

Milestone Award - 2006

Calvin Campbell

Presented By Jim Mayo

I am pleased to have the privilege of presenting CALLERLAB's most prestigious award this evening.

The recipient is a man with such unique qualities that it will be impossible to keep his identity hidden from most of you for very long. Nevertheless, I will keep his name to myself for a while as I list those unique qualities and remind you of his contributions to square dancing.

This gentleman was born and brought up as a child on the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains. He learned to square dance in the fourth grade. I'm not sure whether it was because he didn't play an instrument but he did get to lead the band as the drum major in high school. He set off to college in the 1950's at Colorado A&M in Fort Collins and there he discovered that the college square dance club offered, in addition to lessons in square dancing, the opportunity to meet girls. Fortunately, even though one of the girls he met there was to become his wife, the encounters with girls did not distract him from an interest in calling. Soon after he learned to dance, like many of us, he thought it might be fun to try calling. As he said in a letter to me that I have quoted in my book about the history of modern square dancing:

*I started learning to become a caller in the fall of 1955. I picked up one record for patter and picked a dance from *Sets in Order Five Years Of Dancing* and memorized it. I also did the same with a singing call. This was the accepted method of learning to call and you didn't stray very far from the routines published in the books.*

Those were the early days of Modern Western Square Dancing and that was also very close to where the transition from traditional square dancing began. Our recipient became part of that transition and called for square dance clubs in Texas and New Mexico while pursuing his career working for the US Dept. Of Agriculture as a veterinarian.

At the same time he never lost interest in the traditional heritage from which we came. He and his wife were founding members and have long been active supporters of the Lloyd Shaw Foundation.

In 1974, when CALLERLAB invited about one hundred of the most prominent callers in the US to attend our first convention, he was there. His involvement with CALLERLAB was interrupted for a few years but, since his return in 1991, he has been a strong and vocal advocate for a particular phase of square dancing. He has worked to promote the new dancer party. Five years ago that activity was viewed with some disdain by many, if not most, modern western callers. Some thought of it as an activity for those who lacked the skill to call for a club. Others viewed it as a waste of time since it seemed not to be effective in recruiting people into square dance class. Few thought of the party dance as an important part of our modern activity.

Our Milestone recipient had a different view. A view that, at the time, was certainly in an "uncharted field." He believed that our square dance recreation should be made available in a form that would allow folks to participate without committing their entire recreational life to it. He was vice-chairman of what was to become the Community Dance Committee, then chaired by Ken Kernan. Under their guidance the contra, traditional and easy rounds and mixer parts of square dancing were combined into what we called the Community Dance Program.

By now most of you know that I am describing Cal Campbell. He has worked hard at making that program a success. He has been a strong and out-spoken advocate for a program of dancing that would allow people to join our activity even though they could not keep up with our demanding schedules. In support of this "uncharted" approach he has served, with a lot of help from Judy, for many years as the editor of the CD Journal.

He has continued as an advocate for this special part of our square dance activity long enough to see it become accepted by many of us as an important path for us to take into the future. The current acceptance of, and respect for, the beginner party as part of square dancing does not diminish the decades during which Cal pointed toward that path in near isolation. He and Judy ran the Beginner Dance Party Leaders Seminar (BDPLS) of which we are now justifiably proud, for several years with little recognition by CALLERLAB and virtually no support. For the past 5 years it has been a very well attended pre-convention program that we are pleased to identify as a CALLERLAB event

While the BDPLS is the most recent and most visible of Cal's contributions to our activity, his dedication, willingness to work, commitment to our organization and to square dancing are huge. He has demonstrated the success potential of the kind of square dancing he urges us to offer. He has written very helpful books to teach us the skills he has demonstrated and his writings have been published in all of the major square dance publications.

It is my privilege to ask you to join me in recognizing the contributions that Cal Campbell has made to CALLERLAB, to square dancing and to you and me.