

Meet David Young

By CLARA DOLE WHITE

"Look Ma, David's Dancin'," could never be much of a surprise to anyone in Ventura County or Santa Barbara, for David and his wife, Betty, have become known here as the leading exponents of the folk dance movement. Together they are a dance duo which is much in demand at women's organizations, P. T. A. and U. S. O. groups. They have an excellent routine of dances interspersed with stories of costume, background, and folklore which is common to the dance.

The Youngs, who were charter members of the original Berkeley group, are a fascinating couple to watch dance. Both of them are tall and slender and they have a wide collection of colorful costumes. They execute their dances with so much skill that it takes an incident such as occurred at the conclusion of Meitschi Putz Di during a lesson recently to recall their humanness. David had tossed Betty lightly into the air and she remained poised there, her hands on his shoulders, when suddenly the statuesque structure collapsed and the two landed in a laughing heap on the floor.

Meeting David for the first time one is struck by the way he holds his head to one side as he talks, and by his accent. (David was born in London, England, and is a descendant of Oliver Cromwell). His accent has often been confusing to square dancers hearing him call for the first time.

Ventura County's rapid growth in folk dancing is due very largely to David's organizing and teaching. In the past two years he has helped with groups in Ojai, Ventura, Santa Barbara and Santa Paula. In Ojai, where the Youngs have lived since 1945, David teaches mathematics, English, swimming and folk dancing at a private upper grade school. Some



of his students have developed into exhibition material, a Young arrangement of the "Kra-kowiak" being their specialty.

David is a veteran at festivals, having successfully engineered several in Santa Barbara, Santa Paula and Ojai. This, of course, includes the statewide festival in Ojai's main street where he was beset with multiple difficulties. The much-needed loud speaker system broke down, and while Betty was supposed to be driving several miles to obtain

another, she had instead to drive to the doctor for repairs to her young son, who had been bitten by a dog at this crucial moment.

We are apt to speak amusedly and tolerantly of his "absent-mindedness." They tell of this year's statewide festival in Fresno when the Ojai delegation, tired of waiting for David to join them, sent Betty to investigate. She found him sleeping soundly at the hotel. A bit later the same group drove to the hotel again for him and there he was in the middle of the road unable to remember where he had parked the car! But perhaps forgetfulness is the prerogative of a man in the habit of thinking.

One of David's chief concerns is that, in the standardizing of dance patterns in order that they may danced at the festivals by all groups, the dances have lost much of their original variety and spontaneity. For instance, the popularity of the Hopak, David feels, is due to the portion of the finale when the men are allowed to improvise to the extent of their abilities. If more dances were allowed this freedom of expression, as is true in many countries, the necessity to introduce so many new dances would diminish and the vitality and freshness of the folk dance movement would improve.