

Charles W. "Chuck" Guenther

Jackson, Missouri

2003 Caller / Cuer Hall of Fame



This year's recipient of the Caller of the Year Award entered the world of square dancing 29 years ago. He and his wife first took lessons in 1974 from Breez Graham in Belleville, Illinois, and their class formed the Z-Bar Squares. They served as its first presidents. During the fall of that year they moved to Colorado, where they joined the Kilowatt 8's Square Dance Club. It was there that he started learning the fundamentals of square dance calling. His job led him to encounter Jack Lowe, a local caller. Due to Jack's medical difficulties, Jack requested that he take over responsibilities for Jack's clubs. He accepted that responsibility, thus his square dance calling career began.

Two careers awaited him when he moved to Jackson, Missouri in 1978. He started teaching square dancing, and, at the same time, he went to work for Drury Construction Company in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, where he is still employed. He and his wife joined the local Hilltoppers and Allemanders Square Dance Clubs. He taught a class in Jackson, Missouri, every year except one since 1978, many being held in his own home. A sometimes lack of compensation for his services did not deter him from sharing his time and talents to promote square dancing. He taught many classes in Missouri at Perryville, New Hamburg, Puxico, Charleston, Poplar Bluff and Marble Hill, Missouri, and in Illinois at Chester, Carbondale and Marion. His dedication to and whole-hearted support of our enjoyable pastime are very evident.

He attended the Caller's College in Heartland, Michigan in 1982. A new club was organized in Jackson, Missouri, and he has been the club caller for the Cape County Swingers since its formation 21 years ago. He and his wife were involved in the organization of the Southeast District of the Missouri Federation of Square 'n Round Dance Clubs. He is also a member of Caller Lab.

"Volunteer" is certainly a word that describes this caller. He has called for many activities and fund-raisers, including a Multiple Sclerosis Walk, Cottonwood Treatment Center, Rotary Club, a school book fair, teen outreach groups, church picnics, and customer appreciation days. One unusual fund-raiser that he assisted with was to purchase an airplane ticket for an Austrian girl to be able to return to her country. An airline had filed bankruptcy and left her stranded and without funds to get home.

He continued his promotion of square dancing by calling for 16 years at the Missouri State Festivals. He has also been a great help to the Southeast District on several occasions when he helped in the organization of the State festivals through work with the state booklet, the sound committee, and by serving as master of ceremonies. He also called for the SEMO Summer Swing for several years, along with other local callers.

As a true advocate of square dancing, he has shared his passion of it through the years with people of all ages. He has worked with the Girl Scouts, Future Farmers of America (FFA) members, and sorority groups from Southeast Missouri University. He has made square dancing available to many civic and community groups, taking him from nursing homes to churches and schools throughout his career. He has also arranged and called exhibitions at the SEMO District Fair, the Frontier Days and Riverfest in Cape Girardeau, and at the Chamber of Commerce Picnic, the Iron Mountain Railroad gatherings, and the Jackson Homecomers in Jackson, a merchants' showcase in Perryville, and at Civil War reenactments.

For many years, an annual Doin's Dance was held in the Southeast District. Again, he was a regular caller in support of these events. He also enjoyed camping and took his love of square dancing there with him. He planned and hosted, at his expense, annual cam pouts in Southeast

Missouri for about 15 years. Dancers from several states attended these three times a year at Castor River, Lake Wappapelo and Whipporwill Lake.

His personal life reflects the important values he brings to square dancing. He and his wife Gerry have been married 51 years. They enjoy their five children, eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Dancing has been and continues to be a family activity. Enthusiastic, energetic, hard-working, fun-loving, love for family, friends and country are qualities that further describe this caller. For his dedication to the promotion of square dancing, the Missouri Federation of Square 'n Round Dance Clubs is proud to name Charles W. "Chuck" Guenther as the 2003 Caller of the Year.