



Ralph Page
Milestone, 1980

The crowd was so great that no suitable hall could be found to hold all of the people. So here they were, more than 4,000 dancers, gathered at a huge outdoor stadium taking part in the square dancing.

On the raised platform at one end of the field, was the caller. A short, rather stocky individual fresh from New England. The dancers, now in long contra lines stretching far across the field, were Japanese. They understood little or no English while the caller, knowing only one or two words of Japanese, was directing them all by the use of hand motions.

At best, handling a group of this size is no simple task, but under these rather unusual circumstances, this was indeed a job for someone with great experience, patience, and understanding. For Ralph Page, however, this event which took place in Tokyo in 1957, was just one more colorful highlight in a life filled with unusual square dance experiences.

Ralph was born January 28, 1903, in Munsonville, N.H. He called his first square dance December 5, 1930, and became a full-time professional caller in 1938. By the time WWII rolled around, he was well established as a successful caller and teacher. Calling squares at the New York World's Fair in 1939, he introduced the activity to thousands of visitors from around the world.

His square dance writings began in the 1930s, when a series of his articles appeared in Yankee Magazine. In 1937, he co-authored The Country Dance Book, a classic on New England dancing. Over the years he authored a History of Square Dancing for Readers Digest, a series on the History of Square Dancing for Sets In Order, and a number of classic dance collections for various publishers. Ralph recorded for Disc Records and Folk Dancer Records and composed many square and round dance tunes. In 1949 he began publication of perhaps the most colorful of all square dance publications, Northern Junket.

In the years following the second World War, Ralph, along with his wife, Ada, did extensive traveling, appearing on many festivals and institute staffs in North America and overseas.

Recipient of many awards for his contributions to the world of dance, he received the Yankee Clipper Award, the Granite State Award for work in preserving traditional music and dance, and in 1961 he became a member of the Square Dance Hall of Fame. His portrait is on display at the Lloyd Shaw Archives Center in Albuquerque, N.M.

Ralph Page passed away February 23, 1985. He was a folklorist, historian, and protector of the heritage dances of America.