

Milestone Award - 2010

Masaru Wada

Presented By Mike Seastrom

Page 1 of 2)

There are some who pass through a brief period in their life to enjoy square dancing and even calling, but there are others who make it a lifelong passion. I say passion, because they approach every endeavor year after year with whatever it takes to make what they're doing the best it can be.

Many of those who have this life-long passion for our activity do it alone, or at least get some support and understanding from their spouse and their loved ones. There are others, however, who are lucky enough to have their loved one right by their side throughout their career.

The caller and leader that I'm referring to tonight is one such lucky man. His name is on the 2010 Milestone Award, and his amazing wife has been there and has supported his passion for our square dance activity all those years. I know that as this presentation unfolds, many of you will know the identity of this fine gentleman. Please keep the secret with me until his name is announced.

Our 2010 Milestone Award Recipient and his future bride lived in the same town and were classmates in junior high school. In 1960, four years before they were married, they were invited to a square dance class at a US military base. They did not speak English, so learning to dance was difficult, but the club members were very kind and encouraging to them. Our recipient enjoyed square dancing so much, that a year later at the age of 19 he attended a caller's school at the military base and bought his first square dance records. Because of the very high exchange rate at the time, square dance records were very, very expensive to purchase and to mail to his country.

That same year, 1961, he joined The Far East Callers' Association that was organized by American military forces. He then began to expand square dancing in his own country. In 1962, the dawn of square dancing in Japan, he established the Tokyo Callers' Association and his own square dance club in the same city.

In 1964, he and his wife were married, and square dancers from the military base and elsewhere attended. Mr. Tac Ozaki, the MC of that wedding ceremony, is here with him tonight.

That same year, the editor of SETS IN ORDER American Square Dance Magazine and the future guiding force in the formation of CALLERLAB (Bob Osgood), along with another CALLERLAB Founding Father (Bob Van Antwerp), came to Japan with a tour group of American square dancers. Our recipient was very impressed and inspired by dancers of different countries sharing the fun on the same floor. He was equally impressed with the professional calling techniques he witnessed.

In 1966, he was a director when The Japan Square Dance Callers' Association was established. During those years he participated in educating new callers and in American and Japanese get-together square dance jamborees. He also worked in close cooperation with The Far East Callers' Association and The Japan Folk Dance Association.

His Imperial Highness Prince Mikasanomiya recommended our recipient for his service to the square dance activity in 1976. In 1980, he assumed the position of Director of the Organization Committee of The Japan Square Dance Association. In 1988 he became the Chairman of the Board of Directors. He helped to build cooperation between the six branches of The Japan Square Dance Association and was in charge of organizing The All Japan Square Dance Convention in Tokyo that same year.

He has traveled all over Japan to conduct caller and dance leader classes, and has distributed free materials on how to manage square dance clubs. The Japan Square Dance Association grew to 1,100 members in 1975, then to 9,100 members in 2000 and then to over 14,000 members in 2009.

He helped establish the Overseas Advisory Committee in CALLERLAB and became its Chairperson in 1999. He has also promoted CALLERLAB in his country and in his travels around the world.

He was a consultant to the Taiwan International Square Dance Convention Committee for their first convention in 2003, and has lead tours of Japanese dancers there almost every year. As a matter of fact, he and his lovely wife have lead tours of dancers to many places in the world over the years, and will lead another tour to the U.S. ending at the 59th National Convention in Louisville this year.

Milestone Award - 2010
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(Page 2 of 2)

In 2004, his leadership led the Tokyo Callers' Association to join and to become an affiliated caller association with CALLERLAB. In 2005, he wrote Square Dance For All under the supervision of The Japan Square Dance Association. This book has been a contributing force in increasing the square dance population in Japan.

Our recipient also kept very busy working as a sales engineer at Fuji Film Corporation and retired in 2002. Retirement has given him time to call more than 20 big events all over Japan each year, and call for five clubs every week.

His retirement has also given him time to do some cooking at home, play golf with his wife, and get together with his daughter and her husband. This helps to smooth things a little as he continues to add to his square dance music collection, which already occupies too much closet space at home. Does that sound familiar to any of you?

He is working as a compilation member on the historical chronology of the Japan Square Dance Association, which will be issued at the 50th Japan Square Dance Convention in 2011. He is also organizing another huge anniversary party, the 50th Anniversary of the Tokyo Square Dance Club in 2012.

While there are other fine leaders who have spread the joy of the square dance activity and helped it grow in Japan, one man, one couple stands above the rest. Tonight, to his surprise, our honoree is accompanied by his amazing wife of more than 45 years. It gives me great pleasure to present the highest award CALLERLAB can bestow on any individual to a very deserving man. Ladies and gentlemen, I present the 2010 CALLERLAB Milestone Award to **Masaru Wada**.

Yumiko-san, will you and **Mr. Tac Ozaki** join **Wada-san** at the podium?