

GARDNER PATTON RECEIVES CALLERLAB MILESTONE AWARD

Presented by
Jim Mayo

Over the several decades of my membership in CALLERLAB I have had the privilege of presenting several Milestone awards. This award is usually given to people well known in the square dance community. One of the challenges of preparing the presentation speech is to keep the identity of the recipient from being figured out by most of you for as long as possible. A challenging goal when the recipient is widely known for calling performance.

This evening our Milestone award goes to someone with a long history as a caller. He is the son of a caller and began his calling activity more than four decades ago. His calling has been primarily in his local area. He has been active in the caller association in that area and held most of the offices in that organization. However, it is not his activity as a caller that we are recognizing tonight.

The 5th basis in the list of requirements for Milestone recognition reads this way:

Recipient must have exercised broad influence in the square dance activity - although local geographic and highly specialized activity may lead to recognition.

In this case the “specialized activity” that we are recognizing will identify him for a few of you as soon as I begin describing it. Many of you know that in recent years I have become very interested in and involved in the preservation of square dance history. That work takes many forms. Often, and particularly in the past, the preservation of history has been done in libraries and museums. In that setting, information is accessible only to the very few willing to track down the right repository and then get permission to search for the items of interest.

Over the past decade or more there has been a huge change in that process. CALLERLAB has, with encouragement of the History Committee, taken advantage of that change. We have posted on our web site the complete set of Direction from even before our first convention. We have also converted our Convention Session recordings to digital format and these, too, are becoming available on our web site. Sometimes the process is fairly passive. Documents prepared on a computer are already in

digital form. Tape recordings, once they've been put in the recorder and connected to the computer pretty much convert themselves.

A couple of years ago we presented the Milestone to Bob Brundage in large part for the series of taped interviews he conducted. Those tapes have been digitized but they have also been transcribed. That means someone sat and listened to the tape and typed the whole discussion into a computer. I did a couple of those myself and I can tell you it takes time. Some other people helped but tonight's Milestone recipient did a huge share of those transcriptions.

A few years ago another of our Milestone recipients, Cal Campbell, realized that it would be very valuable as an historical record to have the whole set of Sets In Order magazine available in digital form. With some help he assembled a complete set of the magazines but he then had the challenge of getting it converted to digital format. That process is not trivial. I've copied a few documents and I know the work it takes. Each page is individually placed on the copier. It has to be carefully aligned and kept in place while the copier does its thing. The digital copy is given a name and saved. You then go to page two - and so on for 12 months with the number of pages growing to more than 100 in each month for the 38 years the magazine was published.

As Cal was assembling the full set he was approached by the person we are honoring tonight with an offer to do the digitizing job. Cal was more than happy to accept the offer and many of you now own the digitized set which I think was first sold by the Lloyd Shaw Foundation at our Convention in 2013. That digitized form of "Sets" is also available to read on-line. When that task was finished our honoree offered to do the same for the Lloyd Shaw Foundation quarterly publication American Dance Circle and it too is now available on the Lloyd Shaw Foundation website.

With Sets In Order available it quickly became clear that a digital collection of the even longer publication of American Square Dance Magazine would be at least as valuable. The publisher, our own Bill Boyd, gave permission for all but the latest 5 years of that magazine to be digitized and made available on-line. Our Milestone recipient this evening was again approached and took on the task. It was a much larger job and took a couple of years. It also took negotiation with the University of New Hampshire where the full set is now available on-line. Most of the issues came from the collection of the Square Dance Foundation of New England but the first four years were almost all at UNH. A couple of the first year issues were missing and our recipient found them in the collection of a friend who donated them to complete the UNH set. I helped with the proof reading (to be sure that every page from every issue was included and was right side up.) Few will

ever understand what a massive undertaking it was to scan every page of 7 decades of publication, but we should all be grateful that someone was willing to take on the job and accomplish it so well.

In his write-up for the session he took part in at this convention he identified the size of the task as including a total of 1348 issues of these three magazines. It was a huge contribution to making the history of our activity available to all of us. By now many of you know who he is and I am honored and privileged to present CALLERLAB's highest award to Gardner Patton