



Floyd Davis

Floyd Davis honored by The Stanislaus Arts Council

By Judy Kropp, 209/480-0387

Floyd Davis has received an award from the Stanislaus Arts Council for his contributions in the field of dance. The Stanislaus Arts Council coordinates festivals and performances in the county. They give out grants to promote the arts. They operate the Stars program where volunteers bring arts into the schools - painters, dancers, musicians, singers all go into the schools and give a mini course on their art. Floyd has done that for several years - bringing folk dancing into the schools. Each year they award (a trophy and certificates) to artists in the county in maybe six different fields.

Telling about Floyd Davis's life is like taking a trip through Modesto's history. He was born in 1927 in St. Mary's Hospital on 17th and H Street, went to Wilson's Grammar School when it was only a one-room schoolhouse and graduated from Modesto High School. In 1945 he went into the Army just as World War II was winding down. He guarded Japanese prisoners in the Philippines. With the GI Bill, Floyd was able to attend Modesto Junior College and then on to University of California, Berkeley. He returned to Modesto after he inherited his grandfather's peach orchard on Yosemite Ave. Around 1970 he changed it to grapes and grew them until he sold the vineyard a few years ago and moved into Modesto. He worked for the US Post Office from 1955 until around 1987. He and his wife Elsie have two grown sons, Mark and Neil Davis. Neil and his wife Cindy have one child Gwyn.

Floyd's dancing started in 1939 when he took a ballroom dance class in the basement of the Hotel Covell on J Street. His first experience with international folk dancing (dances from around the world) was at Modesto Junior College where he received a D+ in the class. But a love for dancing was born and continues until this day. He danced at Cal for fun and when he returned to Modesto started dancing with the Modesto Folk Dancers in 1949. It was almost all couple dances then - dances from Germany, Poland, Russia, Croatia. Floyd

would bring the records and help set up the music. The group danced in Gene and Rachael Boone's living room, at Mancini Bowl in Graceada Park and at the Woodland Grange. He met his future wife Elsie in a class taught by Adrienne Bradley. By 1955 Floyd had begun teaching the classes.

He was asked to teach dances to some burly football players at the College of the Pacific who thought dancing was for sissies. Floyd taught some lively Russian/Ukrainian dances and the players couldn't walk the next day because of sore muscles. This led to his attending Folk Dance Camp at the University of the Pacific in 1970. There world class teachers come from different countries every year to teach dances. Floyd has attended every year of camp except for one for 36 years. He'll attend this year for the 60th anniversary of this extraordinary camp in Stockton.

Floyd has performed for many years for festivals, schools, rest homes, churches and city events. He and his dance partner, Barbara Summers, started a Scandinavian performance group in Turlock that performed at the festival each year. They have exhibited Romanian, German, Bulgarian, Israeli dances also. Through the STARS program he has taught at many schools. At Martone School Floyd taught 3-6th grades, 5 days a week for 4 hours a day...he lost 10 pounds that week.

Recently Floyd celebrated his 80th birthday by out-dancing everyone at the party. He now co-teaches Israeli dances in Livermore on Tuesday, teaches the Modesto Folk Dancers in Ceres on Wednesday, and co-teaches the Village Dancers on Friday nights at Sylvan School in Modesto. His motto is 'I won't grow up!' He can still kick over his head, dance for 2 ½ hours and bakes fresh cookies, cakes or cheesecakes for his dancers in every class. "Floyd's special chocolate cake is famous in the folk dance world", said Dori McElroy a dancer in the group.

"I continue to be amazed at the energy Floyd has for dances and his memory for the steps - over 500 dances stored in his mind," commented Jeff Schweiker, another dancer. "I'm amazed at his knowledge of the various cultures that go with the dances," stated Robert Rudholm who also dances three times a week. "He's a delight to be with and always has a smile."

"Floyd has always been generous with his time teaching beginners to dance. The music starts and our troubles disappear", commented Don Kropp, co-teacher of the Friday class.

Blossom Festival & Folk & Ballroom Dance Concert

Sat. April 29, 1-2 pm, Concert; 2-5 pm general dancing. CCSF Dance Studio, North Gym, 50 Phelan (off Ocean Ave), S.F. Cost: \$3 CCSF students, \$5 general. For further information contact: joel@folkdance.com or crb2crb@aol.com www.ccsf.edu (search: dance) or www.ccsframes.com (link:dance) or Gail Barton 415.452-5525

The concert includes guests: Ballet Argentino & Comodore Stockton School Dancers, with City College Folk, Swing, Tango & Salsa Dance Teams.