

Milestone Award - 1993

Earl Johnston

Presented By Ken Ritucci

In Greek Mythology, It is said that Helen of Troy had a face that launched a thousand ships. From 1961 thru 1992, our recipient was responsible for launching more than 1000 careers in the calling profession.

He began his calling career in 1942, after having played saxophone in the high school band. For work, in his early years, he drove a truck for G. Fox Company. He was the only truck driver for the company with blue ears, having practiced calling patter so much as he drove, he used to inhale deep breaths of air and then see how long he could call, using all of the air, hence, the blue ears.

During the 50's, 60's and 70's, he called full time, traveling throughout the United States. He has called in 49 states, all except Hawaii. He has called at all of the major festivals through the years.

As far as teaching is concerned, he was one of the founding fathers of NECCA (New England Council of Callers) Connecticut callers, Springfield area callers.

He was the first Chairman of NECCA in 1962 and later was asked to take that position again, which he gladly did. He was a recording artist, beginning his career in 1959 on the Green label. He spent his entire recording career with that one label.

In 1970, he was inducted into the Square Dance Hall of Fame. He was one of the founding fathers of CALLERLAB, where he has served on the Board of Governors.

In addition to traveling extensively, he was responsible for a very popular note service, "NEWS 'N NOTES". He was co-author of the pocket dictionary of square dance calls, still in existence today.

If you own a Yak Stack or Director Speaker, you can appreciate the fine quality and workmanship. It was this individual that created the first column speaker. He designed one that would fit the back of his trunk. With the help of two other individuals, he created the Yak Stack Speaker, very popular in the industry today.

But perhaps his greatest achievement and contribution to our beloved activity was that in the field of caller education.

Along with Al Brundage, he conducted his first callers school in 1961 in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. His was one of the original schools in the country, with a formal curriculum for teaching callers. His schools were one of the first to teach some of the more complicated movements which was the basis for "Modern Western Square Dancing".

For over 30 years he was involved in callers schools in California, Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, Virginia and New England.

One of the most astonishing accomplishments related to his callers schools is in the geographical locations from where his students came from. His schools truly had an international flavor. Students came from Japan, Australia, Germany and other European countries.

The mark of a good caller is in the consistency to provide such an enjoyable evening that the dancers come back to you again and again. Likewise, the mark of a good teacher is in the quality of the students he/she educates. For those of you who have attended a callers school, imagine yourself returning to the same school not once or twice, but 3,4,5, even 6,7,8 times! That was one of the most significant attributes to his schools.

He is married to his high school sweetheart, Marion. They have four sons and eight grandchildren. Although none of his sons ever became callers, there are many others within our activity that his teachings have influenced.

Dean William R. Inge once said, "The aim of education is the knowledge not of fact, but of values". It is the values that he instilled in over 1000 callers through the years that to this day inspires many to live the role of a caller and leader.

It gives me great pleasure to present CALLERLAB's highest award, the Milestone Award for outstanding achievement and significant contribution to the field of square dancing to MR. EARL JOHNSTON.