



Herb Greggerson
Milestone, 1976

If ever an individual personified the typical square dance caller of the old west it had to be Herb Greggerson of El Paso, Texas, and later of Ruidoso, New Mexico. A true honest-to goodness Texan and as colorful a caller as you would want to meet anywhere, Herb and his beautiful wife, Pauline, were very much the authority on the traditional West-Texas style of square dancing,

The Greggersons were introduced to square dancing in 1933 at a small community center approximately nine miles outside of El Paso. After they had been dancing a year or so Herb memorized a number of the calls and started calling locally. A short time later he formed a club and organized a square dance band.

In those days no microphones or sound systems were available, so, whenever there were more than a couple of squares on the floor, and, so that the dancers could hear the calls, the usual practice would be for every square to have its own caller. Herb preferred to do all of the calling and reaching himself and he solved

the sound problem, as he put it, by "...yelling loud". Pauline explained that when Herb purchased his first public address system in 1936, the veteran dancers didn't like it, thought it "too progressive" and that it would ruin square dancing.

As a part of their promotion of the activity, Herb and Pauline formed an exhibition square called The Blue Bonnet Set and with this group demonstrated the fun and beauty of square dancing. In 1939 these beautifully costumed dancers were invited to perform at the New York World's Fair and to many people coming from every state and from a number of countries overseas this was an enlightening experience. In the belief that square dancing was a rough and ungentlemanly recreation, they were delighted to discover instead a colorful and fascinating activity.

That same year saw the publication of "Herb's Blue Bonnet Calls", a collection of dances Herb gathered from the old-timers in his area. Invited by Dr. Lloyd "Pappy" Shaw to come to Colorado Springs, the Greggersons shared their versions of the Varsouvianna and the Texas Schottish with the young members of Shaw's Cheyenne Mountain Dancers.

Herb worked as a full time traveling caller from 1938 until 1944 when he joined the Navy and served through 1946. Upon his return to civilian life he resumed his calling career, attended Shaw's callers institute in 1947 and began travel-calling on a broad scale. With the help of their club dancers, the Greggersons constructed The Bluebonnet Square Dance Barn next to their home. About this same time they purchased and published "Foot and Fiddle", a square dance magazine covering Texas and New Mexico.

For many years Herb ran an institute camp for leaders and dancers in Ruidoso, New Mexico, and he continued to travel, taking part in vacation institutes, appearing as feature caller, conducting classes, and calling for a series of records on the Capital label. In March, 1961 Herb was inducted into the Square Dance Hall of Fame.

Herb passed away in May, 1979. As a true pioneer in the transition era of western square dancing, Herb will be long remembered for his many contributions to the activity.