

Milestone Award - 1985

Dick Ledger

Presented By Skip Smith

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It is with great pleasure and honor that I am able to present this evening, on behalf of CALLERLAB, the Milestone Award. The man receiving this award tonight is most deserving because of his compassion for his fellowman and for the fun and fellowship he always instills in all his endeavors.

He was born on April 18, 1925 in Pawtucket, RI and was the youngest of five children. He was only 2 years old when his Mother passed away. His father, who was a lace weaver, had to move frequently to where the work was taking them to the NY and NJ areas.

When in his teens, they moved back to East Providence, RI, where he went to high school. Here he played the tuba in the high school band, where he met a young girl, by the name of Susan, who played the french horn.

On his 17th birthday, he joined the Naval Air Force. He was stationed in South America for two years as a radio man on a P.B.M. Their job was flying anti-submarine patrol over the Atlantic. When he returned to the States on a 30 day leave, he married the little girl who played the french horn in the high school band. They were married in E. Providence, RI on December 2, 1944 and recently celebrated their 40th Anniversary.

The first year and a half they were married, they spent with the Navy, stationed in Corpus Christi, Texas, where their first son, Richard, was born. When the war was over and his 4 year hitch was up, they moved back to RI. He became a lace draftsman for the RI Lace Works. Their family grew. They had five more children, four girls, Jeanne, Judy, Christine, and Susan and another boy, Brian.

In the early 50's, his wife played the piano in her Mother's Square Dance Orchestra and he had to chauffeur her to and from the dances as she didn't drive. While attending these dances, he began learning some of the dances that were being done at that time.

The neighborhood in which they were living, Laurel Park, RI was looking for some entertainment in their area hall and that's where the Square Dance career began for "The Man with the Guitar, Dick Leger".

Although Dick has had no formal training and is self-taught, he has a natural talent for music and excels in timing and phrasing. One of his favorite expressions is "The common denominator between the caller and the dancer is the Music. When CALLERLAB was looking for a theme for this year's convention, Dick's entry, "Music - Our Greatest Ally" was chosen. Music, friendship, fun and fellowship are all part of Dick's philosophy. They are the most important things. His enjoyment is seeing everyone having a good time. His goal is always to this end. He enjoys what he does, the dancers feel this and it becomes contagious. They know they're going to succeed so will have a good time.

For several years he had his own square dance orchestra and always had a packed hall. Each year at the New England Convention, Dick calls in the live music hall. No hall is large enough to accommodate those who want to dance to "The Man with the Guitar".

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He's always willing to serve for the betterment of Square Dancing. Since his retirement from the RI Lace Works in January 1971, he has devoted all his time to teaching classes, calling club dances and one night stands, instructing callers and college groups and recording records.

He has served on many panels and has given lectures for various square dance associations. He has taught callers' schools in Rutland, VT., Boonesville, NY, Nova Scotia, Pennsylvania, Colorado and Rhode Island besides working with other callers at their schools throughout the U.S. The emphasis, in all of his schools and clinics is, of course, timing and phrasing.

Dick belongs to and was the President of the Narragansett Callers Association. He also belongs to NECCA, a council of all the callers associations in New England and to CALLERLAB, where he served as chairman of the Timing Committee.

Dick records several records each year and has been a featured caller on Sets In Orders American Square Dance Albums many times. Two of his biggest selling records in Modern Square Dancing were "Mary Ann" on Folkcraft and "Marina" on Top.

He has completed work on a series of Educational Modern Square Dance Albums that are used in schools throughout the country. He also has an Easy Club Level Album on Grenn to his credit. His latest release is a Modern Contra Dance Album recorded on TNT. A man of multi-music talent and often referred to as an outstanding choreographer, he calls quadrilles, contras, traditional, modern western square dances and also cues rounds.

He has called in Bermuda, Canada, England, Spain, the Dutch Antilles, and in most of the United States, including Hawaii.

Although Dick has travelled many miles, he never forgets his home club, the Merry Makers of Laurel Park, RI. He's very proud of his club as they are celebrating their 30th Anniversary in April. He has been their only caller and teacher. He has taught them the importance of timing and it is a pleasure to see them dance to the music and step out on the first beat of the phrase. Smooth -- yes! Fun -- yes!

Dick Leger, "The Man with the Guitar", was voted into the Square Dance Hall of Fame on January 17, 1978.

With all his credits, he has worked hard for the square dance movement and for his fellowmen and is most deserving of any honor bestowed upon him. I've known Dick for 25 years and we've shared many hours working together and have even played a round or two of golf together. I'm proud to be able to call him a true friend. Tonight, I am honored to be able to present this high award, on behalf of CALLERLAB, to my longtime friend. Please join with me now in honoring and presenting the Milestone Award to "The Man with the Guitar", Dick Leger!