

Maximillian “Max” Horn (1924 - 2011)

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Max Horn Nov. 7, 1924 - May 2, 2011 Resident of Martinez
Maximillian Horn, 86, died Monday, May 2, 2011 in Walnut Creek. Max was born November 7, 1924 to Irene (Washabaugh) and Carl Horn in Calipatria, CA. He spent his childhood in the small towns in the Sierra Nevada mountains in California, graduating from high school in Sierraville, CA. He entered the US Marine Corps in 1942, and served in the South Pacific until his discharge in 1946. Max attended the University of California in Berkeley, where he met and married Virginia Warren in November of 1950. They had two daughters, Nancy in 1954 and Linda in 1955. After working various jobs around Northern California, Max began working as a construction estimator for Dinwiddie Construction Company in San Francisco and the family moved to Richmond. Virginia died in 1968. Max married June on February 16, 1975 and in 1976 they moved to their farm in Martinez. They renovated and lived in the 100-year-old farmhouse there, and enjoyed many visitors and friends over the years. For many years, Max taught International Folk Dancing throughout Northern California. Max and June have many friends they have made over the years through folk dancing. Survivors include his wife June, his daughters, his brother-in-law Claude Warren, June's daughter Patricia and daughter-in-law Kathy. A gathering took place to celebrate his life on Saturday, May 7, 2011 at Max and June's farm in Martinez.

Max Horn was a special folk dancer

By Gary Anderson, editor

Max Horn was one of the stalwarts of California folk dancing. He and June had important roles in the early years of the Folk Dance Federation of California. Max was president of the Federation in a period of incredible growth. After his term expired he continued to be deeply involved in promoting and teaching folk dance, at onetime having five classes a week. He also served as editor of *Let's Dance* magazine.

Max and June made their farm available to folk dancers who wanted a place to dance outdoors, have a potluck and to socialize under the stars on Friday nights between Memorial Day and Labor Day with friends.

The Horns constructed a dance floor, tables and two long barbecue pits. Around 5:30 on Friday evenings Max would light the charcoal in the barbecue pits, clean the dance floor and wait for the dancers. This must have been a magic time for the fortunate folk dancers who experienced it. Later, it became too much to do and the Horns made the farm available only on Memorial and Labor Days. These were special days also—Junes cinnamon rolls with the morning coffee, the dancing and the potluck dinner.

The farm was special for the children. The Horns always had animals around. Horses, peacocks, a tortoise—who knew what you would find wandering around the farm? The Horns worked with the local animal rescue people, providing a secure place for injured animals to recover. A treat for the children and adults. (Although I think the creek was a bigger attraction for the kids.)

The Horns saved materials about folk dancing in a building just for that. They preserved a precious collection of dance magazines, photos and recordings. An important resource.

Our thanks to Christ Lang for her invaluable help with this.

Memorial/Labor Day Memories

Memorial and Labor Days meant coming to Martinez for a picnic and dancing under the awning at Max and June's farm in Martinez. Our thanks to Eileen Kopec for making these still shots from her video.



Max blowing a ram's horn



Some of Max's horn collection



Regular Walter Lang leading a line under the awning
—All photos are from an Eileen Kopec video

Thoughts about Max Horn and the Farm

By Stacie Klein

I remember the first time we met Max, many, many years ago, in the early 1980s. We had not been able to find any folk dancing in the area so decided to try to teach a class through one of the cities in the area. Max contacted us and we met with him and through him found the Israeli group near Rossmoor in Walnut Creek. (He also tried to get us to teach other classes - we declined.) That is how we "found" the folk dancing in the area.

Then we were introduced to the "farm" during the summer. We loved it. It was always nice dancing outside. There was usually a breeze of some sort that would make its way up the canyon. The people and the environment made it what it was - then the joy of dancing on top of that.

My girls both grew up going to the farm during the summer. I loved the fact they could just run and play without needing to worry about where they were - they would be easy to find and yet had all the grass and the stream, and they could see all the animals. Keo (the bobcat) was there from the Lindsey Museum, as well as the raccoons and fawns. One time there was an eagle that was being cared for. Then there were the horses and ducks, of course. It was a great environment for them.

I remember one evening we were basically the only ones left and we spent some time talking with Max and June in the kitchen. He showed us the pictures of the house when they bought it and we talked about the renovations he had done. (As I recall the ceiling in the kitchen was lying on the counter when they first bought the house.) He talked about the concrete pad we dance on and how he had it built specifically for a certain number of squares, and how he got the pad to "crack" in specific lines for squares. I think he always hoped to build a covered barn so there could be dancing throughout the year.

One night we were discussing adding onto our house in Pittsburg, and what we were going to do. We ended up going with an idea he had given us about where to put a sliding door - and I was always glad we did, it was definitely the best idea. He was always willing to discuss the how's and why's of doing things like that. He would talk about the projects he had worked on also; he worked on a lot of interesting places.

Another evening we were the only ones there and June brought out a fawn that was only a couple days old so the girls could see it.

My church group had a yearly hoe-down and barbeque there for many years, and Max introduced a lot of people to the area who never had an inkling about some of the history. Of course, while doing square dances he also mixed in a few simple line dances, always trying to introduce more people to folk dancing.

Max always welcomed people and groups to the farm. He loved showing and talking about the old construction style of the barn and even the old square nails that were used. He knew the history of the area and would talk about the era when the farm was first built, and how they would have dances there with people coming from all around the area in their wagons, etc. Sometimes he talked about his years growing up in the Sierras, skiing to deliver and pick up mail, and even how to sweep a dirt floor clean. Other times he would bring out other instruments he had. I remember he had a variety of horns he would bring out, including a shofar and a Swiss alphorn. My

Remembering Max and The Farm

From Rhonda Futterman

Twilight in the summertime was the best time, as a kid: running around outside in the neighborhood after dinner until it got too dark to see and people's mothers started calling that it was time to come in. How many adults still play? We folk dancers do - we fly around and clap our hands and call out silly noises. And a select few of us, the ones who went out to Max and June Horn's farm, got to play outside under the summer stars.

I had my own little ritual at The Farm: I'd park in the soft dirt of the corral, greet the horses, and, feeling a rising sense of joyful anticipation, approach the dance area. There Max would be, standing ever stalwart beside the sound system, looking a bit to my mind like Yeltsin. Did the man ever sit down? We'd chat briefly, and then I'd leave the people finishing their pot-luck suppers. I'd stroll across the expanse of neatly-mown grass to take a peek at the pen full of orphaned raccoons that June was raising for the Lindsay Wildlife Museum. Then I'd go past the garden, relishing the tidy look of rows of vegetables with marigolds at each end, and a faceless manikin in a dress standing guard to keep the birds away. I'd look at the goat, who'd look back at me with no apparent pleasure, and then strains of music would draw me across the wooden bridge over the little creek. The dancing was starting!

We did a lot of the old dances, a lot of the easy dances, helping newcomers follow along, hoping the kids would join us for Hashual and Savila Se Bela Loza. Max was happy to put on requests and happy to help out if we couldn't quite remember how the steps went. Now certain dances will always remind me of him - the phrases he used to explain the steps, the way the heels of his black shoes twisted in as he did Oro Se Vie, the (occasionally apocryphal) stories he told about the dances. As the years went on, he danced less and less, but a good Hasapiko could often still entice him to the head of the line.

The darkening sky would send the beginners home, but as the moon rose the devoted dancers would risk shin-splints on the concrete dance floor for the likes of "Rusty-mule" and Godecki Cacak. When Max started scraping off the barbecue grills and there were only four or five of us left, it would gradually sink in that it might be time to leave. I would feel as reluctant to go as I did when I was a kid and it was too dark outside to see the ball anymore. But we knew it was rude to keep Max up, and besides, "Lord willing and the creek don't rise," it was only goodbye until next week, or next summer.

Yesterday, May 7, I went to the Farm again, parked in the corral and greeted the horse. But this time, there was no dancing. This time, it was the final goodbye. Max and the Farm will stay with me in my heart and in my memories. I will be forever grateful to him for the friends he brought me, the dances he taught me, and the gift he gave me of, once again, being able to play outside in the summer twilight.

daughter actually got to blow them once when she was younger, which was an experience for her (she currently plays the trumpet).

Max will be missed as he was a traditional part of the folk dance scene in the area, as was the farm. It was an "old world" experience that is hard to find anymore, a step into the past.