

Folk Dancers We Should Remember

HENRY "BUZZ" GLASS

by Larry Getchell

We have been requested to revive the series of articles published in *Let's Dance* during 1994 and 1995 under the heading, Folk Dancers Lost and Found. Under a new heading, "Folk Dancers We Should Remember" we have decided to give recognition to a folk dancer who should never be forgotten, founder of the Folk Dance Federation of California, Henry "Buzz" Glass. Our article will not be about his achievement just mentioned as we devoted almost ten pages on this subject in our recently published "History of the Folk Dance Movement in California" of which the first issue quickly sold out. If you do not have a copy, we suggest you order one from the Federation Office in Alameda.

Our request to "Buzz" and Frances for some up-to-date information on Buzz' dance activities during the past and up to the present was promptly provided. As it is a lengthy life-long contribution to the dance world, we will paraphrase a bit due to space limitation.

During the early years when "Buzz" devoted much of his spare time to folk dancing and following graduation from San Francisco State University he did among other things some school teaching. While following this profession in Lodi he invited a group of the leading folk dance clubs to a meeting there. It was at this time he presented his idea for a federation of clubs. He was a short time later elected President of the Folk Dance Federation. His Secretary Treasurer was Frances Farnell who later during that year 1942 changed her name to Mrs. Henry Glass. She was then and has been ever since "Buzz" s good right arm, sometimes his left and in an emergency both.

Folk Dancers today are accustomed to find on their dance programs the Blue Pacific Waltz. This is but one of the many folk dances choreographed by "Buzz". Others were his own special Hopak, a dance which only an old University of California pole vaulter was athletically able to perform. There were also the Skaters Waltz, Missouri Waltz, Numero Cinco, El Mar Caribe, Pour Le Plaisir, Tango Sereno, Linda Mujer, Cha Vidrio and Bar Wash Blues. The latter was an arrangement popular with Round Dancers.

We never failed to be impressed when witnessing "Buzz" performing his Hopak. He first introduced it on August 20, 1944 when the folk dancers presented a pageant of folk dance exhibitions at the Sigmund Stern Grove in San Francisco before a capacity crowd of 12100. The crowd loved it

Of the many dances choreographed by "Buzz", perhaps the lengthiest and most intricate was his Skaters Waltz. Difficult or not, the folk dancers at the time took to it with enthusiasm. Even the Arthur Murray studios of Oakland were interested. This writer was teaching a folk dance class at the Oakland Recreation Park Blvd. Hall and the Skaters Waltz was being taught. We were quite surprised when one evening a young couple from Arthur

Murray's Studio signed up. Their main interest was to learn the Skaters Waltz routine. If it was ever used by their studio, we have no idea.

It became apparent that "Buzz"s achievements were becoming recognized when in 1954 he received a Ford Foundation Fellowship to study the history, culture and dances of Mexico and to travel throughout the country. Frances Glass says it was a very rich and rewarding experience for the entire family.

We will now list some of his achievements as outlined to us. "Buzz" served as co-director of a Mills College summer workshop for teachers for 18 years. The program covered all aspects of Physical Education and Dance. He was one of Stockton Folk Dance Camp's original instructors teaching there several years. Eleven years were spent as an Extension Division instructor for the University of California. He was also a presenter at several State California Health, Physical Education and Recreation Association affairs. He also taught for Arthur Murray Studios.

"Buzz" is also author or co-author of over 25 long-play records, cassettes and CD's of physical educational material for elementary school children. Two of his volumes of poetry, chants, rhymes, etc., Action Time Volume I and Action Time Volume II, are published by the Alameda schools. He is co-author of International Playtime, published by Simon & Schuster, and the Rainy Day Survival Book. For the past 20 years he has given teachers workshops throughout the United States using much of the material listed above. Before his retirement in 1976 he was the Supervisor of Elementary Physical Education for the Oakland Unified School District and later Coordinator of Special Education.

At the present time he is reviving three of his Dances Without Partners albums. Last year a new record "Square Dancing Made Easy" was released as Videos.

He has also traveled throughout Europe and the British Isle, taking the back roads. Spain, Portugal and Israel are included as other memorable trips.

Both "Buzz" and Frances enjoyed square dancing for several years. However, "Buzz" wanted to return to folk dancing and now dances as much as possible with the Piedmonters folk dance group. Both also attend a Country Line Dance group and enjoy this activity very much.

"Buzz" and Frances have two children, Terry and Linelle. They are carrying the family tradition of being active in music, dance, teaching and travel.

We should mention before closing the "Buzz" was editor of LET'S DANCE for the year 1946. His interest in folk dancing as near as he can remember dates back to the year 1937. He joined the Chang group prior to their becoming a club. Seems he saw a notice on a San Francisco State bulletin board about a folk dance meeting; so he attended. Aren't we all glad he did.