

MEET MAUDE SYKES

. . . . By Liesl Barnett



Bees, aside from the queen, fall into two groups; the drones and the workers. The drone is big, showy but doesn't do much. The worker is small, buzzes about quietly and keeps the hive going. It is the same with folk dancers. The ones who are most in evidence are seldom the ones, but the ones who quietly *buzz about* are the ones who get much of the work of your Federation and/or your group done. And this, in a nutshell, could describe Maude Sykes of Chula Vista, who definitely is a *Worker*, with a capital "W".

Born in Springfield, Massachusetts, Maude came to San Diego when she was about eleven years old, and considers herself more a Westerner than a New Englander by now.

Maude is a graduate of San Diego High, and has a B.A. degree from San Diego State College. She has accumulated a lot of additional credit at U.C.L.A., U.S.C., University of California, and University of Colorado.

Since 1937 Maude has been a teacher in the Chula Vista City School District and teaches second grade. She can be credited, along with Elizabeth Ullrich, for a lively program of folk dance activities in the San Diego and Chula Vista school systems.

In early 1950, while attending a leadership conference in the capacity of Vice President of the San Diego County Teachers' Association, Maude was induced by one of the other attending teachers to attend the evening recreation segment, which included folk dancing. The *coercer* was an active member of the San Diego Folk Dancers at that time, and led the hitherto-non-folk dancing Maude through several dances. She enjoyed the evening so much, that he suggested Maude come and join the San Diego Folk Dancers. She went to one of their meetings the following week, and as she, herself, puts it, "from then on I was a gone goose". As a child, before coming to San Diego, Maude had done a little folk dancing and had taken some ballet lessons when she was about ten years old. She says she is a frustrated ballerina, turned folk dancer — but not frustrated.

Formerly a member of the Viltis Dancers and the Sierra Dancers, Maude now devotes her considerable talents as a leader and teacher and all around

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good worker to the San Diego Folk Dance Club, the Folklaenders of Chula Vista and the Southern section of the Federation. Always anxious to improve her dancing and teaching techniques, Maude has attended Stockton Camp for two years, Idyllwild for three years, and Santa Barbara for six years, not to mention missing very few, if any, institutes held in Southern California.

Her Federation activities have been busy, but until her recent election as Historian, out of the limelight. She was a member of the very active Institute Committee for three years; was guest teacher at one institute; and for the past six years she has ably and actively served on the Santa Barbara Conference Committee, a working group that is supercharged with talented dynamos such as Valerie Staigh, Avis Tarvin and others. She is starting her seventh year with that group, proving that she is no slouch - the talkers don't survive in that committee. To keep things from becoming too dull, Maude is also the assistant teacher of the Folklaenders; is workshop teacher for Girl Scout leaders and scouts, and has been directly responsible for the large number of folk dance merit badges among San Diego County Girl Scouts. She also conducts a weekly Patio Workshop in her home, shared with her widowed mother, where she works on perfecting special dances with a small group of perfectionists.

Folk dancing is, of course, her first love among hobbies. Others include Girl Scouting, singing in the choir of her church, where she also has successfully "planted" folk dancing on the social calendar of their Family Nights. In scouting, Maude has been the recipient of the Golden Eaglet Award - the highest given in Scouting - and has been a troupe leader, camp counselor and assistant director at San Diego County Girl Scout Camp. Although she now is no longer active as a leader, she still teaches folk dancing at Day Camps in the summer and has various workshops for leaders, as well as teaching folk dancing to various troupes during the winter months.

Among her current pet projects are International Relations, and she feels, as do many other active folk dance leaders, that there is no better opportunity for furthering these relations than through folk dancing. Towards this goal of better understanding she has been furthering folk dancing activities in the San Diego County Schools and has encouraged - and continues to do so - folk dancing among the teachers. She has conducted a number of workshops for teachers and hopes to have more of them in the near future. As a direct result of her activities, folk dance festivals are now yearly events on the calendar of events of the San Diego County School System.

Maude has been President of the Chula Vista Elementary Education Association and is now finishing her term as Historian of this Organization, while at the same time actively being engaged in the work of its International Relations Committee.

In the past, her activities as Vice President of the San Diego County

Teachers Association and as Representative of the Department of Classroom Teachers to the Southern Section of the California Teachers Association, have been most helpful to furthering folk dancing in the schools in her area.

Maude's great interest in International Relations stems from two things. One is her past membership on the Viltis Dancers, the group founded and led in the past by Vyts Beliajus, who certainly needs no introduction to folk dancers, here, or anywhere in the United States and Canada. The other factor was living one summer at the International House on the campus of the University of California, which she says, was one of the most wonderful and rewarding experiences of her life.

You won't see Maude in many exhibitions and her personality is not splashy. She has a quiet, but delightful sense of humor and does a considerable amount of work for the folk dance movement, but does it so quietly that we felt it was high time folk dancers became aware of the effort she expends toward furthering folk dancing in our State. Maude does not do all this for personal gain, glory or thanks—but they are due her. It is a pleasure to know Maude Sykes and to serve with her on any board or committee. Maude Sykes, of Chula Vista, is definitely a "*Folk Dancer Worth Knowing*".

