

MEET . . LIESL BARNETT



The dynamo behind the Let's Dance Representation and Director of Publicity, Folk Dance Federation of California, South, is a folk dancer from "way back".

Born in Vienna Austria, Liesl started folk dancing at the age of four doing Kolos with the Yugoslav peasants, learning Hungarian dances from her Hungarian godmother (the Serbian godfather provided the Kolo enthusiasm), and learning Austrian and Czech dances from various maids. Additional dance instruction was received along with less important subjects like math, in schools in Austria, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and in Turnvereins in both Vienna and Iglau (now Jihlava in Moravia, Czechoslovakia).

She became interested in customs and costumes of the various nationalities on her father's prodding, an interest that has survived and grown over the years.

She danced in the huge International Youth Congress in Vienna in 1936 and many other exhibitions in Europe. After coming to the U.S.A. in 1939 she did no folk dancing for almost two years. Reason; no knowledge of the English language and ignorance of the existence of folk dancing and clubs devoted to it in this country. In 1941 Liesl became a member of Chang's International Folk Dancers in San Francisco. She was the group's research chairman (costumes and folklore) for two years; finished the unexpired term of Boris Abramson, who died before the first half year was up, then was elected twice to the Dance Chairman (Exhibition). Also, she worked on Chang's monthly bulletin,

In 1948 Liesl moved to Santa Rosa and joined the Santa Rosa Merry Mixers. She was active as instructor for this group, and also, served as co-instructor for the Santa Rosa Junior Merry Mixers. Then in 1949 she established the Santa Rosa Tune Trotters (now defunct), serving as their first president and teacher. In addition, while in Santa Rosa she taught folk dancing at the Guillucos School, Olivet Elementary School (to both children and parents), and to 4-H club members.

In 1952 the Barnett's moved to Tooele, Utah, where Liesl taught some folk dancing, but on a very limited scale as this was primarily a square dance area. She was a member of a Caller's Association, but did not renew the membership after leaving Utah.



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After moving to Edgwood, Maryland in 1953, she organized with the Farm Bureau and County assisting in a Homemaker's Club, and immediately started the group on folk dancing, serving as their only teacher. She also taught at the Officer's Club, NCO Club, Army-sponsored Teenage Center, Edgwood Elementary and High Schools and to the Luther Leaguers of her church.

Then in 1956 the Barnett's moved to Santa Monica, California. Soon after arriving Liesl joined the Santa Monica Folk Dancers, served as the Club's Secretary, Program Chairman and, currently as President.

Other folk dance activities included dancing in Chang's Exhibition Group for six years; working on the script for the 1st Woodminster presentation; working on narration and serving with Walter Grothe on several folk dance concerts at the San Francisco Museum of Fine Arts. Now she is starting her second term as Director of Publicity and Let's Dance Representative for the Federation, South. She has been an active contributor to Let's Dance since its beginning.

Liesl married Ben Barnett in 1940. Ben is an enthusiastic folk dancer, though refuses to become as involved as his spouse. They have four sons, ages 13, 16, 18 and 20 years, none of whom as yet can be persuaded to give folk dancing a try.

Other activities: Volunteer secretary to the Chaplain of the Santa Monica Lutheran Hospital, and she has recently received the only 1000 hour service pin given in the Los Angeles area.

Liesl is currently enrolled as a foreign language major at the Santa Monica City College, with the goal of graduating after three semesters or less. She sings in the choir at the St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Hobbies, other than folk dancing, include researching and making costumes, bowling, writing, making jewelry, and getting her nose into a million and one activities, and collecting friends.

Question most often asked Liesl is: "When do you find time to do all this?" Regular answer: "Who needs sleep???"

By . . . Valerie Staigh

