

People Worth Knowing

WALTER GROTHE

By . . Edna Rose

Yes, he is a person worth knowing, and many of you are fortunate in knowing him as a friend as well as a teacher. My earliest recollection of Walter dates back about twelve years, when I can recall him chasing a young lady at a Festival in Santa Barbara. Now, it is not unusual for a gentlemen to pursue a young lady, but in this instance, the young lady was on foot, zig-zagging around a parking lot, and Walter was doing allemandes right and left in his little M.G. This incident is mentioned merely to remind you that under the Old World dignity and charm there lies a very keen sense of humor.

Born and raised in Germany and educated at the University in Munich, Walter availed himself of the opportunity, while a student, to travel extensively in Europe. He visited most of the Balkan, Scandinavian, and Mediterranean countries. He left Europe in 1925 for two years in South America before coming to California, where he remained only five months. He completed his global circuit by taking off for Hawaii, Japan, China, India, Manila, then back to Germany. Of all the places he visited, California was the favorite, and he returned to San Francisco in 1929. He worked for an Export House until the war years, at which time he operated a Ski Lodge in the winter and a resort on the Russian River in the Summer. He joined the firm of Dean Witter (Stocks and Bonds) and is with them today. At the present time he is enjoying being a bachelor, but is very proud of his two children by a former marriage; a son, who is a teacher at Stanford, and a daughter, studying International relations at the University of California.

Strangely, his folk dancing interest did not begin in Europe. He started while at the Ski Lodge in California, and when he returned to San Francisco in 1942, the Federation was just being formed and he was able to attend the first Festival. Later he joined the Berkeley Folk Dancers, and the same year became a member of Changs. Walter worked extensively with "Let's Dance", was Vice President and later President of the Federation for two years. There is not enough space to list his works with the Teachers' Institutes, North-South Relations, or his work with Lawton Harris, in organizing the Folk Dance Camp at Stockton. (The photograph will be a familiar sight to readers who have attended Summer Camp). Many of your favorite dances have been introduced by Walter - Zillertaler Laendler, Dreisteirer, and he has brought others, on which he did not do the original research, to California, such as the Oslo Waltz, Doudlebska Polka, Dutch Foursome, and many more. He started teaching in 1946, and at the present time is instructor of Beginner-Intermediates at Changs, the Swingsters, Belles and Beaux, all in San Francisco. But if he has a favorite, I am sure, because of his keen interest in people from all countries, it would be his Friday class at the International House at the University of California in Berkeley.

Walter has one other accomplishment which is seldom ever mentioned. On a dare, but only once, he became a Square Dance caller. He practiced and delivered an excellent Texas Star. It was my good fortune to be in a square at the George Washington High School, in San Francisco, the evening that Walter decided to bring his new achievement out in the open. Like everything else that he does, it was a fine job.

Folk dancing fills a big part of Walter's life, and it is through efforts like this that Folk Dancing has been made a part of your life and mine. He is, indeed, a person worth knowing.



*Walter Grothe, in his familiar Austrian
Costume, at Summer Camp*

Photo . . Ace Smith