

Milestone Award - 2003

Stew Shacklette

Presented By Betsy Gotta

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Good Evening.

Those of us involved in square dancing have often dealt with many preconceptions about the activity. As we know, often what is visible is not the whole picture. Tonight's recipient is known for calling a certain specialty of the square dance activity, but throughout their career they have been involved in many aspects of the square dance picture.

Our subject started calling in 1947 while still in high school. He worked with a group of children on roller skates for about a year until he graduated and moved away from the area. While in high school, he also played football and was known as the Fairdale Flash. After graduation, the person attended Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, KY for 2 years before joining the United States Navy. The US Navy sent our subject to San Diego, California where he became involved in the square dance movement. At that time (the early 1950's) square dancing was developing from the traditional form to Modern Western Square Dancing as we know it.

While stationed in California, our caller became very involved in the growing square dance activity. He joined the Southern California Callers Association, the Northern California Callers Association, and the San Diego Callers Association where he served one term as President. He also founded the Palomar Callers Association where he served one term as President. He began calling Contra in 1955 when he met Doe Graham. Doe helped our subject by taping his Contra Prompting and critiquing the tapes. It's a wonder that he had time for the Navy.

After returning to Kentucky in 1958, our hero completed his college degree at the University of Louisville, where he graduated in 1961. He then went back to California for a year, where he taught Phys Ed. and Social Studies in a private school. He also drove the school bus.

From 1966 to 1986, our caller went to work at Ft. Knox in Civil Service as an instructor, "teaching teachers how to teach". His last job was as a Project Officer for developing a Self-Paced Program in Auto Mechanics, which saved the government \$2.8 million in the first year it was implemented. The program returned scrapped vehicles to use by using recycled parts. President Jimmy Carter sent our person a letter recognizing this accomplishment.

While doing all this other work, our caller also continued his square dance involvement, becoming a permanent staff member and then a director of the Kentucky Dance Institute. This dance week covers square, round, contra, folk, and other related dance forms and has reached teachers and future teachers throughout its program. I attended this dance camp myself for some years with my parents.

Our subject also has worked to perfect his calling throughout his career. Some experienced callers will get into a routine and not look to change or improve. This caller took feedback and expanded his horizons throughout his career. As previously mentioned, when he started calling Contras, the caller taped his performance and got critiques from Doe Graham. Later, as an experienced caller, he consulted with Mike Jacobs, whom he had taught to dance, about calling the Advanced program. This shows a true love of the activity, since many experienced callers would not be humble enough to consult with a "newer" caller.

In 1991, our subject, along with David Lewis, founded the Kentucky Dance Foundation with the goals of preserving square and folk dance music and dances for the future. The Foundation has as some of its goals:

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To perpetuate the art of folk dancing in its many forms,

To preserve, encourage, and extend the arts and skills of folk dancing, square dancing, round dancing, line dancing, clogging, etc.,

To preserve the art of teaching dance in recreational and educational fields, To publish books, articles, pamphlets, teaching aids, etc.

To produce recordings, transcriptions, tapes and videos as may be needed by all means known now or developed in the future.

To conduct and promote educational institutes, conferences and workshops for the promotion of the foundation's activities.

The Foundation acquired the Folk Dancer Label, copyrights and inventory from the estate of Michael Herman who was the originator of this record label. This was music for international folk dancing, traditional squares, and contra dancing which had been collected over many years from all over the world. After acquiring the inventory and copyrights, the major work began. First, our subject got a building (40 x 80 feet) built to house the records. He, along with his wife, sorted and shelved 71,000 pounds of phonograph records. Then the records were catalogued in the computer. Working for over 22 years, our caller has digitally recorded the music on the hard drive and converted the records to CD's. In 2001, he received the National Dance Award from San Antonio College for this work.

Our caller has supported square dancing throughout his career. I have already mentioned his working with callers' associations. In addition to that work, our subject joined CALLERLAB in 1975, served 4 years on the CALLERLAB Board of Governors, and served 7 years as Chairman of the Contra and Traditional Committee. He has attended and called at 36 National Square Dance Conventions, served 3 years on the Board of Governors of CONTRALAB and 2 years as Chairman of the Board of CONTRALAB. He is a member of the National Teachers Association of Line and Country Western, the Lloyd Shaw Foundation, and the National Folk Dance Society. In addition to all of this activity, he has developed a self-paced program, How to Prompt Contra for CONTRALAB, produced videotapes on how to dance, and written 4 books on subjects varying from teaching square dancing for grades 4 to 7, to contra calling.

In addition to his work with the Kentucky Dance Institute (which celebrates 50 years this year), our caller is on the staff of the York Contra Dance weekend, teaches (along with his wife) Elderhostles for the University of Kentucky and serves on the staff of many dance camps. He and his wife, Kathie, teach 3 line dance classes each week, a Community Dance program on the 3rd Sunday of the month, and he teaches a square dance class for 4-H children in his hometown. A recent biography says that he is retired. Obviously that is not from the dance activity.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to present this Milestone Award to **Stew Shacklette**.