

FOLK'S DANCE

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DENVER STORY

By
Lt. Ed. Kremers*

Judging from reports of travelers and others in a position to know, there seems to be in this country at the present time three "hot-beds" of interest in folk dancing--New York City, Colorado, and the San Francisco Bay Area. After having served somewhat of an "apprenticeship" among California folk dancers, I was fortunate enough to have an opportunity to spend almost a year in Colorado. In the following paragraphs I'll endeavor to summarize some of the interesting things about folk dancing "as she is done" in and around Denver.

But first I'd like to emphasize that many of the following remarks are purely generalizations designed to give an idea of the overall habits of folk dancers in Colorado, for there, as here, the groups vary in many ways, so all that is said does not, of course, apply to each and every group.

Most of the Denver groups are more or less "closed" groups; that is, they are organized by and for a particular group, and non-members, although welcomed as visitors, find it a little difficult until they discover a group into which they can readily fit themselves. Dance groups are sponsored by the Y's, community centers, city recreation departments, schools, universities, USO's, churches, and many private clubs, some organized purely for dancing, and others having dancing as a secondary activity. Many of the public dance halls sponsor "old-time" or "barn" dance nights regularly, the program including a number of modern dances interspersed with polkas, schottisches, a Paul Jones (called circle two-steps), and some squares.

Denver prefers square dancing to folk dancing. Most of the clubs do little else than squares. They are fine square dancers! When they do get around to something else, it is usually the old-fashioned ballroom figure dance, rather than European folk dances. They do the Rye Waltz, Skater's Waltz, Three-step, La Varsouvianna, Veleta, The Bolero, The Black Hawk Waltz, etc. They also do some interesting patterns to the Merry Widow, Blue Danube, Viennese waltzes, Narcissus, Glowworm, and Laces and Graces. Simple folk dances used fairly often are Cshebogar and Gustaf's Skoal, the latter being "called" like a square dance.

"Live" music, usually consisting of an accordion, piano, and fiddle is the rule in Colorado. One seldom hears phonograph records. This means that the squares are called by "flesh and blood" callers, of which Denver has a number of experts. Denver dancers know a large number of square dance figures, including many of the "singing calls"; such as Red River Valley, Spanish Cavalier, Irish Washerwoman, O Johnny, Log Cabin in the Lane, Hot Time in the Old Town, Yankee Doodle, Darktown Strutters' Ball, Solomon Levi, Marching Thru Georgia, Ain't Gonna Rain No More, and many others.

People in Denver are willing to pay money for their dancing. Admissions, collected each night, range from 25¢ to 75¢ each. Leaders and callers are usually paid at least \$5 per evening, and musicians at least \$3. Experienced callers and musicians are in demand not only by the groups meeting regularly, but also by many of the private parties at which square dancing is the "piece de resistance."

Very few of the Denver crowds have the "mixing" spirit--that is, they seldom change partners during an evening. Thus, one is likely to have the same partner for an entire evening, like it or not! This practice seems to have grown up as a result of the tendency of people to go to dance "by squares." Usually four couples attend a dance with the intention of making up their own square. This undoubtedly leads to better dancing, but at a loss of some of the true "folk" spirit, as California knows it.

*Lt. Ed. Kremers served as second president of the Folk Dance Federation of Calif.

The Steele Community Center does folk dancing more in the California manner. When the leader moved I was invited to take charge, and I made it a point to follow their type of program. About 8:15 p.m. we would call everyone present out onto the floor, doing progressively several simple singing games, followed by several called squares. During a short intermission the musician would play a series of the more advanced couple dances, and the experienced dancers would get in their best licks at this time. The evening's finale would always be a very fast set of squares, with a closing good-night waltz at 10:30 p.m. This Center has also a junior group, beginners group, and an advanced demonstration club. I learned a lot from this group, and also taught a number of our California favorites. The dances that appealed to the Denver dancers were Vengerka, Dashing White Sergeant, Rheinlander, Ladies' Whim, Irish Jollity, Tzyganotchka, Little Blacksmith (Kalvelis), Korobushka, Little Man in a Fix, and for a few of those sufficiently interested to practice hard, the Hambo and Hopak.

Incidentally, several of Colorado's callers have been San Francisco visitors recently, including Carl Bieler, Francis Ware, and Jack Hickish. They can add some variety to California programs if advantage is taken of the opportunity their presence affords.

To have had a chance to both learn and teach dances during my stay of almost a year in Denver really made me happy.

MARCH FESTIVAL

The Albany Folk Dancers were hosts to the Folk Dance Federation of California, Saturday, March 10, 1945 at the Albany High School, Albany. A capacity audience filled the balcony of the auditorium and enthusiastically applauded the gaily costumed folk dancers. The Festival was well blended with outstanding decorations, adequate floor space, good acoustics, and good amplifying system. The St. Patrick's theme for the festival was portrayed with a gay Irish "cover girl" on the programs--hand painted by Myriam Heath. A huge green shamrock in the center of the auditorium had green and white streamers running to the balcony. The unusual cutout posters of folk dance figures were made by George Jelton, chairman of the decoration committee. The Festival Workshop exhibited the Jewish Wedding Dance, Beroiges Tanz, in special costumes. David Boyce acted as Master of Ceremonies for the evening's festivities.

APRIL FESTIVAL

The Castle Promenaders will be hosts to the Folk Dance Federation of Calif. at the April Festival, Sunday, April 22 from 1:30 to 6:00 p.m. at the Castlemont High School, 85th Avenue and MacArthur Blvd., Oakland. The business meeting will take place at 12:45 p.m. in the gym. The theme will be "Honoring the United Nations" in keeping with the World Peace Conference to open in San Francisco April 25.

From San Francisco take an "N" bus or an "A" train. From Oakland take any Foothill bus at 14th and Broadway. Transportation to the door.

MUSEUM FOLK DANCE DEMONSTRATIONS

By
Walter Grothe

A total of thirty-nine dances were presented at the Museum of Art on February 23, March 2, and March 9, by the Berkeley Folk Dancers, The Festival Workshop, and Chang's, each group taking over one whole evening. The audience consisted to a great extent of people who had never seen folk dancing before. All three groups gave excellent performances after having spent a great deal of time with extra rehearsals. The results were gratifying, with the demonstrations being well received by an appreciative audience. The attendance was considerably in excess of our and the Museum's expectations. The staff of the Museum was very cooperative, and Dr. Morley, Director of the Museum, was very well pleased, and stated that she hoped we would dance again next season. Credit is due to all dancers and especially to the persons in charge of the three groups, Eleanor Wakefield, Berkeley; Madelynn Greene, Festival Workshop; and Grace Perriman and Marvin Hartfield, Chang's, for making the performances a success of which the Federation can be proud.

GUATEMALIAN COSTUME

Eder and James Hansen write in to say they have just received a hand woven costume, camisa, Azudi, and banda from Guatemala, and that it was well worth waiting for. They state anyone interested in a costume of this type can write to Miss M.C. Palmer, Casa de Las Campanas, La Antigua, Guatemala, Central America.

(Editor's Note: We'd like to see this costume or have a sketch of it.)

COUNCIL MEETING

In view of the May election of officers for the Folk Dance Federation of California a Nominating Committee appointed by President Clarice Dechent was asked to submit at the April business meeting candidates for the Federation offices. Because of the stipulation of having at least two or more nominees for each office, the Nominating Committee needs the full cooperation of all members in securing the most capable candidates. (Forms have been mailed each group asking for names of possible candidates.)

Anent the Federation election the following proposal was accepted:

1. The Nominating Committee shall present for consideration two or more nominees for each office to be filled. No person is to be nominated for more than one office.
2. Upon acceptance by the Council of the Nominating Committee's report and any additional nominations from the floor, ballot forms, listing the candidates so selected, shall be mailed to each member club together with return envelopes.
3. Each club shall cast its ballot by voting for one candidate for each office, sealing the ballot in a plain envelope which will be returned in an addressed envelope provided by the Council.
4. At the May meeting of the Council, the ballots shall be opened, counted and recorded, and the member clubs notified of the election results.
5. In the event of a tie vote for any office, the Council shall immediately hold another election for that office to determine which of the tied candidates will be elected, each member club represented at this meeting casting two votes through its representatives.

This Committee also recommends that nominees be introduced at the Festival the month preceding the election whenever possible"

A motion was made and seconded that we amend the by-laws as follows: "Divide the office of Secretary into Recording Secretary and Corresponding Secretary, and add the offices of Historian and Director of Publicity and Extension." This motion will be voted on at the next Council meeting, April 22.

While the subscription list to "Let's Dance" is growing rapidly, it was reported that we still need subscriptions to reach our goal. Come on clubs, get busy and send in your subscriptions.

YOUR CLUB AND MINE

SAN CARLOS-BELMONT COUNTRY FOLK DANCERS - by Mignon Ybarreta

The San Carlos-Belmont Country Folk Dancers, one of the newest members of the Federation, welcome all fellow Federation members at our monthly dances, on the second Saturday of each month. Dances are held at the Community Hall in Belmont. Mrs. Jeanne Taylor is our instructor. Although the group has been organized only a short time, they have shown much enthusiasm, and by the time summer rolls around they expect to have mastered many dances so they may enjoy the festivals. Our next dances will be March 10 and April 14.

YOUNG CHRISTIAN WORKERS HEEL AND TOE CLUB - by Dorothe Brand

The Heel and Toe Club of the Y. C. W. was a natural outgrowth of many social activities designed to meet the need of young Catholics for a full life. Started by Frank King, formerly of Chang's, our group has endeavored for the past three years to interest many young people in the joys of folk dancing. Gertrude Hackett became a very welcome leader and became a delightful caller, rivaling the best in the Federation. Dorothe Brand, one of Chang's charter members and a teacher for the Arthur Murray Studios, added much with her knowledge of steps and patterns. Helen Rufran of State College now directs the Y. C. W. on "which foot goes where." The problem of dealing with many transient servicemen has been greatly alleviated by several dance-loving boosters who show up for each and every festival. With their constant nurturing we keep alive the knowledge of at least the most popular dances.

STANFORD FOLK DANCERS - by Dorothy Frost

The Stanford Folk Dancers are planning to be hosts at the biggest and best festival ever! It will be held in the Frost Amphitheatre on May 27 from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. in the afternoon. Further details will be announced by Chairman Dottie Frost as soon as they are developed.

GATESWINGERS - Patricia French

The Gateswingers are now seven years old. The club started at the Central "Y" with the aid of Fay Bowman to revive some of the old western songs and dances. Besides Vera Holleuffer other active leaders of the group include Aileen and Ken Wade. Servicemen have added many steps and calls to the Gateswingers repertoire of squares. Response from this group to USO shows and war appeals has been notable in the past and they continue to work at perfecting socialbility and a spirit of democracy while making merry.

ALBANY FOLK DANCERS

O. T. Stone, President of the Albany Folk Dancers, announces a change in club name from Marin Folk Dancers to Albany Folk Dancers. The Albany Folk Dancers are made up of the beginners group at Cornell School and the advanced group at the Marin School. The beginners meet on Monday evening, and the advanced group on Wednesday evening.

OAKLAND FOLK DANCERS - by Betty Pearson

The USO club at 13th and Clay, Oakland had a folk dance party March 23 at which the Oakland Folk Dancers participated. Genevieve Healy of the group was in charge of the dances. The servicemen thoroughly enjoyed the evening's program and exhibitions.

CHANG'S

We are glad to note that Chang's Folk Dancers are now publishing a monthly bulletin. The new officers are: Clifton Rather, President; Ada Harris, Vice-president and Registrar; Giovanna Gatto, Secretary; Lois Malkason, Floor Chairman; Grace Perriman, Dance Chairman; Madelynn Greene, Research Chairman; Beatrice Jenkins and Gilman Merrill, Folk Dance Federation of California Representatives; Pauline Anna Kerber, Editor Chang's Folk Dancer; Ann Dixon, Financial Secretary; Marvin Hartfield, Robert Shinn and Hilma Lenshaw, Trustees.

Chang's will be hosts for the June festival, details to be announced later.

(Editor's Note: Club Reporters--we'd like "advance" news as much as possible so we can announce your club events as they take place.)

UNCLE SAM'S MAILBAG

We regret to report the death of Lt. Leo Morgan, Field Artillery, U.S. Army, killed in action about December 20, 1944 in Luxembourg. Leo was an old time member of Chang's. He enlisted shortly before Pearl Harbor, and was commissioned Lieutenant just before his death. As far as we know, this is the first war casualty among folk dancers here.

Pvt. Lammy Yeoman and his wife (Lorraine Douglas of Burlingame) are now living at 504 W. 8th Avenue, Denver, and are helping spread the word of the fun involved in some of our European folk dances.

Jimmy Perriman and Pete Bryant of Chang's, and Ensign Wayne Gruner of U.C. have also been stationed in Denver during the past year.

Keith Titmus (Sgt. G. K. Titmus #39010348, 202nd Gen. Hospital A.P.O.#887, c/o P.M. N.Y.C.) is now in Paris, France and should be chattering away "en Francais" before long at the rate he's picking up French words.

Gene Bulf has been holding down the desert near Fallon, Nevada. We'll send along the address soon as we learn it.

Earl Campini's pals can write him at the following address: Earl Campini, F 1/c (MMN) Sub. Sch. Base, Box 7, New London, Conn.

Sherby Ressegieu (#39035093, 460 Bomb Grp, 761st Bomb. Sqdn., APO 520, New York) is in Italy and writes a very interesting letter of many dances he has seen, including an Anglo-Polish ballet, Polka Mazurka, Cracoviac, and many others. We're looking forward to a demonstration of these dances when Sherby returns.

STAFF

Mrs. Ruby Biel, Editor
8007 Hillmont Drive
Oakland 3, California

Mr. Clyde Evans, Business Manager
8141 Idlewood Street
Oakland 3, California

Frances and Henry Glass
Assistant Editors