

People Worth Knowing

INTRODUCING . . . MILLIE COBURN

By . . . Catherine Jerue

In the Sacramento area many conversations begin with "This is Millie" – what better introduction can there be to her folk dance biography?

Millie was born in El Dorado County, on a ranch which her German grandfather developed a year before the Gold Rush, and which remained in the family for almost a hundred years. Her paternal grandmother came from Hanover, Germany and the marriage of the grandparents was arranged by their families. On her mother's side, her great grandmother was direct from Ireland, and in the early days operated the Post Office and General Store at Lotus, El Dorado County, so Millie grew up on California history.

She was educated in the Sacramento schools and is a secretary by profession. She started folk dancing in Merced in 1949, with Circle M Folk Dancers. She later became the instructor of the group and assisted in establishing the Merced Workshop which brought dancers from throughout the County together. This Workshop is still active in Newman and retains many of its original members. She was a member of the Fresno Council Workshop for five years, and Fresno is still "home"!

Millie was active in the Merced County Folk Dance Council during its existence, served as its secretary, and Club and Council representative to Federation affairs for many years.

She came to Sacramento in 1957 for a "short sojourn" which has continued to the present. She immediately became active with *Taboe Swingers*, served as secretary, was Sacramento Institute Chairman in 1959, and is Sacramento Council secretary this year. She was appointed to the Federation Research Committee in 1958, and to the Teachers Institute Committee in 1960, on which she still serves.



Millie Coburn

Millie is employed by Aerojet-General Corporation in the Reliability & Quality Control Division of the POLARIS program, and is as enthusiastic about the Space Age as she is about folk dancing. She is a charter member of the Cordova Chapter, National Secretaries Association (International) a professional organization, has served on the Bylaws Committee of her Chapter and is now Bylaws Committee Chairman.

She considers herself blessed with co-workers of foreign birth, who take a sincere personal interest in her research projects, furnishing interesting, authentic information about their native dances. They assist in translating from original source material, when available, and vie with each other to establish accuracy. They are presently assisting in the translation of a volume of old Swedish folk dances for use by Camellia City Folk Dancers, and are proud and pleased to find a group of Americans interested in perpetuating the culture of their native country through their folk dances.

Many persons have contributed to Millie's development in the folk dance field, but she speaks fondly of two persons directly responsible for her enthusiasm for research, who pointed out that folk dancing can provide much more than recreational enjoyment.

One of the persons is Ruth Allen Roah, her first teacher, who urged her to try teaching, and who introduced her to the infinite variety and advantages of Folk Dance Camp at University of the Pacific, which Millie has attended for ten years. The other person is Miriam Lidster, who, through a presentation at Camp a number of years ago, influenced her decision to concentrate on research into the broad cultural and historical aspects of folk dance.

Millie sincerely believes that association with many nationalities through their folk dances will promote a better understanding between peoples — that through folk dance perhaps all people may come together, one step at a time, to eventually close the circle, the center of which will be international understanding and good will. She follows Miriam's philosophy that there can be no animosity toward your neighbor in your heart when you join with him in a dance.

