

Folk Dancers We Should Remember

by Larry Getchell

George Murton

Resulting from our research for Folk Dancers we should Remember, some of the letters received tell some very interesting stories. At a recent 50th wedding anniversary party for Wayne and Clarice Wills we met Dana Murton, son of George and Adrienne Murton. He brought with him his parent's folk dance album. This album covered a time frame mostly of the fifties and it brought back many memories.

George and Adrienne were friends dating from the late forties but mostly just folk dance friends. This means we enjoyed their company at festivals, Statewides and later folk dance camps. As to their private lives we knew very little. Now having met their son Dana we wrote him for some background information on his parents. With some minor editing here is what he had to say:

My earliest recollection of George and Adrienne folk dancing was when we lived in Sausalito in the 1945/47 time frame. Mom always claimed that Dad was a "Wall Flower" and always resisted the idea of looking into dancing. I can remember Mom urging Dad to come on down to Central School to Wilma Young's class if only to watch while she took folk dance lessons. If you ever knew Wilma Young she was not one to allow a "Wall Flower" to remain unpicked. As the story goes, Wilma got everyone up to try a new dance but George was sitting on the sidelines watching. "Come on George you're going to try this too"--That was the last dance George ever sat on the sidelines for. He was hooked for good. He often used the same tactic to get new dancers on the floor for the first time.

Times were tough job wise and Dad found himself working in Sacramento and commuting home on week-ends. What should he do for recreation during the week but find the folk dancers at the "El Rancho" Shopping Center in East Sacramento where he became very active in folk dancing. Shortly a return to the Bay area found Dad and Mom becoming active in the Northern California folk dance world. We two boys also joined in.

A temporary move to San Gabriel found us all participating in some of the Southern California folk and square dancing but we all missed the Northern style. A return to Redwood City in 1948 got the family well ensconced in the Bay area folk dance family. As I recall, George and Adrienne attended folk dance camp at Stockton in 1949. I believe I attended Folk Dance Camp in 1950/51/52 before going off to college.

I can remember Dad being particular good as MC for a number of festivals. At a folk dance exhibition at Woodminster amphitheater in Oakland where Dad was the MC, he made a Freudian slip when he was describing various "Versions" of a particular dance and said "virgins". It brought down the house.

During their years in Redwood City, George and Adrienne taught folk and square dancing in Burlingame. "The Burlingamboliers" I believe was the name of the club.. They certainly loved that teaching. I remember hauling boxes of recordings and sound equipment in and out of the auditorium many times.

Dana mentions that his parents attended Stockton Folk Dance Camp in 1949 for the first time. Following George's term as President of the Federation, Lawton Harris put him in charge of Camp Assemblies, a job he handled efficiently for several years.

This writer's last close association with the Murtons took place sometime in the late fifties, shortly after they had moved from the Bay area. My wife and I were attending a Statewide in San Diego. On Saturday night with the dance program about over, we were approached by the Murtons and asked if we would like a tour of San Diego night life. We accepted and they drove us from night club to night club for a short visit of each. One of these was located on a little island. The side of the island facing land was separated from the mainland by a narrow moat. You crossed over a little bridge to get to the night club itself. It was all very interesting.

During Danny McDonald's Presidency, 1948-49, George held the elected Federation office of Director of Extension. That "Extension" must have caused some attention as George Murton was elected President of the Folk Dance Federation of California for the years 1950/51. He inherited a financial problem resulting from Let's Dance" magazine excessive cost the previous year. He was successful in getting Lawton Harris to take over as the new Editor. The savings resulting from this change started the Federation to again operate in the black.

We regret that George and his wife Adrienne are no longer with us. We sorely miss them as does the folk dance movement. They should be remembered.