

Master of Ceremonies

by Tim Marriner

In addition to all the skills that it takes to perform at square dances one needs to know how to act as the Master of Ceremonies for special events and conventions. The President of the United States is always introduced. So the worst introduction would be to suggest that the following individual needs no introduction. Here are some guidelines to assist the duties of a M.C.

General Responsibilities

In many ways this person is in charge of the proceedings of a dance. Sometimes the duties include programming the dance. Other times the M.C. is merely following a schedule. The M.C. must know how to handle an emergency. Advise the dancers of the location of the exits, restrooms, water fountains, flyer table, and food line. Typically the M.C. is responsible for getting the dancers on and off the floor. If the event programmed a Grand March usually the M.C. leads this with appropriate music. Visiting dignitaries and guests would need to be introduced. Announcing the Color Guards, invocation, birthdays, anniversaries and announcements might be an additional responsibility. These are important duties and a caller needs to know how to accomplish them effectively.

Preparedness and Flexibility

Get to the dance early and make sure the program is still in order. Be sure the equipment is fully operational. Some things just don't always go as planned. So be ready for anything. Someone might be a "no show" and you will have to fill in or adjust the schedule. If the event is set on a precise time frame you must be sure that the others are aware how much time they are being allotted. Keep track of the time and schedule. Keep a list of singing calls done in order to avoid duplicates. Expect the unexpected. Power failure, equipment failure, sound levels, and medical emergencies are problems that could occur. The M.C. needs to know how to contact medical assistance if needed and location of phones and first aid supplies.

Making Introductions

When making introductions always give the credits, affiliations, and titles first, ask for a warm welcome then give the persons name. Remember to give the partners name as well if present. Introductions should be meaningful and informative. Don't leave anything or anyone out. Index cards with everyone's information listed can be a helpful reference. Avoid overlong introductions, side stories and lengthy jokes. This can be viewed as showboating. You were asked to perform a duty of M.C. not be a ham. The M.C. is not the star of the show, merely the catalyst to keep the program running smoothly.