

# SONG CHANG

(1891 - 1974)

A great man has gone---quiet, always self-effacing, incredibly effective in promoting folk dance. His name was Song Chang, the Father of Folk Dance in California, a devoted husband and father of two wonderful children, a son Wah, and a daughter, Lana.

Chang earned his living in various ways, selling World Books and his personally created, utterly delightful, scenes of San Francisco and Hawaii. He was an artist. However, his major love was folk dance; it was a calling, a true mission. The folk dance was his means of displacing racial prejudice, and the unwholesome doldrums that spawn juvenile delinquency, with real fun & sincere understanding between people and their cultures.

He started with a very small group of some six couples, which expanded to the great club that became Changs International Folk Dancers, which in turn soon outgrew itself. Yet, rather than turn people away, members were urged to start clubs in their own neighborhoods, creating many of the Federation clubs.

Chang never pushed himself. Rather, he encouraged others to assume leadership and to become teachers. Once a club was on its feet, off he went, teaching another group of beginners, or two or three groups, until they became self-sufficient. How many thousands of people there are who got their start in folk dance with this superb teacher is incalculable. In his own club, Changs, he was seldom their lead teacher, yet his influence was ever present, with its quiet, eagleless wisdom, keeping Changs strong all those years.

The Federation itself was Chang's idea. The initial plans were developed in his home. The idea was to be a blend of folk dance and ethnic clubs, which represent our basic source material. This group didn't succeed, but the initial push was done; the idea was launched; the Federation became a reality.

Yes, a great man has gone, but not his works, not his influence. His contribution has been one of understanding between peoples, races, creeds & cultures, their music, dance rhythms, costumes, customs and language--the essence of which is LOVE. Thank God such a man existed and passed our way. Thank God we knew him. A great man has gone--but his gift is deathless.

*Bob Shinn*

