

### A CALLER' S CALLER (1963 - 1985)

*Those having torches will pass them on to others.*

*(Plato)*

*A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.*

*(Henry Adams)*

I don't know where the notion that I could teach callers came from, especially so early in my career. I had barely been calling for five years when I announced that I was going to teach a callers' class in San Jose. I was hardly a seasoned veteran and the news must have raised many an eyebrow among the more experienced callers in the Valley. On the other hand, I wasn't totally without experience. During the self-help sessions at our Fowler's Howlers meetings, I was often asked to assist newer callers and found that I was able to provide suggestions and guidance in cases where other members could not.

Perhaps this was what emboldened me to consider teaching a callers' class. Or perhaps it was because I believed I could improve upon Bill Fowler's training program. Or maybe it was simply because there hadn't been a callers' class in the area for several years and I sensed that this might be a good time to offer one. Whatever the reason, I took the plunge in 1963 and hung out my shingle as a caller coach.

I prepared a detailed curriculum and wrote a number of handouts describing the calling skills I planned to teach. I rented a hall for eight Sunday afternoons, placed an ad in the local square dance magazine, and was pleasantly surprised when six eager students and their partners showed up for our first session.

As always happens in such situations, the teacher learned more than his students. I discovered that teaching callers wasn't as easy as I had imagined and that I had a lot to learn about coaching. However, I taught my program as planned and several of my students went on to become popular callers in the Santa Clara Valley. Since this was my first school, I carefully monitored my progress and made notes of what worked and what didn't. I thought about how I might improve my lectures and how to make my demonstrations more meaningful; I re-evaluated and re-edited my handouts and, in general, looked for ways to make my coaching better.

I don't know how it happened but when my first school was over, I seemed suddenly to have acquired a word-of-mouth reputation as an effective coach and, during the next few months, I received numerous inquiries asking if I intended to conduct another school in the future. About a year later, I started up my second callers' class and it too turned out well. Not only had I learned a new skill, I had discovered a new source of square dance income.

I continued teaching local caller classes on a regular basis - - roughly one class per year - - until I retired. These were home based schools and I always taught them on Sunday afternoons. I later increased the length of the class from eight sessions to ten. Most of these schools were conducted in San Jose, including one or two in my remodeled garage. I also taught two schools in Santa Rosa and another two in the San Francisco area. The San Francisco schools were sponsored by the Northern California Callers' Association and in those sessions, I shared the teaching and coaching duties with Bill Castner. Some of the most popular callers in the Santa Clara Valley, many of whom are still calling today, are graduates of my home based northern California caller classes.

In the 1970s, a new caller training format emerged on the east coast. It probably started in New England in the mid 1960s when two very well known eastern callers, Earl Johnson and Al Brundage, pioneered a concept where the students came to a resort hotel for an intensive program of caller training. The program was five days long and the school provided complete classroom, dancing, dining room and living facilities. It was an efficient arrangement and the idea soon spread to other eastern cities. Its rapid proliferation suggested two things: first, that I was ready to conduct a live-in school of my own, and second, that the west coast was the logical place to do it.

By the mid 1970s, my national visibility as a festival caller had increased and my reputation as a caller coach was similarly upgraded. I had written and published my first how-to-do-it book about square dance calling and I was also the editor and publisher of a monthly callers' note service with a respectable international subscription list. I wondered whether my name alone carried enough weight to make an out-of-town Bill Peters school feasible. I decided to find out.

In 1974, I completed a calling engagement at a popular square dance camp near South Fork, Colorado. It was called Fun Valley and it was situated 8000 feet above sea-level in a remote part of the Rockies. Snow closed the mountain passes in the winter and the resort could only remain open between June and September. Their typical season began on the Memorial Day weekend and closed right after Labor Day and, during this time, they hired callers hoping to attract vacationing square dancers to their resort. When I considered the problem of where to conduct a western live-in school, Fun Valley came immediately to mind. Its location and its facilities seemed ideal for the kind of school I contemplated. The scenery was breathtaking and, while the cabins had seen better days, the resort featured a generous kitchen. The food was delicious and they fed you often; there was a spacious dining hall which could also be used for after parties. The dance hall was in a separate building and could do double duty as a classroom for the morning and afternoon school sessions, and as a dance hall in the evenings.

The owner of the Fun Valley Resort was a gruff old Texan named Mac Henson. He was a colorful character who would bet you that in a room full of 30 or 40 strangers, at least two individuals shared the same birthday. He was seldom wrong! When I spoke to Mac about renting the facility for a callers' school, he told me that he had been thinking about extending his season by a week or two and that my idea of running a callers' school sounded good to him. We settled on terms, struck a deal and the first Bill Peters Callers' School was held at Fun Valley in September, 1975.

I planned to hold three sessions per day for five consecutive days. This was a heavy schedule and too much for me to handle by myself. I would definitely need someone to assist me. I hired Bill Davis. Bill was a fine caller whom I had known since the 1960s. He was a Ph.D. with degrees in Physics, Electronics and Mathematics; he worked for the Lockheed Aerospace Corporation in Sunnyvale. Our initial interactions were casual and seldom involved more than small talk at callers' association meetings. As time went by, however, we discovered that we shared an interest in backpacking and we went on a number of weekend hikes together in the Sierras. Sometimes we took our kids along and sometimes it was just the two of us. I came to admire and respect Bill's keen intellect and his devastatingly precise turn of mind, especially in the field of square dance choreography.

Bill had analyzed the structure of modern square dance choreography in a way that, as far as I knew, no other caller had done before. He unselfishly shared these perceptions with me and provided choreographic insights I hadn't previously understood or appreciated. Where I was a talented showman, he was an equally talented choreographer/technician and we represented a unique combination of both the art and science of calling. We genuinely liked each other and we made an excellent coaching team.

Our first Fun Valley School turned out well and we taught another one at the same location the following year. I then moved the school to the Showboat Hotel in Las Vegas where the schools were even more successful. Between 1977 and 1985, we taught one or more schools at the Showboat each year. While our first schools comprised a single five-day program and catered to the needs of both beginning and experienced callers, we later expanded our operations to offer two schools: a five-day program for newer callers and a second five-day program for callers with experience. The two schools ran one after the other, separated by a two-day weekend which gave the staff some time to rest up, refresh and regroup. All in all, Bill Davis and I taught over a dozen schools together.

Although we now live an ocean apart, we have remained good friends and, through his wife, Bobbie, we remain in touch by e-mail. Bill suffered a stroke a number of years ago which severely impaired his ability to communicate. His brilliant mind is as active as ever but his verbal abilities are substantially diminished. With great difficulty, he is able to put simple sentences together but it is very difficult for him and his end of the conversation rarely amounts to more than simple yes or no responses. It is a heart breaking tragedy.

The success of the Bill Peters Callers' Schools led to other provocative coaching collaborations. In addition to operating my own schools, I have especially appreciated the several schools I shared with Jim Mayo and I have also enjoyed the schools I taught with Al Stevens in Europe.

I first met Jim Mayo at the Leadership Conference organized by square dancing's former national magazine, Sets In Order. It was held at U.C.L.A. in July, 1964. We didn't work together, however, until nearly ten years later when we met again at the now-famous Asilomar meeting of January, 1973. CALLERLAB, the International Association of Square Dance Callers was created at this historic session and Jim and I were among those who helped originate, develop and implement its basic concepts. We were members of its first Board of Governors.

We came to know each other as a result of our work in CALLERLAB. We worked on many projects together and served on the same committees. We developed a mutual respect, appreciated each others talents, and listened to each other's opinions. Jim is well educated, highly articulate,

level-headed and open-minded. He is an excellent speaker and a prolific square dance author. He also drinks single malt scotch and has a connoisseur's affinity for fine French wines. That we would join together to teach callers' schools was inevitable.

Jim and I have shared the podium at numerous caller clinics and seminars but the one I remember most fondly was a formal debate we had at a CALLERLAB convention in Miami Beach in the 1970s. It dealt with the question of whether the proliferation of choreographic complexity was harmful to square dancing. Jim argued that it was, while I took the opposite view. We had had this debate privately many times before and it continues to this very day. And while neither one of us has as yet completely won over the other, we have, over the years narrowed the gulf and each of us has inched a bit closer to the center. Since every caller must sooner or later decide how much choreographic difficulty to include in his own programs, Jim and I have deliberately discussed this subject in each of the schools we have taught together.

We are both concerned with the future of square dancing and, when our viewpoints diverge, they are not so much disagreements as they are sincere efforts to discover how we might reconcile our differences. It is also important to observe that our many discussions have been singularly devoid of acrimony or mean-spiritedness.

We have jointly conducted callers' schools in Georgia and Texas and also in several cities in Australia and New Zealand. Together with John Kaltenthaler and Herb Egender, we operated the successful Superschool East and West programs. These schools were conducted annually between 1985 and 1993 and were very well attended.

Jim introduced me to the pleasures of fine French wines. He is regarded as CALLERLAB's resident wine connoisseur and, on one occasion, I teased him about it. I suggested that all this to-do about fine wine was a deliberate hoax perpetrated by wine merchants; that its so-called *mystique* was sheer snobbery, and that there really wasn't much difference between one bottle and the next.

Jim promptly set me straight. I was scheduled to stay with Jim and JoAnn at their New Hampshire home on an upcoming calling tour and, during that visit, he conducted a special wine tasting for my benefit. It had been specifically designed to educate my palate. It compared supermarket Cabernets with both medium grade and premium grade Cabernets from France. The difference between them was astonishing! But now that he has taught me to recognize and appreciate those differences, I don't know whether to thank him or curse him. It is a mixed blessing. Do I thank him for introducing me to the enjoyment of fine wines? Or do I curse him for creating a preference for wines I cannot afford?

Al Stevens is one of the best callers I know. His patter is consistently interesting and his singing calls are a sheer delight. He was a career Air Force Sergeant who retired in Germany in the late 1980s and chose to remain there. He has been a square dance caller for about as long as I have and he is now recognized as one of the top callers in Europe.

He says we first met many years ago at a Northern California Callers' Association Meeting in Alameda. I'm sure he's right but I have no memory of it. My first memory of Al goes back to the first calling tour I organized in Europe in 1980. Al had booked me for a dance in Bitburg, Germany. It turned out to be a great dance and I remember asking Al if he would like to share a final singing call with me. I also remember asking him if he could harmonize. That's like asking Fred Astaire if he can do the time step! We sang Down on Bourbon Street and his ability to coordinate his style with my own blew me away! It was an exciting performance which left the audience clamoring for more. We have since repeated it many times. Betty steadfastly insists that when it

comes to a singing call duet, especially a rouser like Bourbon Street, Al is the only one who can hold his own with me. I tend to agree .

After the Bitburg dance, Al brought me back to Europe four more times - - in 1987, 1989, 1992 and 1996. The purpose of these tours was to teach callers' schools and call weekend festivals. Although we served as co-teachers during the first 1987 schools, I essentially functioned as Al's mentor and my primary responsibility was to show Al the tricks of the coaching trade. I played a similar role during the 1989 schools but that year I also administered part of the oral exams required for Al's formal accreditation as a CALLERLAB. Caller Coach. By the time of the 1992 schools, Al had become accredited and had gained a lot more coaching experience. In the schools we taught that year, as well as in the ones we taught in 1996, Al and I worked side by side as full and complete partners.

In addition to working with Bill Castner, Bill Davis, Jim Mayo and Al Stevens, I have also conducted full-program schools with such well-known coaches and callers as Dave Taylor, Lee Kopman, Cal Golden, Dick Han, Daryl Clendenin, Vaughn Parrish, Stan Burdick, Gloria Roth, Martin Mallard, and others. I have served on the staff of seventy-one full program callers' schools.

I have also been hired to conduct a large number of caller training clinics and seminars. These are typically weekend affairs and will often include an open dance on Saturday night in addition to lectures and demonstrations during the day-time sessions. While the typical five-day live-in school format almost always features student calling sessions, clinics rarely do. According to my date book, I have conducted sixty-six such clinics in all parts of the U.S and Canada and I have worked for most of the activity's leading callers' associations. The last seminar I conducted was the annual Labor Day Weekend Seminar sponsored by the Michigan State Callers' Association in 1997. I had been the featured coach for this event once before, twenty years earlier!

I am also one of the very few coaches who has taught schools especially designed to train caller coaches. In fact, it wouldn't surprise me if the idea for such a school originated with me. In April of 1982, I persuaded Al Brundage, Cal Golden, Jack Lasry, Jim Mayo and Bob Van Antwerp to join me in conducting a three-day training program for student caller coaches. We ran the program immediately before the start of the 1982 CALLERLAB convention in Reno and, despite a terrible snow-storm which closed the roads through the Sierras, our pioneering venture turned out well.

Jim Mayo had called some dances in northern California and we had arranged to meet somewhere in so that he and JoAnn could drive to Reno with us. As luck would have it, there was a huge snowstorm on our travel day and they closed the roads a little past Sacramento. Hoping that they might re-open the roads the next morning, we spent the night in a Sacramento motel. The storm continued all that night and it was still snowing the next morning. The roads remained closed so we decided to drive back to the Oakland airport, park our car and fly into Reno. The coach school, the first ever conducted anywhere, was a big success. I forget how many students we had, but I remember feeling very good about how well the program went and about how effectively our staff of coaching superstars worked together.

At my suggestion, the Superschool staff added a coach school to the program in 1990. We offered it again a few years later. The coach school ran in conjunction with our regular callers' schools. The idea was that in addition to their own special lectures and demonstrations, part of our coach students' training would include observing our experienced staff actually working at a real ongoing callers' school. They would listen to our lectures and presentations and monitor how we worked one-on-one with real caller students. Nothing like it had ever been available before. I later

convinced Al Stevens to allow me to offer a similar coach training program at several of our European schools.

One of my major assignments at CALLERLAB was to serve as the first Chairman of its Caller Training Committee. The committee consisted of a select panel of the activity's leading coaches and, working together, we developed a standardized caller school curriculum. We selected the subjects to be taught and assigned a priority to each of them. We suggested what percentage of a school's total training time be devoted to each of the recommended subjects. This Curriculum has become the accepted guideline followed by all callers' schools operating at the present time.

It may be immodest to say so, but I believe that my greatest contribution to square dancing has been my work as a caller coach. While I am a competent caller, I am a superb coach. As a caller, I have an enviable record of festival bookings and prestigious calling dates. There are, however, many callers whose success equals mine and many more who have enjoyed an even greater popularity. On the other hand, there are only a handful of callers whose coaching background approaches mine. I have been a pioneer in the coaching field and I have made many innovative contributions, It is where I have achieved my greatest reputation.

I have frequently been called a *caller's caller*. If someone had conducted a nationwide poll when I retired in 1985 and asked the average caller to name the top 7 or 8 coaches in the business, I suspect my name would have appeared on most lists. As boastful as it must sound, I'd be less than honest if I said I disagreed.



WITH BILL & BOBBIE DAVIS  
LAS VEGAS, 1977



WITH JIM MAYO, EL PASO, 1979



WITH AL STEVENS, DREISSEN, 1987

**ON THE ROAD AGAIN.....AND AGAIN.....AND AGAIN (1962-1997)**

*On the road again.  
I can't wait to get on the road again.  
Having fun and making music with my  
friends,  
I can't wait to get on the road again.  
(Willie Nelson)*

A working caller spends a lot of time behind the wheel of his car. In the mid 1970s, I was calling - - and driving - - every night of the week. In addition to club, class and workshop dates in San Jose, I was also driving to weekly engagements in San Mateo and South San Francisco and twice a month to workshops in Santa Rosa and Salinas. On Saturdays, I called dances all across California and beyond: from Eureka in the north to San Diego in the south; from Sacramento, Yuba City and Reno in the east; to all points in between. The miles piled up.

If a Saturday night dance involves a drive longer than three or four hours, most callers prefer to take a motel or stay with friends and drive home the next day. We never did. No matter how long the drive, we preferred to drive home right after the dance. My rationale was that if I stayed over, I lost the next day; Sunday became a travel day which meant that a single dance cost me two days plus the price of a motel. That made the dance unprofitable. But if, on the other hand, we drove home immediately after the dance - - even if it meant driving all night - - we woke up in our own beds on Sunday with the rest of the day still awaiting our pleasure. To me, that made a lot more sense and, as a result, we did a lot of middle-of-the-night driving over the weekends.

At the peak of my career, for example, I called Saturday night dances in the greater Los Angeles area at least a half-dozen times a year. I would always try to amortize the trip, which averaged about six to six and 1/2 hours one way, by promoting a second dance on either the night before or the day after the Saturday dance. This made the event a two-dance weekend and justified staying over. This wasn't always possible and we'd often leave San Jose around noon on a Saturday, drive to L.A., call a dance and, when it was over, turn the car around and drive right back home again. After a while, we came to know intimately every turn in the road, every rest stop, and every Denny's restaurant on California's Interstate 5 freeway.

We could never have done it, if Betty hadn't shared the wheel with me. We originally tested our you-drive-while-I-sleep technique on our 1953 coast-to-coast trip in the Nash. We perfected and refined it when I became a traveling caller. For us, the most efficient strategy was to change drivers every two hours, even if the driver didn't feel tired or the sleeper wasn't ready to wake up. We always felt better if we deliberately swapped roles every two hours and we adhered to that discipline whenever possible.

When it became evident that my calling career would require a lot of nighttime driving, we traded in our car and bought a shiny new, customized GMC van. It was a working vehicle in every respect. Its color was a bright, shiny blue and I personalized the interior to accommodate our long

haul driving habits. I had special shelves and compartments installed in the back to carry my sound equipment. The van's interior was totally carpeted and there were comfortable captain's chairs for the driver and the co-pilot. We had a CB radio and there was a long rod for hanging clothes and petticoats, plus a small closet for things like road maps, a coffee maker/hot plate, a first aid kit, a flashlight, and similar on-the-road necessities. I built a special stand for our vacuum thermos so that the driver could pump a cup of hot coffee while driving. The *piece de resistance*, however, was a sofa across the back that opened out into a double bed - - although I don't recall that we ever used it that way. On most trips, one of us drove while the other one slept stretched out across the back seat sofa.

I remember the van's shakedown cruise. I called a weekend festival in Missoula, Montana and extended the trip to include an extra night at nearby Flathead Lake for a reunion party with some friends who had been with us on our first Hawaii tour. The drive to Missoula was enjoyable but uneventful. The drive home was a bit more interesting.

We decided to leave Flathead Lake about 10:00 PM and we planned to drive straight through to San Jose - - a long journey, but a good way to test the van's nighttime niceties. One thing worried us about leaving so early. After leaving Missoula, the country was so sparsely populated that the nearest town where we might expect to find an all-night gas station was Twin Falls, Idaho. It was 300 miles away and beyond the range of the van's 250 mile gas tank. We mentioned our concerns to our friends at Flathead Lake and they told us that about 150 miles down the highway, we'd come to a small town in Idaho called Arco. They told us that, upon our arrival there, we should drive around until the local sheriff pulled in behind us and then tell him we needed gas. Which is exactly what we did.

We arrived in Arco at three or four in the morning and, after only a minute or two, we saw that a police car had pulled in behind us. I waved the officer over and told him we needed gas. He smiled and politely asked us to follow him. He led us to a closed Chevron station, opened it, filled our tank and even made change and wished us bon voyage before sending us back on our way. It was a lovely, Only-in-America experience. It also, however, alerted us to a possible future problem and the very next week, I doubled our driving range by adding a second gas tank to the van.

We drove the van during most of my calling career and took it with us to Lake Tahoe when we retired in 1985. We finally sold it when Lake Tahoe's annual snowfall made it necessary that both our cars be equipped with four-wheel drive. By that time the van was on its second engine and the odometer showed that it had racked up well over 300, 000 miles. It had served us well.

While we certainly did a lot of driving, I was never the sort of traveling caller who, like an old-time itinerant dancing master, traveled from one town to the next calling square dances. I always maintained a healthy mid-week home program and most of my traveling occurred on the weekends. I got my start on the road calling in the Pacific Northwest, particularly in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. According to my date book, my first out-of-town tour came in June, 1963 when I called consecutive dances in Portland, Tillamook, Richland and Spokane. Many similar tours followed and, over the years, I have called dances in just about every major city in the northwestern U.S. and Canada.

In 1978, I decided to see what life on the road was really like and I booked a major driving tour with dances in Boise, Casper, Omaha, Columbus, Boston, Pocono Pines, Washington, D.C., Skowhegan, Nova Scotia, Beckley, West Virginia, Nashville, Pensacola, Baton Rouge, San Antonio, and Hobbs, New Mexico. The entire trip took exactly three weeks. Most of the dances were on

consecutive nights and usually required a long day's drive from one dance to the next. It was certainly different and I think we enjoyed it - - to a point. What I remember most was how hard it was; how quickly the driving became tiresome and how we chafed under the never-ending pressure of having to make it to the next town in time to call the next dance.

Mechanically, the van performed beautifully but it seemed to grow smaller with each passing day and we were relieved when we finished the tour and finally pulled into our San Jose driveway. While the tour was profitable and the dances paid more than my local club dances, Betty and I agreed that full-time touring took too much out of you and that it was no way to make a living.

Another interesting trip in the van occurred in May 1980. I had been booked to call a dance in Pasco, Washington just two days after the Mt. St. Helens volcano erupted. The air was full of ash and, after two days, it was still so thick that it ruined your car's engine if you drove through it. The local residents kept the ash out of their engines by stretching an old panty hose over their radiators. The Pasco dancers were concerned about our car and they telephoned me at home right after the eruption and told me to park my car 70 miles south in Portland and that they would come and pick us up. After the dance, we spent the night with a caller in Pasco. We watched him as, every hour, he hosed down all of the shrubbery around his house to keep the ash from killing his plants.

We drove the van to Colorado the four times I called or taught schools at Fun Valley. On one of those trips Betty drove there without me. I had accepted a festival booking in North Carolina the weekend before the Fun Valley sessions were due to begin. The travel logistics were complex. First, I would fly to North Carolina on a commercial airline and, on the return trip, fly back to Denver. We then enlisted the aid of our very special Square Hopper buddies, Don and Lu McPherson. We arranged for Betty and Lu to drive the van to Fun Valley while Don, who was a pilot and belonged to a flying club, would fly to the Denver airport in the club's single engine Cessna. Don would meet my plane when it arrived from North Carolina and the two of us would then fly in the Cessna from Denver to Alamosa. Alamosa was the closest landing strip to Fun Valley and, if it all worked out as planned, that's where Betty and Lu would meet us. The four of us would then drive the few remaining miles to Fun Valley.

It all came off without a hitch.. And it was fun! Betty and Lu had a fine time on the drive up and told us that they sang their way through a mild snowstorm over Wolf Creek Pass. Don was not allowed to land his single engine plane at the Denver airport so he found an old abandoned airfield just outside of Denver and parked his plane there. He caught a taxi to the main Denver airport, met my plane and we took another taxi back to the Cessna.

The abandoned airfield where Don had left the Cessna reminded me of an old World War Two aviation movie. Fade In: some old hangars with broken windows and dilapidated shutters banging in the breeze, dust flying in the air and tumbleweeds rolling all around. The music swells, then fades as we hear the sounds of an airplane engine and we segue back in time to 1943. I bet that at least a half dozen films started out that way - - and this old airport looked just like that!

By the time Don and I took off, night had fallen and we flew from Denver to Alamosa in the dark. It was over the Rockies so there were no lights visible below; there was no moon and clouds blacked out the stars. It was eerie. Everything was inky black and you couldn't tell up from down. Don was flying on instruments and after a bit he told me to look to my right and suddenly the blue landing lights of the deserted Alamosa air strip were turned on. Don landed the Cessna and there were Betty, Lu and our trusty old blue van waiting for us. We were all relieved to see each other.

On another occasion, Don and Lu and Betty and I flew in the same Cessna from San Jose to the National Square Dance Convention in Oklahoma City. On the way home, we stopped in Las Vegas to visit Don and Lu's daughter and her family. We spent the night visiting and gambling and the next morning began the last leg of our journey home. It is necessary, when flying west out of Las Vegas, to fly over 4000 foot Mt. Charleston and on this particular morning, the headwinds above 3000 feet were so strong that Don's little Cessna lacked the power to fly over the crest. Don checked his maps as we flew south along the mountain ridges looking for a pass low enough for us to cross. The closest and lowest pass was at Tehachapee near Bakersfield. We flew there and tried several times to fly over the mountains but the winds kept turning us back. We decided we'd better land the plane at the Tehachapee air strip, find a motel for the night and hope that the weather was better in the morning.

For the preceding hour or so, the air had been exceptionally bumpy and I became terribly airsick. The moment we landed and the plane came to a stop, I clambered out of the cabin, ran behind the nearest bush and upchucked everything I had eaten that day. Lu had apparently suffered the same problem for she found her own bush and joined me in my misery. Betty and Don were made of sterner stuff and were unaffected by the turbulence. They stood calmly by, sympathetically waiting for Lu and I to regain our composure.

The Tehachapee air strip consisted of 300 feet of beat-up runway, an old wind sock, and a telephone booth. On a wall of the phone booth was a sign with the name of a motel. It said that if you rented a room, they'd come and pick you up. We called them, rented a double/double, spent the night and, the next morning found that the weather had cleared up. We had an early breakfast and flew home to San Jose without further incident. It had been an exciting week end.

I remember two other adventures in a single engine aircraft. In 1979, I was hired to call the Alaska State square dance festival in Anchorage. It was one of the few festivals where they also paid the airfare for the caller's wife, so Betty came along. When they met us at the airport, they told me that before taking us to our hotel, they had arranged for a publicity interview aboard the single engine plane that a local radio station used to report traffic conditions. Between descriptions of the rush hour traffic in downtown Anchorage, the pilot interviewed visiting celebrities and encouraged them to plug the event that brought them to Anchorage. As we circled the city, I told them all about our upcoming dance.

There was a downtown furrier who allowed George Ioanin, a local caller, to borrow fur coats for visiting callers to wear during their stay in Anchorage. George took us to the furrier's shop where, from a rack filled with expensive furs, Betty and I were each allowed to make a selection. We picked matching sealskin parkas trimmed in white wolverine fur. They were beautiful and worth about ten thousand dollars each. It is probably politically incorrect to wear such furs today, but we felt sinfully pampered at the time. I called the Alaska State festival again in 1982 and we repeated the identical routine.

That first time in Anchorage also stands out in my memory because they paid me in *cold cash*. My calling fee for the weekend was \$300.00 plus airfare and expenses, so they froze three one hundred dollar bills in a huge cake of ice and gave it to me on stage at the beginning of the dance. They gave me an ice pick, told me my fee was in the ice and, during the breaks between tips, I had to hack at the ice to get my money. It was a great gag! It was also weird to finish calling close to midnight and walk out of the hall to find that the sun hadn't gone down and it was still daylight outside.

On that same trip, they took me up in a single engine aircraft one last time. When the festival was over, one of the dancers, a bush pilot, took me in his plane for a low-level flight over the Mendenhall glacier. It was spectacular. He even let me take over the controls and fly the plane for a few minutes before we landed.

There is no question that it was exciting to be gallivanting around the country, taking in the sights and meeting new people, but it wasn't always fun and games. We had many unpleasant experiences, especially on the highway. Ask anyone who is on the road a lot and they'll tell you that the two things they fear the most are bad weather and the Highway Patrol. We had run-ins with both.

There have been many times in the van when the rain was so heavy, the windshield wipers were unable to deal with the volume and we had to pull over to the side of the road and wait for the rain to subside. We haven't done much snow driving on our calling trips, but there were several times when a snowstorm caught us unexpectedly while driving over the Siskiyou Mountains near the California-Oregon border. On one occasion, we were following an Oregon State snow removal truck traveling south on the I-5 near the Siskiyou summit and we got stuck in the snow. I tried every trick I knew, but I couldn't break out. The wheels kept spinning and my efforts to free us only churned a deeper hole in the snow. Fortunately, the driver of the snow removal truck had seen us and was aware of our plight. He came back to rescue us. He slowly maneuvered his truck behind our vehicle and gently pushed us out of the hole my spinning wheels had made. We were then able to carefully drive over the summit, out of the snow and onto dry pavement.

The Siskiyous are also known for black ice. The term *black ice* defines a highway condition in which the surface of the roadway looks like wet pavement but is actually a thin layer of solid ice. Its appearance is very deceptive and, because the driver doesn't recognize the black patch as ice and drives over it as though it was merely a wet stretch of roadway, it can sometimes result in uncontrollable skidding. It is extremely hazardous. We have slipped and skidded our way over the Siskiyous on more than one occasion.

We have also had to contend with heavy fog, especially in California's Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys. Sometimes the fog was so thick and impenetrable that you could barely make out the tail lights of the car in front of you. I used to call a Mad Hatter's dance in Yuba City every January, a time when the Sacramento Valley creates its worst fog. The trip home each year was almost always touch and go.

For me, the most fearsome highway menace was the Highway Patrol. I have always found it difficult to keep my speed to the 55 miles per hour legal limit when driving on on freeways designed for much higher speeds and I have been ticketed many times. One year, I had three tickets in a twelve month period. I was given an assigned risk status by the insurance companies and my premiums skyrocketed.

I contested almost every ticket in court and, while I didn't win every time, I often managed

to have my case dismissed. Sometimes, the officer who wrote me up failed to appear and I was off the hook. One of my more amusing court appearances occurred before a San Mateo judge. Truth to tell, with most of the tickets I have received, I have been guilty as charged. This time, however, I was unjustly accused.

I was driving home on a Saturday night from a dance I had called in Ukiah. It was about two in the morning and I had just come over the Golden Gate Bridge and had driven about ten miles on Interstate 280 on the last leg of our trip home when I saw flashing red lights behind me. I pulled over and stopped. The officer casually sauntered over to the van and told me that not only had he observed me speeding, he had seen me weaving dangerously and recklessly changing lanes.

I was certain the officer was mistaken and could only conclude that he had seen another blue van because I knew - - unequivocally and for an absolute fact - - that it couldn't possibly have been me. Despite my protestations, I was unable to convince the officer that he was mistaken. He insisted I had been drinking and when I told him that I had just come from a square dance where drinking is forbidden, he muttered something about people always drank at barn dances and proceeded to administer the usual roadside D.U.I. tests. He had me walk a straight line and do the touch-your-fingers-to-your-nose routines. It seemed to annoy him when I passed every test and he was unable to establish that I was driving under the influence of alcohol. He wrote me up for speeding anyway. I was livid and vowed to see him in court.

It turns out that not only was the officer incorrect when he gave me the ticket, he also assigned me to the wrong venue. At our court appearance, the judge asked me what I was doing in his courtroom and I told him that that was precisely what I wanted to know. I told him I was on my way home from a square dance when..... The moment he heard the words *square dance*, the judge interrupted me.

*Square dance*, he said, *Do you know Chick Burgess?*

Chick Burgess was a cantankerous old caller in the North Bay and we had known each other for years. He was, in fact, the former caller of the Whirlaways and despite the fact that I had replaced him, we had remained friends and colleagues. Apparently, Chick was also active in North Bay politics and, as I later learned, he and the judge often played poker together.

*Yes sir*, I told the judge, *Chick's a very good friend of mine.*

That was all the judge needed to hear. Before I could continue my defense, he banged his gavel and dismissed the case.

My travels also required a lot of flying. These were mostly festival bookings or caller clinic/seminar dates. I've experienced all the usual horror stories about lost baggage, missed connections, canceled flights and the like, but several incidents remain in the forefront of my memory. Like the time I was the only passenger on a huge L1011 aircraft

I was coming home from a caller seminar in Orlando, Florida. My flight was scheduled as a non-stop trip direct to San Francisco but, for some reason, they changed my routing when I checked in at Orlando. Instead of a direct flight to San Francisco, they put me on a short hop to Jacksonville and from there I could catch a direct flight to San Francisco. They told me this was necessary due to aircraft availability problems.

I was unhappy about this unexpected change in schedule and I grumbled and muttered obscenities as I walked to the gate. I had expected that the plane for the fifteen minute flight to Jacksonville would be one of those small puddle jumpers they usually use for short commuter runs, but I was wrong. My plane was a gigantic L1011 and I was its only paying passenger. As I boarded

the aircraft, the entire cabin crew were at the door to welcome me. They pointed to the first class section and told me to sit anywhere I liked. They were as amused as I was at the idea that I had this large aircraft all to myself. For fifteen minutes it was my own private jet. The plane out of Jacksonville was another story. It was completely booked and full of squalling babies. It was cramped, dirty and noisy. It was quite a comedown.

The last time I flew on square dance business was in September 1997 when I conducted the Labor Day Weekend Caller Clinic and Dance for the Michigan State Callers Association. I had to fly to Detroit and then catch a commuter flight to Flint, Michigan. The Detroit connection was tight and, to make matters worse, we arrived late. As is always the case, the gate for my connecting flight was at the other end of the airport and by the time I arrived there, they had just closed the doors and my plane was moving to the take-off runway. I asked the girl at the gate what I should do and she got on the telephone and somehow arranged for the plane to return to the gate to pick me up.

Everyone glowered at me as I boarded the aircraft. We would now be late coming into Flint and it was all my fault. I pretended not to notice, found my seat and strapped myself in. It was a twenty minute flight and I spent most of it worrying about the luggage I had checked. It appeared that I was going to make it to Flint more or less on time, but how about my luggage?

I'd had this problem once before. There had been a similar delay and while I made it to the dance in time, my bags did not. It was in Durham, North Carolina and I remember that I had to borrow a shirt from my fellow caller, Bob Fisk, so I would have something clean to wear at the Friday night dance. When we arrived in Flint, I positioned myself at the baggage carousel fully expecting the worst. I needn't have worried. My bag was the very first one out of the chute!

I've conducted three square dance tours to Hawaii. The first was in January, 1973 when Boeing had just introduced its brand new 747 jumbo jet. It was a huge plane and, to attract passengers, they set up two small lounges for the economy class passengers: one in the front and one in the rear. In the front lounge, they served free Mai Tais and you could help yourself from a tray full of *pupus* (Hawaiian finger foods). The rear lounge had several sofas and a magazine rack. We asked a flight attendant if we could square dance in the back lounge and she said why not. So we did. Flying was fun in those days!

The second Hawaii tour took place in 1975 and I led yet another one in 1977. That one turned out to be an exceptionally large and highly profitable affair. Caller Bob Page had just gotten into the travel agency business and, when I was hired as the featured caller for the 1977 Hawaii State Square Dance Festival in Honolulu, he asked me if I would like to lead a tour. In addition to free passage and housing in Hawaii for Betty and me, he offered to pay me an additional fee for each person who signed on.

Bob bent over backwards to promote this tour. He placed ads in *Sets In Order* and other square dance publications and we enlisted enough square dancers from all parts of the country to charter our own airplane from Western Airlines. We were what the travel business calls an Affinity Group.

We had arranged for our passengers to assemble at the Oakland airport on a Wednesday morning in February. We were all gathered in a waiting room when the captain of the plane approached me to ask when we would like to leave. It seems that as the nominal leader of the tour, such matters were left entirely to my discretion. I tried not to look as though this was my first time. I smiled and told him, ***Whenever you're ready, Captain; whenever you're ready.***

Although I have had several opportunities to lead other tours, the 1977 tour was my last. I

found shepherding such a large group to be more trouble than it was worth. Every passenger with a problem dumped it in your lap and expected an immediate solution. The incident that cinched my decision to never lead a tour again occurred when a honeymoon couple came to me in Kauai to complain that they had been assigned a room with twin beds and would I please do something about it.

I have called in 49 of the 50 states. I don't know why, but I have never been asked to call in Iowa. It pleases me to recall that many of my dates were repeat bookings. A caller's repeats are an accurate barometer of his success. Before I retired, I used to call every year at Chuck Goodman's beautiful hall in New Orleans; for about six or seven years in a row, I opened Dave Abbott's Dance Country season in McCloud, California every Memorial Day weekend; I called the Spokane Salmon Festival twice, the Alaska State Festival twice, the Hawaii State Federation Festival three times and, by the time I finish writing this book, I will have called the annual No Ka Oe Festival in Maui for the thirteenth consecutive year.

As I look over my old calling calendars, I can hardly believe how much traveling we actually did, both in the van and in the air. Today, it all seems a bit too much but I didn't think so at the time. Back then I thought it was fun and I truly enjoyed the hectic lifestyle of a busy square dance caller.



***COLD CASH***, ALASKA, , 1969  
(This picture did not copy from the original

BRAND NEW GMC VAN, 1975

### OVERSEAS CHARMS (1977-1996)

*When I travel abroad, there is only one thing more remarkable than how unlike everything is from the world I know , and that is how alike it really is.*

*(Mark Twain)*

Betty rarely came with me when I flew to an engagement in the U.S. or Canada.. She always accompanied me, however, when I flew overseas.. I called my first dance in a foreign country in 1977. Since then, we have flown overseas more than twenty times. I have called three times in Japan, twice in Taipei, three times in Australia, five times in New Zealand, and seven times in Europe. Except for Saudi Arabia, I have called in every known square dance venue in the world.

It all started when I called the 1975 State Festival in Hawaii, sharing the bill with Canadian caller, Earle Park. Among the eighty squares who attended the dance were seven squares of dancers from Japan. They delighted us all! They were cheerful and charming, and they danced superbly. I remember thinking, how could we possibly have gone to war with such lovely people.

For our final tip on Saturday night, Earle and I sang a singing call duet. I no longer recall its name but it was an up-tempo, wild and wooly rabble rouser. One of the Japanese dancers, a caller named Matt Asanuma, observed us from the sidelines. He was smiling from ear to ear, totally caught up in our jubilant presentation. As we began building toward the climax of the call, he was unable to restrain himself. He ran up onto the stage and, fully matching our own enthusiasm, joined us as we launched into the final chorus. When we finished, there was unbridled pandemonium in the hall as the crowd roared its approval. It was an unforgettable moment.

Before that dance ended, I was invited to come back to Hawaii to call the 1977 dance and my acceptance was announced from the stage. Shortly after we returned home to California, I received a letter from one of the Japanese callers asking if I would be interested in calling the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary dance for the Fukyukai Square Dance Club of Tokyo. Their dance was scheduled for the weekend immediately following the 1977 Hawaii Festival and, while they couldn't afford to pay me a fee, they asked if I would consider calling their dance if they sent round trip airline tickets from Honolulu to Tokyo for Betty and me and took care of all our expenses while we were in Japan. I couldn't get to my typewriter fast enough to write and tell them *Yes!*

That trip to Japan was my first overseas assignment. It was a fantastic experience. As a traveling caller, I have often received the red carpet treatment from my hosts and sponsors, but I was unprepared for how elegantly we were treated in Japan. They couldn't do enough for us. We were introduced to a lovely Japanese lady named Tokuko Yasaraoka. She had been in the Emperor's service for many years and spoke excellent English. She was also a square dancer and had volunteered to be our guide and translator while we were in Japan. She was warm and gracious and she anticipated our every need. We fell in love with her.

We spent our first night at an upscale hotel in downtown Tokyo and the next morning we were driven some eighty miles away to a resort hotel in the little town of Hakone, near Mt. Fuji.

Most of the dancers stayed in dormitory accommodations, but Betty and I were assigned a room all to ourselves. It was very nice, except there was no bed! I didn't understand. The floor was covered with *tatami* mats, but were we supposed to sleep on them?

After the dance that evening, we returned to our room and found that someone had taken cushions and bedding from a wall closet and had fashioned two beds out of them. I remained dubious. The cushions were probably better than the *tatamis*, but they weren't real beds and I was afraid we'd be sleeping on the floor after all! I needn't have worried. That night I lay down on the cushions and I fell asleep as soon as my head hit the tiny cylindrical pillow. I slept comfortably all the time we were there. Betty did too.

Emperor Hirohito's second son, Prince Mikasa, is a square dancer and a charter member of the Fukyukai Club. He came to the weekend and hosted a pre-dance dinner in our honor. The officers of the Japanese Square Dance Society and their wives were also invited. It was an elegant affair. The food was exquisite; it was served on delicate Japanese china and we ate it with solid gold cutlery.

A strict protocol dictated the seating arrangements: as the Prince's honored guests, Betty and I sat on either side of him. Betty was on his right and all the other ladies sat in a row on Betty's right side. All the men sat on my left down the other side. The exact seating depended on how high a position you held in the association hierarchy; the association President sat next to me, then the Vice President and so on down the line. The Prince was served first, then all the men, then Betty and finally, the remaining ladies. The Prince spoke fluent English and our dinner conversation was polite and formal, but mostly small talk.

Our dining room was situated at the opposite end of the hotel from the dance hall and, when dinner was over, we formed a procession and paraded through a series of busy lobbies to make our way to the dance. There was a protocol for this as well. A uniformed hotel employee served as our guide and led the way. Then came the Prince, followed by Betty and me and, in the same order that had prevailed around the dinner table, each of the other couples fell in behind us. The lobbies were filled with noisy, chattering people but as our entourage entered, a hush fell over the crowd and everyone bowed respectfully. They remained that way, heads bowed and silent, until the Prince, like Moses parting the Red Sea, had led us safely through the crowds.

The dance was in progress when we arrived. The Prince entered and again, everything stopped. The dancers bowed deferentially as he walked to a chair near the stage. He took off his jacket and draped it neatly over the back of the chair. It was a signal. By removing his jacket, the Prince, whom the Japanese consider to be a direct descendant of God, became a mortal square dancer. It was as though he had set his divinity aside and had suddenly become human and approachable. The dance resumed. Many of the Japanese ladies asked the Prince to dance and he himself asked Betty to join him in a square. I had been warned that duties of state prevented the Prince from dancing very often and would I please keep the choreography simple whenever I spotted him on the floor.

As I had observed in Hawaii two years earlier, the Japanese dancers were very enthusiastic and even though most of them couldn't speak English and had memorized the calls phonetically, they were exceptionally proficient on the dance floor. Their exuberance inspired me and I called extraordinarily well that evening.

Like most American festivals, this one included an after party. It was a typical post-dance after party except for one thing. In Japan, between the end of the dance and the start of the after

party, it was customary for everyone to bathe.

The area around Mt. Fuji is known for its therapeutic hot springs and the hotel offered three separate bathing accommodations: a Men's Bath, a Ladies Bath, and a Family Bath. Betty and I decided we weren't quite ready for the Family Bath and opted for the appropriate one-sex-only facilities. Betty and I were each assigned a guide and they told us to put on our hotel robes and slippers. We'd proceed directly to the after party when we finished bathing but that was OK since it was the accepted custom for everyone to attend the after party in their robes, kimonos and slippers. Determined to adhere to local custom, Betty and I went to our room, disrobed and clad only in robes and slippers, our guides led us to our separate baths.

The ritual of the Japanese bath is an unmitigated pleasure. First you sit on a tiny milking stool in front of a cold water tap located about a foot above the floor and, using a tiny washcloth and soap, you clean and rinse your body. After that, you sit for fifteen unruffled minutes in a large bathing pool, up to your chin in the soothing hot spring waters, a small white washcloth draped casually atop your head. There were a half dozen other fellows in the pool with us; everyone smiled and nodded politely to everyone else. It was all very formal and civilized. When you step out of the hot pool, it is customary to deliberately shock your body by immediately dousing yourself with ice cold water from the tap. I forget whether this opens or closes your pores, but it is supposed to prevent colds. I don't know whether it does or not, but it certainly qualifies as an eye opener!

The after party was in full swing when we arrived and most of the dancers were indeed clad in robes and kimonos. There were lavish refreshments, they put on skits and other entertainments and I surprised everyone when I played my harmonica with the small 4-piece band, all of whom were callers. When the after party ended, a series of after-after parties were hosted in various hotel rooms and Betty and I were expected to spend a few minutes at each of them. As they escorted us through the hallways from one gathering to the next, we could always locate the next party room by the large mound of one-size-fits-all slippers piled outside the door.

We didn't stay at any one party long enough to sit down; we exchanged a few pleasantries, then took off for the next party. A group of young singles were singing Japanese folk songs at the last one we visited. It seemed like fun so we stayed there a bit longer. We contributed to the festivities by singing a few American folk songs and we had a fine time. But there was one slight problem.

We were all wearing robes and kimonos and I assumed that, like me, no one had anything on underneath. I was mistaken! No one had told me that, after the bath, we were supposed to wear an undergarment under our robes and I was flabbergasted to discover that I was the only one in the room who was stark naked under his robe! There were no chairs in the room and everyone sat on the ever-present *tatami* mats. The knee-length hotel robe kept me decent as long as I remained standing, but it was next to impossible to maintain my decorum if I tried to sit on the floor. No matter how I pulled or where I tugged, the robe never seemed to cover me completely. The young Japanese ladies couldn't help but notice my embarrassed squirming and they tittered nervously. I faked a smile and tried to look unconcerned. After a few more songs, however, nobody cared and, for the rest of the party, we all enjoyed a marvelous hands-across-the-sea experience. The one song everyone seemed to know was On Top of Old Smokey.

We found the Japanese to be an interesting people: serious but fun-loving, steadfast and single-minded yet full of contradictions. They worship history and tradition, but are determined to be in tune with the present - - a paradox made evident one afternoon when I rode the Tokyo subway

and found myself seated between two pretty young ladies. One was clad in a traditional kimono, *obi* and *zori*; the other wore expensive designer jeans and spike-heeled Gucci shoes.

The Japanese are courteous and almost too polite. Adherence to form and something called *face* are all-important. When we drove back to Tokyo after the dance, we were on a street so narrow that two cars coming from opposite directions could not pass each other. No sooner had I realized this when a car suddenly appeared and it was traveling directly toward us. The two cars stopped nose to nose and both drivers got out. They bowed politely and, after a brief exchange, returned to their vehicles. The other driver backed up to the first side street, backed in and allowed us to pass. I asked our driver how they had decided that the other car should back up and not us. My driver answered, ***I told him I carried honored guests from America.*** The other driver would have lost *face* had he insisted on the right of way.

Our next overseas visit came three years later in 1980 when I was hired by the European Callers and Teachers Association (ECTA) to call a dance and conduct a caller clinic in Heidelberg, Germany. It wouldn't have been profitable to travel that far for the ECTA date alone, but there was no way we were going to pass up an opportunity to go to Europe. I made some inquiries, wrote some letters and picked up some additional engagements in England, plus two more dances in Germany and managed to put together a short European tour. I also scheduled overnight stopovers in Paris and Interlaken, plus a brief visit with some of my relatives near Düsseldorf.

At first, I wasn't sure I wanted to visit my relatives. I knew their names and I had their addresses, but all I really knew about them was what my mother had told me. I am an only child so my parents were the only family I ever knew. I was aware I had uncles and aunts and quite a few cousins, but we had been separated by an ocean far too long for there to be any genuine familial connection between us. We were strangers and I feared our meeting might be awkward and uncomfortable with neither of us knowing what to say to the other. Betty pointed out, however, that such a meeting could just as easily turn out to be a wonderful, heart-warming experience and that I'd hate myself forever if I let the chance go by. She was right. After all, the worst that could happen was that we'd feel ill at ease for a day or two and then it would all be over. I wrote to my family to let them know we were coming.

They responded quickly. They were delighted we were flying to Germany and they were already planning a huge family get together. For reasons I have never understood, my cousin Karola, was estranged from the rest of the family. She and her husband Gerd met us in Heidelberg on the day I finished the ECTA caller clinic and the four of us drove in their brand new Mercedes to their home near Düsseldorf. The next morning she took us on a whirlwind tour of the city and, that afternoon, my cousin Hans arrived to take us to Lintorf where we were to meet my aunt Gretchen and my uncle Hans.

Our brief visit with Karola had been cordial but she had remained strangely distant and aloof. As we drove to Lintorf, I wondered if we'd get a similar reception from the rest of the family. Despite repeated efforts on my part to keep in touch by mail, we never heard from Karola again.

In Lintorf, we stayed with my aunt Gretchen, whose longevity and general demeanor made her the undisputed matriarch of the family. We hadn't been there more than a few minutes when she deftly established her status by reminding me that she had attended my birth and that she had held me in her arms when I was barely five minutes old.

Two family meetings had been arranged: one at aunt Gretchen's and one at the home of my

uncle Hans in Eggerscheidt. I met dozens of my relatives and, as we exchanged stories about my mother and told each other about our lives, a strange new feeling came over me. In the midst of all this *gemütlichkeit*, I slowly realized that I was inescapably linked to these people, that I was, indeed, one of them. We shared a common heritage; their blood was my blood; I belonged to them and they belonged to me. For the first time in my life, I experienced a real sense of family. It overwhelmed me. It was a highly charged, deeply emotional moment and I have never quite gotten over it.

If my aunt Gretchen was the family matriarch, my uncle Hans was the family rogue. He was a lovable old reprobate and a bit of a rascal. He took me for a walk, supposedly to show me where my birth house once stood, but we ended up in a local *Bierstube* where he bought us each a large *Schnapps*. Both Gretchen and Hans are gone now and I am glad we had the opportunity to see them before they passed away. We became friends with Hans' young son, who is also named Hans. We visited them on almost all of my subsequent European tours and they have stayed with us at Lake Tahoe. Cousin Hans is our primary contact with my family these days. We are very fond of him.

There is much that I remember about the 1980 tour. It began in England where Pete Skiffins, a former student in my 1978 Las Vegas callers' school, had arranged a series of calling dates for me in Southampton, East Anglia and Nottingham. Pete had set up an ingenious travel plan. The morning after a dance, each host club's caller drove us half way to the following evening's engagement, where he would hand us over to the caller for the next club. We completed our travels in London where I conducted a weekend caller clinic. The night before the clinic, however, was a free night and Pete took us to an old-time English Music Hall where Kenny Ball's British Dixieland Band was playing. They were terrific.

Upon completing my assignments in England, we crossed the Channel by hovercraft and, after spending some tourist time in Paris and Interlaken, I conducted the ECTA clinic in Heidelberg and called dances in Bitburg, Berlin and Munich. It all went off as planned.

Paris memories include obligatory visits to Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower and the Champs Elysee, but mostly I remember a delightful lunch in a small side-street café. A large sign containing its sandwich menu hung on the wall. It was in French and I didn't understand a word of it until I saw that they had listed Sandwich No. 12 as *Frommage*. It was a word I recognized; I had run across it several times before in crossword puzzles. It was the French word for cheese and, when the waiter came, I threw caution to the winds. I tried to sound like a seasoned world traveler as I ordered, ***Deux Sandwich Frommage***. The waiter nodded perfunctorily and returned in a short while bearing two enormous cheese sandwiches. Each sandwich consisted of a single baguette of freshly baked French bread, sliced in half lengthwise and thickly smeared with a magnificently pungent French *Brie*. The sandwiches were delicious and I was proud of how competently I had improvised my way around the language barrier. So proud, in fact, that when Betty suggested returning to the same café for lunch the next day, I told her I wanted to see if my competence worked elsewhere and insisted we look for a different restaurant. We found a charming little sidewalk café near Notre Dame. I gave the waiter the same order and waited for the same result. Not this time! These sandwiches were two slices of plain white buttered bread with a single slice of packaged yellow cheese carelessly thrust between them. We were crushed! We resolutely wrapped the sandwiches in some napkins to be eaten later as snacks and beat a hasty retreat to the first café. It must have been difficult for her, but Betty never once said, ***I told you so***.

For no reason other than a desire to see the Swiss Alps, I included Interlaken in our travel plans. I was glad I did. It was a lovely place, fresh and clean with an ever-present scent of pine in the

air. There was also a nice surprise in store for us. When we checked into our *Gasthaus*, the concierge, a lovely Swiss lady who spoke perfect English, asked what my occupation was. I told her I was a square dance caller and expected the same raised eyebrow that answer usually produces. It was not forthcoming. Without looking up from the hotel register, she casually said, ***How nice. There's an American square dance tour staying in a hotel down the street and they're having a dance this evening. You should go.*** It turned out to be a caller from Ohio who was known for leading travel tours for square dancers. He had some other callers I knew on the tour with him, and even some dancers from San Jose. We spent most of the evening commenting about what a small world it had become.

From Interlaken, we traveled by train to Heidelberg. There was a scary moment when we changed trains in Basel. We only had six minutes to make our connection and we were late arriving in Basel. We were running with all our baggage to catch our next train, which had already started moving. Aware of our plight, the *Bahnhofmeister*, who looked exactly like S.Z. Sakall, the old Warner Brothers character actor, literally threw me and my bags onto the slowly accelerating train. By the time he turned to do the same with Betty, it was too late. The train was moving too fast and, as I stared helplessly out of the window, I watched Betty grow smaller and smaller until she finally faded into the distance. I frantically pulled the cord which I assumed would stop the train. It didn't! I was trying to decide what to do next when the train stopped at another station. We were still in Basel. I got off as fast as I could only to encounter another difficulty!

Since Basel is on the border between Germany and Switzerland, I had to go through the Swiss Immigration checkpoint. Before we had become separated, I had given Betty my wallet and passport to hold for safekeeping and I now stood before the official with no passport, no wallet, and no way to prove my identity. In my perfect, unaccented German, I explained what had happened and assured him that my bags held mostly dirty laundry. He looked at me skeptically for a moment and then, probably thinking of all the forms he'd have to fill out if he detained me, he discreetly waved me through. I caught a taxi and we hurried through Basel's cobblestoned streets back to the train station where I had left Betty.

I found her, calm and unruffled, sitting on a bench on the same platform where I had last seen her. She had wisely reasoned that rather than try to chase after me, it would be best if she stayed where she was and let me find her. The station master had tried to put Betty on another train, but she held her ground and wouldn't budge. After we reunited, we caught the next train to Heidelberg and, as we were pulling out, saw the station master on the platform. We waved to each other and he grinned broadly and mouthed the words, ***Gott sei dank*** which is German for ***Thank God***. I have never deliberately separated myself from my passport again.

We concluded the 1980 tour with dances in Berlin and Munich. Both cities are rich in history. Our Berlin hosts showed us the Berlin Wall and the Brandenburg Gate, and in Munich we were taken to see the famous cathedral tower bell ringers in Munich's public square. A few days later, we were back home again.

As travel became a more frequent part of our lives, we started to collect gold and silver souvenir charms which Betty hung on a charm ring which she could also wear as a pendant. It had become our custom to buy an appropriate charm from each new place we visited and it wasn't long before it took two rings to hold them all.

We packed our overseas bags again two years later. I had already accepted an invitation to do a two week tour in New Zealand and Australia in 1982 when I received another invitation to call the Fukyukai's 25th anniversary dance in Japan. It was scheduled for the weekend following the

Down Under Tour and it was too good an offer to pass up. It would mean adding an extra week to the tour but I could make it work. When I completed my dances in Sydney, we could fly to Tokyo and there would even be time for an overnight stopover in Hong Kong on the way. It was an ambitious itinerary but it turned out well and Betty was able to add at least a half dozen new charms to her collection.

A direct flight from San Francisco to Auckland normally takes fourteen hours so I decided it might be better if we made the trip in two stages. Spending a night in Honolulu would minimize the inevitable jet lag problems and, since we were leaving on Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> 1981, it would also allow us spend a romantic Christmas in Hawaii. We left California as scheduled and spent the holiday in Honolulu. After Christmas dinner we had a nightcap at The Dolphin Room, a small lounge located in the lobby of our Waikiki hotel. The entertainment that night featured a young couple named Keith and Carmen Haugen whose performance captivated us. Keith is a mid-westerner who became fascinated by the culture of Hawaii and its language. He has, in addition, become something of an expert in the history of Hawaiian music. In their act, Keith plays the guitar and sings old Hawaiian songs while his charming Polynesian wife, Carmen, plays the ukulele and dances the hula with the grace of an angel. Their act is pure Hawaiian and totally devoid of the glitzy trappings that most of today's hotel performers seem to prefer. We found them utterly enchanting. During a break, they sat at our table for a bit and we chatted. We have seen them perform many times since that Christmas night and they always recognize us and call us by name. The next morning we flew to Auckland and began the New Zealand portion of our tour. I had been booked to teach two schools, one in Auckland and another in Christchurch, and also to call a dance in each location. It was a wonderful experience and we met many New Zealand dancers and most of their callers, some of whom became good friends and we still keep in touch by e-mail.

We then flew to Sydney where I called a dance for caller Barry Wonson in Goolagong, near Sydney, plus another dance in the Australian Capitol City of Canberra. We were there in mid-January which is mid-summer in Australia. It was incredibly hot in Canberra on the night of our dance. The hall had no air conditioning and I found it impossible to get any kind of excitement going. We were all glad when I finished the final tip.

It had been our first trip to New Zealand and Australia and we were much impressed by the spectacular beauty of their countryside and the unique character of the natives. Both the Aussies and the Kiwis are a warm, generous and fun-loving people; they are friendly and gregarious, and exhibit a quick sense of humor. Their local colloquialisms and their broad regional dialects often made them difficult to understand but, as they delighted in reminding us, we were in their country and *we* were the ones with the funny accents!

Before we knew it, it was time to leave for Japan. I was now collecting countries like merit badges and rarely missed an opportunity to add another new location to an upcoming itinerary, which is why I arranged for us to spend a night in Hong Kong on our way from Sydney to Tokyo. I also wanted to surprise Betty by making our brief stay in Hong Kong a first-class, first-cabin experience in every respect. Without telling her, I had booked us into The Peninsula Hotel, Hong Kong's most prestigious hostelry and had arranged to be met at the airport by a liveried chauffeur driving a Daimler limousine. Unfortunately Betty wasn't aware that outside of the U.S., a Daimler was considered to be even more upscale than a Rolls Royce and while she was pleased, she wasn't especially impressed by the Daimler and would have preferred the Rolls.. She conceded, however, that the chauffeur in livery was a nice touch.

We were both bowled over by the service and sumptuous facilities of the Peninsula Hotel.

Our limo was greeted at the curb by a dignified Chinese gentleman in striped pants, tailcoat and winged collar who escorted us to the front desk to supervise our check-in. A team of three young assistants dressed in smart white uniforms and wearing white pillbox hats, took care of our bags. Our escort showed us to our room and made a special point of demonstrating the comforts of its elegant bathroom. He proudly showed us its sunken tub of Italian marble and tapped the spotless clear glass shower walls with his white-gloved knuckles. They were so clean that some hotel guests didn't see them and hurt themselves trying to walk through them. The toilet was in a separate little room off the main bathroom and had its own telephone extension on the wall. It was the first time I was ever able to avail myself of such decadent luxury and I regretted I didn't know anyone in Hong Kong to telephone. We didn't have time for sightseeing, but we did take a few minutes for some shopping and we added another charm to Betty's pendant ring. The next afternoon, we boarded the plane for Tokyo.

The Fukyukai Club's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary dance was very similar to the anniversary dance I had called there five years earlier. It was even more successful. This time the dance was held in a hotel in Ito, a small town approximately 70 miles northwest of Tokyo. We had a joyful reunion with Tokuko who had once again volunteered to be our translator and guide. We also enjoyed reconnecting with many of the dancers and callers we had met on our earlier visit.

As he had done five years before, Prince Mikasa came to the dance. This time his wife accompanied him and he once again hosted a dinner in our honor. The Mayor of Ito and some other public officials were also invited and this dinner was even more elegant than the earlier one. It was prepared by a famous Japanese chef; the printed menu was in French and had been translated into Japanese. That didn't help us and we had no idea what we ate, but every dish was a gourmet's dream. A different wine was served with every course. I hadn't yet cultivated my interest in wine so I didn't fully appreciate what I was drinking. What I do remember is that every wine was uniquely delicious and that I was especially impressed by how they were served. Several uniformed wine stewards stood behind the dinner table and, as you took a sip of wine, a steward unobtrusively stepped up to the table to refill your glass. When the next course was served, your glass was removed, replaced with a clean one and a new wine, selected especially for that particular course, was poured. Be still, my drooling palate!

A standout memory from that trip to Japan was a singing call duet that Betty I performed at the Saturday night dance. On our previous trip, we had heard a pretty Japanese song called, *I Will Show You the Way* and I had suggested to my own record producer that he allow a Japanese caller to record it on one of his labels. When I was looking for something special to call at the Saturday night dance, that record came immediately to mind. I knew that our audience would especially enjoy it if Betty and I called it as a duet and that they would enjoy it even more if we called part of the song in Japanese. I asked one of our Square Hoppers ladies, Aiko Tauchi, who was fluent in both Japanese and English, if she could help us learn the words. She said she'd be happy to try.

Aiko wrote down the Japanese words to the original song so that we would be able to memorize them phonetically. Betty and I then devised and rehearsed a showman-like vocal arrangement in which I called the choreography of the dance in normal fashion, and Betty joined me singing harmony at the tag lines. We deliberately sang them in English until the final chorus when, we suddenly surprised everyone by singing them in Japanese. The dancers went wild and the applause was deafening. Even Bourbon Street couldn't top it! Our duet turned out to be the high point of the week end.

The after party was also very similar to the one five years before except this time everyone

bathed privately in their respective hotel rooms. There was much food, skits we couldn't understand and I again played my harmonica with a small band. The goodbys at the Sayonara dance the next morning were even more sorrowful than they had been the last time.



WITH PRINCE MIKASA & HIS WIFE, TOKUKO (on right)



BETTY & THE PRINCE

AFTER PARTY IN THE KIMONO

(This picture did not copy from the original)

SIGHTSEEING AT KAMAKURA