

People Worth Knowing

AVIS TARVIN

By . . . Liesl Barnett

Visit any Southern California folk dance group and you can be certain that Santa Monica's popular Avis Tarvin and her two youngsters, Cynthia and Barry, are well-known.

Born in Canada, Avis has lived all but the first two years of her life in Santa Monica and was educated in local schools and at U.C.L.A.

By occupation Avis is an accountant; by choice a well-qualified and immensely popular folk dance instructor. She is the principal teacher of the Santa Monica Folk Dancers — for the love of dancing rather than financial gains. This has earned her the unqualified admiration and loyalty of all members of the group. Her gayety and easy charm and her friendly manner put strangers and beginners at ease immediately, and she is often instrumental in so bringing new members into the club.

Outside Santa Monica Avis is known for her part in many delightful exhibitions, presented in collaboration with Al Pill, an authority on Mexican dances. She is an active member of the Gandy Dancers and frequently participates in their exhibitions, the recent of which were high points of a Disneyland spectacle and the December Federation festival, sponsored by the Santa Monica Folk Dancers. She also was a member of the now-defunct International Dance Circle (IDC) and is active in many phases of the Federation set-up. She has taught, and assisted Al Pill with his classes, at many institutes and was on the faculty of the Folk Dance Camp at Santa Barbara.

Her hobbies, next to dancing, are sewing and costume research. Although this is not generally known, Avis is a gifted concert violinist, having performed with such world-famous conductors as Peter Mermeblum, at the Hollywood Bowl, and Leopold Stokowski, at the L.A. Philharmonic Auditorium; and at one time she was a stand-in for Ann Southern.

Avis got into folk dancing about 12 years ago. In 1947, when Santa Monica celebrated the 75th anniversary of its founding, folk and square dancing in the streets were a part of the festivities. Among the spectators was Avis Tarvin, who was, until then, only interested in ballroom dancing. So enthralled was she with what she saw that she hung around the sound trucks long after the dancing had ended, asking where, when and how she could learn to folk dance. The person she turned to for information was Audrey Marcus-Corcoran, another well-known Southland folk dancer. She invited Avis to the recently organized Santa Monica Folk Dancers. For the next four years Avis did not miss a single Tues-

day night session of the group and is still only rarely absent from the club. She has come a very long way in folk dancing since that time.

Among the offices she has held were several stints as secretary of the S.M.F.D., was the club's president and, most recently its Federation delegate. She is presently active on several Federation committees, Research and Standardization, North-South Relations and Santa Barbara Camp Committees, among them. She has also actively participated in many other facets of Federation activities without appointment or office.

Avis is the recipient of a three-year pin for Den Mothers, having stuck it out in cub scouting six months longer than her son, Barry. She has taught folk dancing to Cynthia's and other Girl Scout groups, thus helping many youngsters attain their merit badges for folk dancing.

On Valentine's day of 1959, the Santa Monica Folk Dancers combined the Valentine's and 11th Birthday parties, using the occasion to publicly thank Avis for her years of unselfish service to them. The secretary pinned a "medal" on Avis, and, in the French manner, kissed her on both cheeks. Then, after reading it to the assembled membership, she presented Avis with a scroll honoring her services. While this presentation was a lot of fun for all present, the appreciation it expressed was nevertheless, most sincere. It also pointed up the fact that Avis Tarvin is, indeed, foremost among the "People Worth Knowing" in the folk dance world.



*Avis Tarvin, of Santa Monica Folk Dancers,
in Costume of Lowicz, Poland*