

# TEACHER OF THE MONTH

Introducing . . . ALBERT S. PILL

By . . . Liesl Barnett

Go over the titles of the dances you and your group are doing; single out the Mexican dances and you have a sure thing if you make a bet that 9 out of ten of them were introduced by Al Pill. This quiet, unassuming man has had a personal love affair with Mexico for a long time, and so intense is his feeling that he manages to infect others with it - at least where folk dancing is concerned.

Does your group dance La Moreliana, La Suriana, Mascando Chiquite, Las Virginias or Tehuantepec? You are indebted to Al for them. The list is much longer, but this is not a compilation of Mexican dance titles but a paean to Al Pill. Many other Mexican or American Dances from California, Arizona and New Mexico, with a definite and distinctly Mexican flavor and/or influence can be added to the list of his credits. There are many dances which were introduced by others and were being done incorrectly or had lost their distinctively Mexican styling and Al set to work cleaning up the mistakes and sloppiness in our execution of these numbers.

Many a festival has been enhanced by the lovely exhibitions he and Avis Tarvin have put on, always in the completely correct costumes for the particular region. Always Al gives the little "extra" by telling the meaning and history of the dance he exhibits, the occasion when this dance is performed, the meaning and origin of the particular costume and much additional information which increases the spectators' enjoyment and appreciation of the exhibition and at the same time provides painless education of other peoples' customs and costumes. (Subliminal advertisers could learn from Al!)

For the past ten years Al has taught and directed various folk dance groups in the Los Angeles area and is at present the director of the Fiesta Dancers. Last year he was on a sabbatical leave and spent eight months in Mexico visiting schools, ethnic organizations and villages in his quest for knowledge of Mexican folk culture.

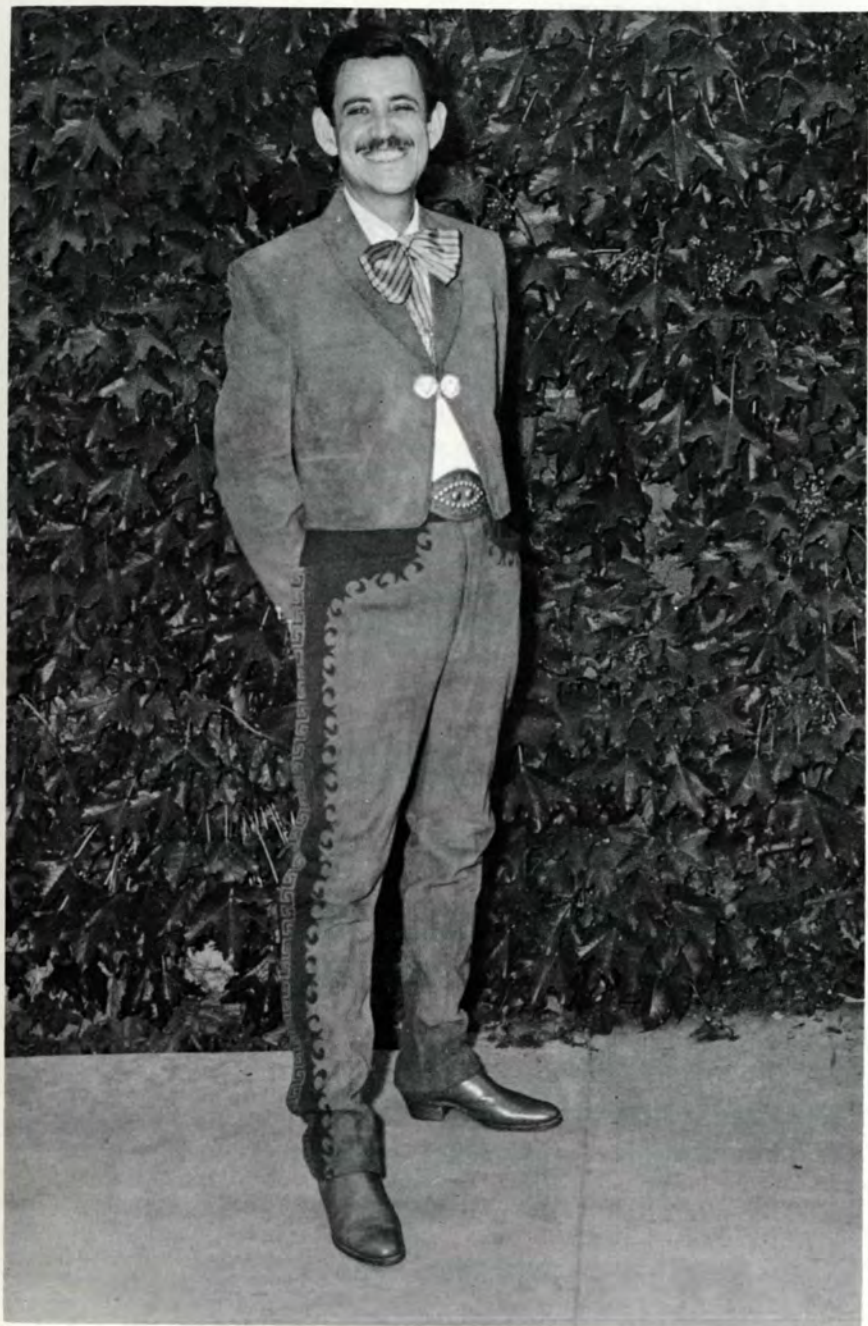
By occupation he is a teacher for the Redondo Beach City Schools and specializes in teaching the social studies unit on Mexico. He has taught for years at the folk dance camps in Stockton (University of the Pacific), Idyllwild and Santa Barbara, in addition to institutes in various cities in the West.

He has a large collection of unusual and very old Mexican sombreros and has exhibited them and given talks on them at camp sessions and other occasions. Also at the camps Al has given lectures on Mexican regional music and dancing, and his articles on Mexico and her folk culture have appeared in various folk dance publications.

He recently studied with teachers at the Padua Hills Theater in Claremont and is presently working towards his MA degree at UCLA, having in mind the goal of teaching folk dancing and allied arts at some university.

Something to look forward to is a book Al is working on. And while this

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will be a work on Mexican Dances for children, I am sure the older folk dancers will find plenty to interest them in this, too.

We do a great many dances for which no music was available and Al was instrumental in overcoming this handicap also. He has held many recording sessions with native (Mexican) musicians and saw to it that they were released under the ASP Records label.

Al Pill states that the purpose of his efforts is to interest people in Mexico and her culture through the folk dance medium and this he has been doing remarkably well.

As in every year since its beginning, Al Pill will be on the faculty of the Santa Barbara folk dance camp—don't miss his classes. You not only will learn some lovely dances and learn them correctly, but your knowledge of the ethnic culture of Mexico will be vastly increased, as will your understanding of her people be more complete. All by himself, Al is doing quite a job of upholding the good neighbor policy, much more so than any politician could or did ever do.

