

## Caller, Teacher, & Entertainer

My business card says: Paul Cote; Caller, Teacher, & Entertainer and I strive to be all three. There is much more to being a caller than simply finding the corner every time. (And that's a good thing for me 'cuz I miss that corner more often than I'd like!) When I call a square dance, I want to find those corners, but I also want to give them a little song and dance along the way.

Is it necessary for a caller to be a good teacher? Not really...but it is a big help. Is it necessary for a caller to be an entertainer? Again; no, but I know the dancers are happier when they get the whole package.

Some people think it's all the same thing but it most definitely is not. There are some fantastic teachers out there that call terrible square dances and vice versa. Many of those fantastic teachers wouldn't have a clue how to be entertaining.

When I think about a good caller, I am thinking about mechanics. A good caller moves you around the floor to the beat of the music. He/she will have decent timing, a reasonable variety of choreography, and will find that corner "most" of the time. A good caller will have a pleasant, clear voice and will hopefully be able to carry a decent tune.

A good teacher is going to be patient. That teacher will know the material being taught backwards and forwards. They will be able to clearly illustrate their point to the dancers. A good teacher gives their dancers every opportunity to succeed. A good teacher realizes that if he explains something once and the dancers don't succeed, explaining it a second time LOUDER is not necessarily going to make their point any more clear.

Yes, there is a specific definition for each and every call, but there are also many ways to illustrate that definition. Different people visualize what is being said in different ways. From a mini-wave, how far is  $1/4$ ? For one dancer, that's one wall. For another dancer, that's 90 degrees. For a third dancer, it's half of a trade. All are equally correct. A caller could stick to his guns and call it any one of those ways, but the caller who offers people alternative illustrations gives them more opportunity to succeed. It is not enough to know a lot as a teacher. I do everything I can to find a common ground that takes the information in my head and plants it in the head of the student. I WANT my students to dance to other callers and succeed based on the information I gave them.

Above all, I want to be a good entertainer. I want the people who show up at my dance to know that I am giving them everything I have to offer. I try to be upbeat and enthusiastic. I will sing every song from my heart. I'll hit the highest (quality) note and the lowest note I can possibly hit that day. I'll hold a note as long as my overdeveloped "callers muscle" will allow. (For non-callers, that's code for my big fat gut!) I try to have a sense of humor and I want the dancers to know that I absolutely want to be there more than anyplace else in the world that night. If I've done my job right the dancers will FEEL my enthusiasm, and hopefully take it home with them.