feuding, especially in the home and neighborhood.

After those Church Leaders had been warmly greeted and seated, their presenters, a married couple, began by reminding all that "marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God" (cf., D&C 49:15), and "neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:11). They reemphasized the words of Alma and Isaiah. They then taught and testified of the "promised land" words of God in the book of Ether (see Ether 2: 6-12).

They concluded Gold Rush City needed enough civilizing, and nurturing womenfolk to love their man, to marry him, to keep building a pleasant and joyful life with him in their clean and orderly home, to feed him, to seek learning and wisdom with him, to serve alongside him, to go to uplifting worship services with him, and to settle him down, with goodly children. As reward money was expended as prescribed, turns out they were right. End of Story

Each of the virtues listed by the author in his work The eDictionary of Human Character is a **pure and virtuous principle**. Which ones would you use to win the greatest rewards you could, for yourself and others? What better choices and decisions will you learn, make, and teach from this Allegory?

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Written by: *M. Gregg Fager*
CEO, Human Progress L.C.
myhumanprogress.com

