

FRANK & ELSA BACHER

This article is about two people well known in folk dance circles in California. Much could and should be said about these folks and I will attempt to do some small justice to that end.

NADINE MITCHELL, Editor

1947. That's when it began in Sonoma, California. Frank's sister noticed an article in the newspaper regarding folk dancing and said, "Let's go." Frank said, "OK," and thus began a long involvement that has benefited many, many people.

Around 1950, Frank's class instructor left to serve in the reserves during the Korean Conflict and Bernice Shramm took over the teaching duties. Frank says she was a fantastic teacher. She described each step and movement in detail. Frank remembers practicing by himself in a converted barn until he had the waltz and hambo steps down pat. He got his own sound equipment and played the music for Bernice's classes and parties. Frank was Bernice's helper and dance partner until her death in 1970. Frank says he learned a great deal from Bill D'Alvy; together they bought their first remote microphone equipment and shared sound responsibilities for many festivals.

Frank has done the sound for various clubs, the Redwood Council and for festivals in and around San Francisco since 1950 to the present day. Also included in those events were annual Scholarship Balls and Statewide Festivals. One can see by Frank's involvement that he has a great deal of expertise in this field. Frank said Ned Gault also gave him a lot of tips on sound which is information he still uses to this day. He says he learned how to keep the dance program moving from Ned because that keeps people dancing; those of us who dance at events where Frank is in charge know he does do that. He believes this contributes to a lively dance program.

In 1970, Elsa started folk dancing in Santa Rosa with Dee Rossi and Wendell Schaal. She responded to an ad in the newspaper regarding a beginning folk dance class. For Elsa this was a new activity, which she enjoyed very much. She remembers a large group attended this class and she still dances with some of those same people today. She believes that this speaks well for folk dancing. Elsa and her daughters attended quite a few summer family camps at Feather River where Millie von Kinsky taught folk dances to children and teenagers as well as adults. She says it was truly a fun time dancing on the deck all morning and dancing again in the evening. Millie, who was accompanied by her husband, Von, was a particular and precise teacher and a bit of a perfectionist with a great sense of humor. She became Elsa's role model. Although Elsa's children did not continue on with folk dancing, Elsa did.



Frank and Elsa dancing & camping in 1996

In the late 1970's the Federation put on Teacher's Institutes in the Bay Area. Millie von Kinsky and Ned Gault were very much involved in setting up these events. A wide variety of people instructed teachers on how to teach their students. Elsa feels these Institutes were very good and benefited many.

In 1980, at the Camellia Festival in Sacramento, Ray Olson, Federation Past President, asked Frank to serve as the next President. To convince Frank that he definitely was wanted and needed to serve in this office, a large picture of Frank was displayed during the festivities to announce that he was running for President. Frank says at this time the Federation was in dire financial straits so he had a big job ahead of him trying to make the Federation solvent again. Burt Scholin, his Vice President, said he would organize a fundraiser so the Federation could get out of the hole. To accomplish that, Burt put on a "Souper Bowl" Folk Dance Festival which was held in the Oakland Hills. This was an

afternoon workshop after which everyone could have soup for supper. The Oakland folk dance group provided this. Dancing followed in the evening. This event served its purpose and made the Federation financially healthy again. Frank says he is eternally grateful to Burt for doing this. Frank went on to serve for two years as Federation President.

Elsa attended Feather River Family Camp and Stockton Folk Dance Camp during the 1970's and then began instructing in the late 1970's in Santa Rosa. She says she likes to learn folk dances more than do actual folk dancing. Frank was always at every folk dance festival and event that she ever attended and in 1982, Cupid entered the scene at Folk Dance Camp, and the next thing you know, they were married at St. Francis Church in Sonoma on November 27, 1982. Thus began not only a marriage but also a joint folk dance activity that was even stronger and more productive because there were now two talented, enthusiastic people to share much valuable experience and knowledge with others.

In 1986, they both worked hard on a successful Statewide Festival, which was held in Santa Rosa. Frank has been President of the Redwood Council for many years. He has been a faithful member of Changs Folk Dance Club in San Francisco since 1962. Frank has been Floor Chairman for the music program at Changs since 1970. Elsa has recently succeeded Ruth Ruling as Changs' instructor. Also, in 1970, Frank took over the Novato folk dance group. In 1982, when Frank and Elsa got married, the Santa Rosa group was fortunate to acquire him too.

So, let's recap. Frank has been a folk dancer since 1947. He is a Past President of the Federation and still serves on committees. For many years he has provided sound for local, regional and Statewide festivals, such as the annual Fresno Harvest Festival, Sweetheart Festival in Napa, Blossom Festival in San Francisco, Cherry Blossom Festival, Rose Festival, and in the past, has provided sound at the Festival of the Oaks. In addition to all this, he and Elsa teach weekly classes at Changs in San Francisco, Novato and Santa Rosa. Elsa is an excellent teacher and we all benefit from that. She is the one responsible

for the great lunches provided after Assembly Meetings when they are held in the Santa Rosa area. She also serves with Frank on the Federation's Insurance Committee, and that involves a lot of time and dedication to keep all the Federation clubs' insurance records accurate. Together, they are a tireless couple, who work very well together, who can be depended upon to take on whatever task is asked of them and do a great job of it. We always know they will be there, doing their job, and doing it well. They are an inspiration to us all and I for one wonder where they get all the energy to do all that they do. Only two people who truly love folk dancing as they do could and would continue on year after year. We are truly fortunate to have them. I know I have probably not done justice to all their hard work but I want them to know we all appreciate them. Thank you, Frank and Elsa.



Stockton 1989 - good times with good friends