

DEAR READER

Welcome to Marshall Flippo and the World of Square Dancing Star, legend—all words used to describe Marshall Flippo in the square dance world, yet when we started this project, he made me promise that I didn't portray him as a hero. His humble spirit spoke volumes about his view. Marshall Flippo died on Sunday, November 4, 2018. He called actively until he was ninety years old, having a sixty-four-year career in the field he loved. During his heyday, he worked at Kirkwood Lodge in Osage Beach, Missouri, for half of the year, calling seven nights a week and the other half he toured the United States, calling usually six nights a week for forty-two years. He endured this grueling schedule because he did what he loved! He returned to his Texas roots as often as he could and called the anniversary dance for the Grand Squares Square Dance Club in San Antonio, Texas for forty-four years. He had long-term relationships with many dancers, clubs, and festivals all over the world.

He truly was a Renaissance man. The rough times of the depression and the subsequent recession formed Marshall Flippo, forcing the Flippo family to move several times around the Abilene area, searching for lower rental costs and better housing. As a *caller*, he spent six months of a year for forty-two years traveling the country and the world, a gypsy. Did the frequent moves during his early years set him up for this lifestyle?

It was 1944, and Flippo focused on World War II. He volunteered at seventeen, influenced by the war's impact on his country and his surroundings. Flippo's oldest sister and best friend enlisted, leading the way for him, so his patriotism shifted the direction of this young Texan's life away from finishing high school and out to the world.

After his service to his country, Flippo returned to Abilene, Texas and met the love of his life, Neeca. A happenstance career that fell into place because of a serendipitous square dance vacation to Kirkwood Lodge in the Lake of the Ozarks of Missouri ultimately changed his life forever.

His career spanned six decades, and he loved every minute. He came to the activity a bashful young Texan and felt the formula for his success was "he was the luckiest man in the world—at the right place at the right time." This powerful theme weaves its way through his life story, from getting rides home to Abilene, Texas with his friend, Thurman Curry, to his naval training in San Diego, California and his baseball career, to all the ins and outs of his successful square dance calling career.

During a large part of our interviews, we looked at three albums/scrapbooks Neeca, Flippo's first wife, made for him. She documented a major part of his successful career, so I often reference him looking at a picture from one of these albums/scrapbooks.

More than anything, Marshall Flippo wanted you to laugh in reading his biography. His life was joy-filled, and he wanted you to experience that through his stories.

I knew him as "Flippo" or "Flip." Often when he spoke to himself in our conversations, that's how he referred to himself, as well. I will use Marshall sparingly in this book, not out of

dishonor, but because “Flippo” is what we called this man we loved.

Flippo was a Texan through and through, with a unique story to tell. I would do him a disservice if I didn’t include some of his linguistic differences. I’ve tried to capture his syntax, his Texas twang, and his words in a way that you can hear him telling his story to you. Flippo often sang the end of a sentence—truly a *caller* and master storyteller. I include these so the reader can hear his Texas twang, again not to disrespect him.

This biography is the remembrances of a ninety-year-old man. I’ve tried to verify all the Navy stories with historical fact. I did seek out truth when in doubt from those who might know. I couldn’t verify the rest of the book because many of the key players are dead. So in saying that, these are Flippo’s stories and memories; he was accurate in many places but admitted in others he just didn’t know for sure. So let’s go with that!

Since Flippo was the source for this book’s stories, when he said things like “Bill Hagadorn said,” I didn’t do a quote within a quote, but wrote it as a direct quote of Bill or whoever Flip was quoting.

There’s a glossary of square dance and round dance terminology, Appendix I, in the back of the book, and I italicized all dance terms in the text to signal the reader. For easy reading and reference, any terms will be in the Footnotes once at the end of each chapter. For more expanded definitions for some calls, see the glossary.

Now look over our shoulders as we look at his life through the albums and scrapbooks. Enjoy his pictures and meet Marshall Flippo!