

Bill Davis

1923 – 2009

Bill Davis loved square dancing. He loved dancing, calling, teaching dancers, teaching callers, and analyzing and writing choreography. For a basic nerd and introvert, Bill became an amazingly social creature when he entered the world of square dance.

Bill began square dancing around 1953. In 1955 he decided to try calling. He often said that the first time he heard himself on tape was very nearly the last time he called. However, he persevered; and by 1956 he was calling for two clubs – the Menlo Wrecks (1956-58) and the Hot Timers of Monterey (1956-60). A succession of mainstream then plus clubs followed including Nags & Stags (Palo Alto 1958-60), Sunnyvale Single Squares (1959-60), Pacifica Seaside (1960-70), Belleswingers (Sunnyvale 1968-70), Road Runners (San Mateo 1970-78), and the Katydid (San Jose 1978-95).

Bill also called for a series of Advanced and Challenge workshops and clubs. These included Challenge Squares of Sunnyvale (1962-65), Tri-Star Swingers (Redwood City 1972), Jack of Clubs (Concord 1975-76), Square Chics (SSF 1974-78), and Top 8s (1972-95). Eventually, he was calling weekly programs of Mainstream through C-1 and teaching classes at all those levels.

Bill was co-founder in 1958 of the Santa Clara Valley Callers Association. He was also a long-time member of Square Dance Callers Association of Northern California. He served in various years as Program Chairman for the Santa Clara Valley Jubilee and as Coordinator of the Challenge Dance Program for the NorCal Golden State Round-up. He was regularly



voted a Top Ten caller in both the Santa Clara Valley and the NorCal region.

Bill was a featured caller at many festivals and often was asked to conduct caller seminars and caller training schools for other caller associations. Most of his travels were limited to the western U.S. and Canada until he retired from his full time job at Lockheed in 1989.

Bill was a pioneer in technical aspects of contemporary square dance calling, presenting papers on sight calling as early as 1964. He attended his first Callerlab convention in 1974. After that he worked tirelessly on its Board of Governors and on numerous committees including the Mainstream Basics, Quarterly Selections, Think Tank, and Ad Hoc. He also served as chairman of the Formations, Advanced Definitions, Challenge Definitions, and the Board of Governors Program Policy Committees. He was a Callerlab Caller Coach, and he received the Callerlab Milestone Award (for outstanding contributions to square dancing) in 1989. In 1995 he was honored with the Callerlab Lifetime Member Gold Card.

Bill's heavy involvement in caller training dated from 1974 when he and Bill Peters joined forces for an annual caller school – first in Colorado and later in Las Vegas. Davis also taught several ten-week sight calling courses for callers in the San Francisco Bay Area. After Bill Peters retired, Davis taught a number of Bay Area caller schools with Kip Garvey.

In 1972 Bill published his first book: *Symmetric Choreography and Sight Calling*. He subsequently published editions called *The Extemporaneous Caller* and *The Sight Caller's Textbook*. It was while writing the first book that Bill began developing the idea of using Formation, Arrangement, Sequence, and Relationship for describing square dance set-ups and devised a complete symbol system for depicting choreo-states. These concepts were eventually adopted by Callerlab.

Bill was a prolific writer. He wrote regularly for *American Square Dance* and *Sets In Order* magazines as well as having a syndicated column in over 20 regional square dance magazines throughout the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. In 1972 he began yearly publication of his Top Ten series on choreography. These morphed into *The Big Five* dictionaries of square dance definitions and usage. In 1972 he also began publishing a national caller's note service under the auspices of the Santa Clara Valley Callers Association. At its peak, this service had over 1,000 subscribers across the U.S. and in nine other countries.

All these activities came to an abrupt halt in May, 1995. Following surgery on a carotid artery Bill had a massive stroke that left him without the use of his right arm and hand, severely limited his speech, and destroyed his ability to spell so that he could no longer write.

Not all of Bill's time and talents were devoted to square dancing. After years as a fierce competitor on basketball and volleyball courts (particularly two-men beach volleyball), Bill discovered handball. He won nearly 50 trophies in handball tournaments. He originated and coordinated for 10 years the Labor Day Handball Tournament for the San Jose YMCA and guided it to national prominence. In 1992 he was inducted into the Northern California Handball Hall of Fame. He also made yearly backpacking excursions in the Sierras from his teens until 1990, when his knees said, "Enough!".

Square dancing was Bill's dearly loved avocation; handball was his favorite hobby; and engineering was his calling in life. He was born in L.A., grew up in Glendale and was graduated from CalTech with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering. He then went to Annapolis and served in the navy until the end of WWII. At that time he returned to CalTech and earned a Master's in Physics. While working at Lockheed designing missile guidance systems, he earned a PhD in Electrical Engineering at Stanford. He retired in 1989 after 42 years in the aerospace industry and after making numerous notable contributions to the U.S. space program.

In his private life, Bill was a devoted, gentle, and loving husband and father. He died of pneumonia on January 28, four months after having a second stroke. He is survived by his wife of 37 years, six daughters, four sons-in-law, eight grandchildren, and two great grandchildren. He will be greatly missed.