

Charlie Chapman Retires

Charlie Chapman, Advertising Manager, retired in June after twenty-nine years of service to Ford Meter Box. As an ambassador for Ford Meter Box in the waterworks industry, Charlie became well-known for his vast waterworks knowledge, advertising experience, and public speaking skills. Charlie greeted countless tour groups to Ford Meter Box and regaled many audiences with his presentations on Ford Meter Box and local history. He attended countless tradeshow, including 21 ACE conventions, and visited many customers during his tenure. Charlie was committed to the waterworks industry and volunteered for AWWA at the state and national level.

Charlie is a twenty-year member of the American Water Works Association. For the national Association, he led the Operator Involvement committee and is currently a Trustee for the Distribution and Plant Operations Division.



Charlie was a valuable member of the Indiana Section AWWA. In 2012, he was awarded the Water Wheel Award, and in 2015 he was awarded the Hoosier Crew Award for his service and dedication to the section. He is currently chair of the Public Relations Committee for the Indiana Section.

As Advertising Manager, Charlie helped launch Ford Meter Box's first website in 1996 and oversaw its development and expansion. Corporate communications have changed drastically during Charlie's time in Advertising as he advanced the move from print to digital documents. In 1989, Ford Meter Box mailed out 5,000 catalogs annually. Today, only 700 catalogs are distributed per year as more people turn to online resources.

Tom Lower, Vice President and Senior Manager of Sales and Marketing, offered insight into the impact Charlie has had. "Charlie is responsible for a great deal of the sales tools and exposure we have in the marketplace today and for that we are eternally grateful."

Congratulations, Charlie, and enjoy your retirement!












Farmer's Market

Oil on masonite by Rebecca Burton, 712 Bond Street, North Manchester, Indiana 46962

SEPTEMBER 2018

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Dance Marathons: Endless Days and Nights on the Dance Floor

Dance marathons that were once the rage across much of America are now all-but-forgotten relics of the flamboyant times of the 1920s and the drab years of the Great Depression. They were contests of physical endurance where couples struggled to dance for hours and, sometimes, days on end, trying to stay awake and trying to stay on their feet.

The marathons flourished in towns and cities in nearly every state, and they attracted audiences of men and women who came to watch and to cheer the couples on the dance floor. Today, the dance marathons of earlier years are sometimes compared to the “survivor” shows that are seen on television.

Some social historians trace the beginning of the dance marathon craze to 1923 when Alma Cummings, a dance instructor, danced without stopping for 27 hours at the Audubon Ballroom in New York City. She changed partners from time-to-time with six men who had the advantage of being able to take breaks each 30 minutes or so. Soon, along came Vera Sheppard, an office clerk who chalked up 69 hours of dancing without stopping. Vera’s record quickly fell to a dancer from Cleveland, and the craze was underway.

Promoters found they could turn a quick dollar by setting up shop in a gymnasium or even a theater and charging up to fifty cents for a seat at a contest. Women, it is said, made up the greater portion of the audience, which invariably increased in the evening. Customers could stay as long as they liked. In the larger venues a live band provided the music at night, but during the day, when the audience was smaller, a phonograph blared away from a corner table.

The sponsors sometimes brought professional marathon dancers with them. These couples knew the ropes of marathon dancing, and they knew of certain antics certain to please the crowds. The contests were often slanted in favor of local contestants, and the professionals would drop out early so that the hometown couples took the prizes.

Promoters of marathon dancing, always provided meals for the contestants. They sometimes fed the dancers as often as 12 times a day, but meals had to be eaten while the dancing was going on and not during rest periods. In other words, the meals were part of the show.



Photo credit: Marathon Dancers, 1923. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016834823/>.

Especially during the Great Depression, some dancing couples said the guaranteed meals were an even greater incentive than any possible prize money. It beat standing in a breadline and waiting for handouts, some said.

The rules of marathon dancing varied from place to place, but in general the couple was required to keep moving (except during rest periods), even shuffling on the dance floor, sometimes within the confines of a measured space. In some contests, dancers faced disqualification when one knee touched the floor. Some contests lasted for weeks, and that was fine with promoters as long as audiences kept coming. One marathon dance competition in Chicago claimed a run of 115 days.

By the late 1930s, many towns and states had outlawed marathon dancing as being a threat to the health and safety of the dancers. Other laws declared the contests immoral and degrading. World War II brought an end to marathon dancing. Young men who had been contestants were drafted, women went to work in defense plants and Americans found more serious ways to spend time.

Dance marathons have staged a bit of a comeback in recent years, especially on college campuses where they serve as fundraisers. But today’s dance marathons are more mild and more innocent versions of the ones that captured the nation’s fancy several decades ago.

by Pete Jones