

People Worth Knowing

HANS AND NORMA ZANDER

Among Southern California's friendliest folk dancers are the "The More The Merrier Folk Dancers" of Inglewood. And the two people who can take a large share of the credit for this are Hans and Norma Zander. Observing them while they are teaching or directing a dance, they are models of poise and serenity. No one would ever guess how hard both of them (but especially Hans) had to work not too long ago to overcome shyness and a kind of stage fright. They are a gay, charming couple with a tremendous capacity for making people feel welcome and at ease.

American-born Hans Zander says he has been dancing almost all his life. He can remember doing little folk dances and simple waltzes with his mother when he was only 3 years old. From the time he was 12 years old, Hans received lessons in all types of social dancing. His family had moved to Berlin, Germany, and Hans attended German schools, which accounts for his sometimes very German sentence structure. The Zanders met at a German picnic dance. Norma, a native of Mengen (a town near Nuernberg), Germany, has also been dancing most of her life. She and Hans found they had much in common - love for dancing, music, art, and people. Both are accomplished musicians - Hans plays the violin, Norma the piano. They have two talented daughters. The older one is an artist and lives in New York; the younger daughter is married, lives in Southern California and is about to make grandparents of the Zanders. Strangely, neither daughter is too interested in dancing.

The Zanders began their folk dancing at the Swiss Park in Duarte, where in 1951, Billy Durst was the teacher. Hans and Norma enjoyed folk dancing, but with their extensive backgrounds in music and dancing, soon outgrew the classes in Durant. They then joined the Santa Monica Folk Dancers. (I am happy to report that both the Zanders are still members in this group). Audrey Marcus Corcoran was the leader-teacher of the group and her more advanced dances and progressive teaching presented the challenge the Zanders were looking for. Hans and Norma now were really "hooked" by the folk dance habit. Another person whom Hans credits with being instrumental in making him an active participant was Millie Libaw, who is notorious for bringing people out of their shells.

In 1956 the Zanders attended the Santa Barbara Folk Dance Camp. Here Hans became so enthused with the personality and teaching of Millie von Kinsky, that he decided to teach what he had learned from her to his group in Inglewood and to anyone else who wanted to learn. Hans has been teaching ever since. Norma, however, has no desire to teach, but helps Hans to demonstrate. He credits her with his success as a teacher and says without her gentle easy charm and winning personality he would not have been able to achieve any measure of success as a teacher or leader. "Norma is my biggest asset - she calms things down when my temper starts to get hot and she always makes people feel at home" - is how

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(continued)

*Photo, Courtesy of Dr. Sears
of THE MORE THE MERRIER
FOLK DANCERS*

Hans sums it up.

Although they have been active in the folk dance movement only since 1952, Hans has already an impressive list of activities. He has been on the council of the Santa Monica Folk Dancers; was chairman of the Federation's Institute Committee until his resignation last December; has served with Elizabeth Ullrich on the Santa Barbara Scholarship Committee. Currently he is on the Federation Nominating Committee; is official leader and instructor of the *More The Merrier Folk Dancers*, where he also is in charge of exhibitions. He and Norma dance frequently in exhibitions, specializing in Swiss and German dances, as well as tangos and other ballroom numbers. They have danced on TV and for the movies. Hans says: "Dancing for Columbia Studios and Unitours Films was not only fun, it was profitable as well". (Does that make it a profitable hobby?) Among the dances the Zanders have popularized in the Southland is the charming Swiss "Chilbitanz".



Hans is self-employed, keeps busy looking after his property. He and Norma have a common hobby - he builds furniture for their home, she does the upholstery making and sews drapes and other decorative touches. An expert seamstress, Norma makes all their costumes. Hans' Mexican Charro suit is probably the only thing Norma has not made herself.

Does Hans have any special plans and pet projects for the future? He has, but is dubious that he will be able to carry them out. He wants, for example, to work up an exhibition of the Skater's Waltz with a definite ice skating effect. This may not be folk dancing, but if Hans and Norma are going to do it, it will be done well and effectively.

This is a quick glance at two of Southern California's best liked dancer-leaders. Truly Hans and Norma Zander are two people who are worth knowing and I, for one, consider myself fortunate to be a part of an organization where they, too, are active and that I can count them among my friends.

. . . . Liesl Barnett