

Milestone Award - 2002

Al Stevens

Presented By John Kaltenthaler

Tonight we are gathered to honor a member who has displayed loyalty and promoted the activity for many years. As we have heard, there are five categories that set the recipient apart from the ordinary and must be met.

Tonight's recipient has met all five of these categories and I would like to share some of his background with you. The recipient has to be nominated by one or more people. The Executive Committee reviews the nomination and their decision is final. Tonight's recipient was born in 1942 in Waltham, MA. One of his early but painful memories was eating homemade yogurt, which his mother insisted was good for a baby. It had a terrible taste that required his mother to clean up the floor. He had the normal childhood situations that active boys find to do. Playing with other children provided things he was dared to do which sometimes went sour leaving scars, cuts and bruises. Doctors and a lot of TLC got him through his early years. One time he had to raise a small piglet and was traumatized when he had to give the piglet to a butcher. Because his step-father was a boxer by profession, our recipient took up the sport and did very well. Subsequently he decided to look for a different line of work without so many bumps, bruises or blood.

It was during his college years that he became interested in square dancing. He met a girl he thought was a schoolmate but she turned out to be the president of the square dance club and became his dancing partner for the evening. At a subsequent dance the caller for the evening told our recipient that, although he had requested a particular singing call, our recipient would have to call it himself and he did. This is when our recipient got the calling bug. He decided to teach himself to call as others before him had done. He would take singing call figures and use the calls for his patter. Thus he started his career in 1958 with logic and determination.

Some time later he found a flyer about a caller's school with Jim Mayo. However, our recipient did not meet Jim's high standards of a minimum of 3 years dancing experience. He was not accepted on his first try. He stills talks about this frequently.

Shortly thereafter he began to visit military recruiters and it seemed the Air Force offered the best deal and he enlisted. He continued to develop his skills while in the military. He began to add states in which he had called dances. When he was transferred to California he had the opportunity to gain further recognition and popularity. One of the clubs for which he called had a retired general who was able to get him deferred from Vietnam for 12 months. He was subsequently assigned to Tripoli in North Africa. (Much better than Vietnam) His arrival flight in Tripoli was the same flight as the departing club caller took. This began his numerous overseas calling gigs.

To date our recipient has called in all 50 US states and 28 foreign countries. When he was stationed in Hawaii he danced and called with many well-known callers who were traveling to Hawaii. He was invited to join CALLERLAB in the early 1970's but military duties precluded his attendance until 1976. He began serving on several committees and was elected to the Board of Governors in 1992.

When he was stationed in Europe, he was met by the president of ECTA, the European Callers and Teachers Association, who heard he was a CALLERLAB member. He began to fill in his calling dates and travel throughout Europe. He was elected V-Pres., Training Director and served 5 years as President. He created a note service for callers. He began to train other callers through caller's colleges and has conducted more than 48 colleges to date including colleges in Sweden, Denmark, Germany and the Czech Republic. He was the first Accredited Caller-Coach outside of the North American continent. He has recorded for Windsor, Sting, Dance Ranch CW record companies and the Sets In Order Documentaries. He has served in numerous capacities within CALLERLAB including Chairman of the Overseas Advisory Committee. He has been a full time caller in Europe since 1983. By now most of you recognize our recipient. It is my honor and distinct pleasure to present this MILESTONE to **Al Stevens**