

Folk Dance Profiles



ERNEST DRESCHER

by Miriam Lidster

Many people have worked in the Folk Dance Federation of California for twenty years or more. "Ernie" Drescher is one of these workers.

Ernie went to Balboa High, where he played clarinet and saxophone in the orchestra. It was in the orchestra that he met his late wife, Bee, who played the piano. After high school, Ernie graduated with a degree in Electrical Engineering from Healds Engineering College. In 1938, Ernie and Bee were married; and in 1940, they bought the house in which Ernie still lives. At that time, it was the third house in a tract of cabbages, without street lights, in the area now known as Stonestown.

Ernie and Bee were interested in getting involved in folk

dancing, so in 1940, with no previous experience, they went to a class at Changs. The class was for beginner, intermediate, and advanced dancers; and Ernie and Bee learned their first dance, a Russian Peasant Dance, that night. Ernie and Bee had a daughter, Tina, who now lives in San Mateo with her husband and three children. Tina danced with a young women's exhibition group, The Petite Ensemble. This was truly a "folk dance family."

During Ernie's many years of service, he was President of the Folk Dance Federation of California in 1969-70 and again from 1974 to 1976. He has been on the Board of Directors for nine years and worked on the By-Laws Committee in 1977 and again in 1988. The By-Laws have been revised many times; however, Ernie was instrumental in working with the By-Laws as they are being used at the present time. He was also President of the San Francisco Council when it consisted of approximately seventeen clubs.

Changs (well-known to many, especially those who dance in San Francisco) elected Ernie as President seven times. Of course, he also served on their By-Laws Committee.

It is difficult to talk about Ernie and his many and varied activities without talking about Bee. Ernie and Bee choreographed and produced several anniversary, Christmas, and birthday parties for Changs. For many years, Bee taught a women's exhibition group which performed often at Federation functions. She was a protege of Anatol Joukowsky. She also took Japanese dance instruction and was the only Caucasian to exhibit Japanese dancing at the invitation of her Japanese instructor in Japantown, San Francisco, in front of an all-Japanese audience.

When Bee and Ernie went to Hawaii in 1972, Bee danced with a

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group of Japanese women in Bona Dori. It is customary that the pupil of a certain teacher wear the identical costume of that teacher. Bee, in the costume of her teacher, joined the group of women dancers, dancing counter clockwise in a circle. All those watching the performance were amazed by her style and proficiency and applauded her when she sat down. Bee presented a Japanese solo at the 1979 Statewide Festival in Fresno. When Bee passed away six years ago, Ernie gave up active folk dancing.

But he did not give up service to the Folk Dance Federation of California, in spite of a recurring knee problem. He still offers suggestions and guidance to committee people.

For your years of service, Ernie, we thank you. You have served us well.