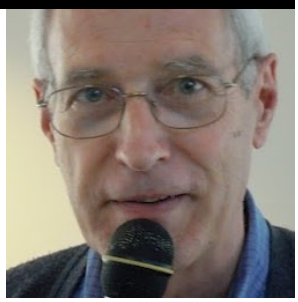
Participating in CALLERLAB

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So you're thinking you might want to become more involved in CALLERLAB? Go to a convention? Maybe join some committees? Work on a project? Perhaps do a presentation? Do some networking? Let's explore that a little bit.

Before getting more involved it helps to know what CALLERLAB actually *is*.

Many regard CALLERLAB as some sort of regulatory body, who decides what calls are on what programs, what the definitions for those calls are, what constitutes proper usage, what callers need to know, how callers should conduct themselves, and...you get the picture.

That idea is not true.

Consider: *Square Dancing is a folk art.* As such, it is whatever its practitioners–*that would be us*–collectively *say* it is.

What the calls are, how they work, where we use them, what styling is involved – all of that is up to us, collectively and as individuals.

Of course, if we want our activity to have some sort of large public presence, to be something people can do here, there, and everywhere, it behooves us to impose some consistency on what we do. If dancers are to be able to move around and dance in different places with different people, they need assurance that the calls they hear mean the same thing everywhere. *That* requires some sort of wide community consensus.

CALLERLAB represents the most prominent organization for creating that community consensus. It serves as a communications nexus for exchanging ideas and information that lets us, as a community, decide how we want things to be.

During one of my Chairman's speeches a few years ago I said, *"CALLERLAB is the crucible in which our consensus is forged"*. Afterwards, I received some good-natured (I think) mockery for the high-mindedness of that sentiment. But to this day I can think of no more apt description of what CALLERLAB does. *We forge consensus*...and that's not necessarily easy or fast.

OK, now you're intrigued. You want to be part of this process. How can you do that?

By far, the most exciting and engaging thing you can do is to attend a CALLERLAB convention (this year is in Richmond, VA, April 14-17). You need not be a CALLERLAB member to do this. The convention is 2-½ days of networking, education, and entertainment that is the absolute fastest way to get the lay of the CALLERLAB land.

Less exciting and more work is to participate in some committees. For this, you must be a member. Committees are where the *real* work and information output comes from.

We're all familiar with the Program Committees that oversee the definitions and lists for the Basic, Mainstream, Plus, Advanced, and Challenge programs. To join one of them you have to be actively calling the program involved. But there are many others (some might say too many) which are concerned with less technical activities and open to all, including partners.

"Define 'less technical'!", I hear you cry. Well...if you know something about marketing, teaching, choreography, writing, websites, computers, raising money, organizing groups, social psychology, history, public relations, there's a committee looking for your help. That's not an exhaustive list by a long shot. If you really want to have direct influence and input on the activity we all love, committee membership is the way to go.

Are you really keen? Would you like to maybe do a presentation at convention? Perhaps become a committee Chair or Vice-Chair? Or, maybe even run for the Board of Governors?

We have GCA members who have done *all* of that, so don't think it is out of your reach.

True, to accomplish these things some people have to notice you and believe you are suited to the task. You have to "know the right people", or at least *be known by* them. Some believe it's an "old boy's club" that they will never be admitted to. But that's not the way it is.

Let's look at the idea of doing a presentation at convention. How does that happen?

Each convention presents roughly 40 hours of education and interest sessions. Most of these involve multiple presenters. That's bunches of people. The speakers are selected by the Executive Committee, which is responsible for convention planning. The EC has to decide what topics are to be presented and then find people to do it.

The connotation of "old boy's club" is that they are trying to restrict membership. That is the exact *opposite* of what the EC has to do. The EC is always scrambling to find qualified presenters for information sessions. If you can impart some information members would find useful, speak up! The EC will definitely take note.[2]

If you're not sure what sort of thing would be of interest, have a look at the CALLERLAB Convention Audio Recording Index (go to knowledge.callerlab.org and look under **CALLERLAB Conventions**). It lists over 900 past sessions with descriptions of the topics (and links to the recordings if you find something you want to listen to). The catch here is putting the bug in the ear of an EC member before the convention plan is set in stone – which usually happens a bit less than a year out. The easiest way to do that is to attend convention and fill out a com-

2 Your Editor notes that he was asked to make a presentation on "E-Communications" due to his expertise at setting up mailing lists, websites, and social media accounts, despite not knowing any of the "right people". You have no idea which of your skills might be useful to other CALLERLAB members until you start attending Convention and get to know people...and give them a chance to get to know *you*!

ment form with your suggestion. The EC will definitely see it.

What about being a committee Chair or Vice-Chair? Again, the EC officially appoints these positions, but they normally do it on the advice of the existing officers. Each committee also has an EC Liaison who keeps an eye on committee activities and sees all their email traffic. This means *EC members become aware of who participates and contributes to committee work*. Obviously, then, the path is to join a committee, roll up your sleeves and do some valuable work.

Joining the Board of Governors is by far the hardest nut to crack, but it is entirely democratic. You run, people vote for you (or not) and you're elected. The key here is name recognition. If people don't know who you are, they won't vote for you.

How do you gain name recognition? If you've read down this far, and you're Board material, you can figure it out.

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GCA member Kurt Gollhardt dancing with Sherry Winkenwerder at El Camino Reelers' themed potluck "The Woodstock of Square Dancing". Photo courtesy of Ken Seibert.