

Milestone Award - 1998

John Kaltenthaler

Presented By Herb Egender

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Of course all of you know that the person who presents this prestigious award has a two-fold job. First of all, he has to tell you why this individual is getting the award. In this particular instance that's no problem, whatsoever. Because this individual fully deserves it. The other thing that the presenter is supposed to do is give you just enough information so that you think you know who the person is, but not enough so that you're sure. In this instance that's impossible.

I can't hide the identity of this individual longer than a couple of sentences. As a matter of fact I feel what we ought to do is just go ahead and give him the award and get this over with so will you come up here uh....no I guess maybe I should give this. I'll give it a go.

This caller began his calling career over 40 years ago doing barn dances and one night programs in a country far from home, where English was the foreign language. He moved from that country to a city in the southwestern part of the United States, as matter of fact he moved into the city where I received my flying wings in November of 1942. That didn't help you much did it? There he was selected as one of four callers to call for the club. He did call for that club and began doing was then referred to as modern western square dancing. Not only did he call for the club, but he started his own class there. Now we often hear comments nowadays that square dancing is dying, how do you think he felt, when that first class consisted of four morticians and their wives?

In 1981 this nomadic family moved again to northern Germany. There he established a club which they called NATO because the club members came from many different countries. He moved then again to Heidelberg and there he had two clubs that he called for, those clubs are still strong, going strong. Now only did he call for those clubs, honing his calling skills, but he became very much involved in training other callers. He made a significant contribution to training programs which are still in existence.

He was chairman of the European Callers and Teachers Association at one point, he was also a training director. In 1966 he again returned to the United States, and went to work for a large corporation on the east coast.

Again, he found himself in a position of trainer. He had a good job, he had security, he had prospects of moving upward, and I think you will agree that so far I have described a fairly intelligent, forward looking individual. This forward looking, intelligent individual after 10 years, quit this job to go to work for a loosely organized outfit, that had no money, and didn't even have a home office. It's kind of hard to figure.

However it wasn't long that he was with this new organization until his managerial skills became apparent. He soon had the organization on a forward moving track, gained respect, and for the first time in long time on a fairly stable fiscal basis. I have to tell you that not very many people know, speaking of finances, not very many people know, how many times he deferred his own paycheck so that there would not be any red ink in the books.

Though not long after he got this job, my late wife Erna and I visited him and his wife in their home. We looked forward to this for some time. You can imagine our shock, when shortly after our crossing the threshold, we were told to stuff it. Well, being a military man myself, I was not about to argue with this former major in the United States Army, so indeed for several hours, Erna and I did indeed stuff it, or rather we stuffed them. We were rewarded with a nice, nice rest on a bed which folded down amongst stacks of boxes, stacks of papers, copying machine, and various other office paraphernalia, it was quite obvious we were sleeping in the midst of a very busy office.

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There are many other stories we could tell about this gentleman, though we have time for only a few. He was not into the job only a year or two, before coast to coast across this country, hotel reservation clerks, head waiters, hotel sales people were talking to each other shaking their heads and asking this question. How in the heck do you pronounce that name? It still gives some of our mc's problems. Many of you that attended early conventions, will remember this gentleman for the manner in which he consistently banged his head against the light fixtures behind the head table. I say consistently because not once, but several times. Fortunately there was no damage done to the light fixtures or to his head. As a matter of fact he didn't even muss his hair.

Now when a monument is erected to CALLERLAB, and surely there will be one, on that monument, etched in stone, will be words that come from the heart of this man. Words borne of frustration and concern and those words are, what we all know, NO BADGE - NO FOOD - NO EXCEPTIONS.

To more serious things, our recipient tonight maintains a full home program including clubs and classes, he is very much involved in his local callers association, he travels extensively in his part of the country, has made a number of trips to Canada, Europe, Australia as well as many other states outside of his own neighborhood. He is an accredited Caller-Coach and he's established a wide reputation as an excellent trainer of callers. He has made major contributions to caller training materials including the Curriculum Guidelines for callers and the Technical Supplement.

He took the lead in establishing licensing agreements with ASCAP and BMI, he was largely responsible for setting up and manning the training seminars at the National Square Dance Convention. He and his wife have been prime movers in the Overseas Dancers Association for many years, they have been hard workers for LEGACY and he has done many leadership seminars in various parts of the country. In 1979 he and his wife were awarded the Sets-In-Order American Square Dance Society's, Silver Spur Award, because obviously he couldn't have done all this without his wife. It's a wonder she stuck with him for 18 years, they were not able to celebrate their anniversary, because it fell at the height of the CALLERLAB Convention and he had other things to do. Well, on a personal note I can say for a period of about 8 years, I stuffed it any time he told me too, because he was my boss. And I have to tell you, never a greater guy to work for or work with. You know him as the 18 year Executive Secretary of CALLERLAB, you know him as a member of the Board of Governors, I know him as a former boss, and wonderful friend. It's indeed my honor, my pleasure to present the Milestone Award to **JOHN KALTENTHALER**.