

PEOPLE WORTH KNOWING

WILMA GRAESCH ANDERSEN OF FRESNO

by Marjorie Widman

One of the nicest and most complimentary incidents I have had happen to me in a long time was when Vi Dexheimer asked me at the Camellia Festival to do an article on Wilma Graesch Andersen for "Let's Dance" Magazine! It is truly my pleasure, as ours is a friendship of many years, which began through folk dancing in Fresno.

May I present Wilma Graesch Andersen - MRS. TEACHER of the Fresno area. Although she was born in Sylvan Grove, Kansas, she graduated from Fresno State College in 1945. For the past three years Wilma has been the wife of our special Danish-born friend, Svend; mother of year old Karen - a darling potential folk dancer, who already loves to keep time to the music as she watches the dancers; and by profession - a very excellent school teacher.

Her interest in preparing work and recreation for her students found her in an adult education class under Fresno's first leader of folk and square dancing, Thelma Deming, in 1947. She has belonged to the Valley Reelers, Fresno Frolickers, and the Fiesta Dancers. Her photographic mind and natural teaching ability, together with her tremendous enthusiasm, soon lead to the organizing of the Fresno Council Workshop, in 1949. The first exhibition, "La Mesticita," was presented at the Fall festival of that year.

Since that time, under her continued directorship, the Fresno Council Workshop has presented well-received exhibitions all over the State. It is a fun-loving, advanced and exhibition group sponsored by the Fresno Folk Dance Council representing all Clubs.

Wilma has attended nine of the Stockton camps, attended and taught at Idyllwild Camp, and has had additional training at Mills College. She has been an important factor among the leaders who have kept the pleasure and interest at a high pace in the Fresno area. Her work for several years on the Research Committee and the North-South Relations Committee is well recognized in the state, as well as her untiring service in co-ordinating the teaching in the Fresno Council. She is always eager to help others - such as, a weekly trip to Merced one year is only one example.

At present, besides her class, baby, husband, and home, she has, through her Danish husband's interests, done a great deal of research, etc., on Danish dances and costumes. The Workshop has presented some of these. She is also instructing a young Danish group, who may sometime be one of the exhibition groups at one of our festivals.

It is most timely that she is honored in this month's "Let's Dance" in recognition of her untiring work for folk dancing. Due to the many demands on her time at home and her return to teaching, Wilma is retiring as Director of the Workshop after our Fall festival. We most sincerely hope it is only a temporary situation, as we will miss her tremendously as our leader. Many thanks, Wilma, from all of us for the many hours of pleasure you have given us!

The picture (below) of Wilma and Svend was taken recently at the new "Bit of Bavaria" Inn on the way to Yosemite. The Workshop had a gay evening of dining and dancing there - in costumes in a most real atmosphere.



Wilma and Svend



Karen

ANDERSEN