Milestone Award - 1994
Bob Ruff
Presented By Bob Osgood

To be eligible for the Milestone Award, an individual must show qualification in the following areas:

1. Uncharted fields
2. Withstand the test of time
3. Make an unselfish contribution
4. Demonstrate professionalism and leadership
5. Have had a broad influence on the square dance activity

The individual selected to receive the award tonight meets all five of the criteria. His name -- Bob Ruff.

Bob began his calling in 1949, during the "boom" period of square dancing. Teaching capacity-sized classes, the new dancers filled the clubs he called for and the success of his teaching and calling skills became apparent. During this time he became a successful recording caller and in the early 1950's he called throughout North America. In addition to teaching others to call in his home area of Whittier, California, he also served on the faculty of callers schools across the country and appeared on the staff of many dancer institutes during this period.

At this time there was considerable concern about the square dancing that was taught to the young people in our schools, overextended school teachers, knowing little or nothing about contemporary square dancing that was being enjoyed by the adults in their area, relied on outmoded styles of dancing and calling. Rather than thrill the young students, this form of dancing literally "turned them off" with the effect, that many never wanted to square dance again. As a matter of fact we heard of more than one instance where a school teacher threatened to punish the boys and girls who had done poorly with their school work by making them square dance an hour on Friday.

Bob Ruff's avocation was teaching and calling square dances, but his full-time vocation was teaching mathematics and physical education in a junior high school. Combining his ability in teaching square dancing to adults and his proven success with the 7th and 8th grade students, he set aside time each week to include squares for his young pupils.

The popularity of these dances caught the attention of other teachers in the school and soon they were asking Bob to call for their classes. This worked out fine, but when teachers from other schools in the area asked for help, he had to draw the line. There just weren't enough hours in the day. Then it became apparent to Bob that the combination of his teaching and calling formed a system that might be packaged and made available with a few illustrations, printed notes and caller instructions. The music, his proven style of calling and teaching presented on a special extended-play recording, completed the package. The next step was to gather teachers who wanted to learn and, with an in-service program involving a full day of practice, teach them how to use the tools he had created.

The beauty of the program was that the students were having fun, plus learning the form of square dancing that was being done by the adults in their area (and around the world).

It was just a matter of time before Bob received requests to conduct in-service courses for school teachers, recreation leaders and others across North America. His calling techniques were made available to hundreds of teachers and they, in turn, began teaching hundreds of others.

Along with the success of this system that Bob initially designed for school children, the records began finding their way into the Australian "outback" and other isolated spots where there were no callers or teachers.

Last October the CALLERLAB Executive Committee found Bob well qualified to receive the coveted Milestone at the 1994 Convention in Vancouver.

A short time later Bob became quite ill and it was decided, despite the usual procedure of not pre-informing a recipient, that Bob be notified, hoping that knowledge of this honor by his peers would help to encourage him. He expressed great pride in having been honored in this way.

Bob passed away at his home on January 22nd.

Here to accept the Award are his wife, Babs and son, Jeff.

And so, with great pride it is our distinct honor to present CALLERLAB's highest award to Bob Ruff.