

TEACHER OF THE MONTH

Elizabeth Ullrich

By . . Liesl Barnett

Almost all folk dancers in Southern California, and many from the North are familiar with the smiling eyes, infectious humor and charm of Elizabeth Ullrich of San Diego. Her reports, spiked frequently with German words and exclamations, are the highlights of many a Federation council meeting, and have furnished laughs to what might often be an otherwise proceeding.

Like with the late Mrs. Lou Price, our problem in the case of Mrs. Ullrich was not so much what to put *into* this personality sketch, but in what to *leave out*. That woman has done enough to write several books on her experience as a teacher and folk dancers and I wish she would do so.

Elizabeth was educated in her native Germany, studying at Universities in Dresden and Leipzig for a degree in Physical Education. Folk Dancing was not only a requirement, but also a welcome recreational activity in an otherwise heavy class schedule. One of her final exams consisted of composing a peasant-type dance.

Upon moving to San Diego, Elizabeth was active in volunteer work in that city's Recreation Department and introduced Folk Dancing as a major activity. She became the physical education instructor of the San Diego Turner and there, too, started folk dancing teaching it with physical education.

In 1934, San Diego presented Elizabeth Ullrich with an official award in recognition for her volunteer services.

In 1939, Elizabeth became an instructor for the P. E. Dept., of the Sweetwater Union High School District's Adult Education Division, a job she still holds. To keep life from becoming too dull she also held the job of supervisor for the Chula Vista Recreation Department during the war years. Renewing her teaching credentials every year through University of California correspondence courses and special courses at San Diego State College, she finally received her Life Credentials in October 1947. She now teaches full time morning and evening classes in three high schools of the Sweetwater School District. For a time she also taught at San Diego Evening High School, but no longer does so. (Must have interfered with Folk Dancing?).

In 1950 she started her own folk dance group, in the S. D. Turner's building. Later the Chula Vista Recreation department decided to sponsor this group and they moved to their present meeting place at the R. L. Mueller school in Chula Vista, where they dance every Friday night. Their charming exhibitions are the highlight of many a festival, but the best one yet was the parody they performed last December at the Santa Monica

festival. In 1950 the first Folk Dance Camps were held at Mills College and in Stockton and Elizabeth attended both. She has participated in three Idyllwild workshops and is a regular attendant at the Santa Barbara Folk Dance Camp, where she taught German and Swiss dances for three years.

Elizabeth Ullrich
with a
Chinese Child and
a Greek Child at

Balboa Park

●
International
Program



In 1958 Elizabeth went to Germany with the American Turner Gymnastic Group to attend a Gym Meet in Munich. There she was asked to assist in judging the Folk Dance event, an assignment she found extremely interesting, 300 costumed dancers, arranged in groups of from 8 to 16 in a set. They had one compulsory dance and one of their own choice to do, and Elizabeth saw quite a variety of dances she might not have seen anywhere else. While on this trip she visited folk dance groups all over Switzerland, Bavaria and other parts of Germany, bringing back many dances and making many wonderful and rewarding contacts with different German groups.

At present, Elizabeth Ullrich is Chairman of the Scholarship Committee for the Folk Dance Federation of California, South, which she is well qualified. She is very active in San Diego folk dance circles, especially her own Folklanders group. As she herself points out: "What with Phys. Ed. classes eight times a week and all the folk dancing she will keep fit for a long time to come and everyone in California certainly hopes so.