

Folk Dancers We Should Remember

Max Horn

by Larry Getchel

Our selection for this month's "Folk Dancer we should Remember" has not only been active in promoting folk dancing for a good number of years but is still today a very enthusiastic contributor. He is both your friend and mine, Max Horn. To mention Max and not include his lovely wife June would be inexcusable. Among other things she was Editor of Let's Dance magazine from 1977 to 1987. Then, too, his daughter Linda was editor from 1975 to 1977. But for the moment let us talk a little about that fellow Max Horn himself.

Much of the material furnished us by Max lacks exact dates so we will approximate them as best we can. He says, "I was raised in family of Fundamentalist Christian Faith where dancing and close touching of the opposite sex was frowned upon." Entertainment in this Southern California farming community was confined mostly to the home, the church and an occasional street fair. There was of course no TV, no radio, not even a theatre. Later due to family problems we moved to Northern California and attended high school at Loyalton. Music and dance now made its appearance in Max's life. He played in the high school band and later became a member of a school dance band, playing for school functions. One of these was a Friday night school program where there was a fiddler who also called squares. Max became interested and as a result learned to call and teach squares.

Along came World War II and Max joined the Marines. His travels brought him to the island of Samoa and there he picked up a few ideas on community activities involving music, singing and dance. Following his appointment to Officers Candidate school he was assigned to the University of California, Berkeley. Here he spent spare time learning to round dance and folk dance.

The war finally over he returned to Berkeley where he became Recreation Director for Westminster Hall, the Presbyterian Student Center. His job was catering lunches and to teach dance and games. Before finishing school he married one of the students. He says he had been studying at the School of Forestry and after completing school went up to Ukiah and became Personnel Director and then Logging Manager for the Hollow Tree Lumber Company, managing the logging road for the Masonite Corporation. During his stay in Ukiah he established two folk dance classes where the town population was but 10,000 people.

Early in 1950 Max moved back to the Bay area, working at several jobs in the construction and lumber industry. He didn't have much time for folk dancing what with work and raising a family. In 1969 he lost his wife who died at Alta Bates Hospital of cancer while he was building a new wing on the hospital complex.

With the children now teenagers there was time to again take up folk dancing. This soon developed in a teaching schedule of five nights a week with a party or festival to go to each weekend. It was through folk dancing Max met June and they managed to find time to get married. From then on both Max and June have made their presence known through many contributions to the folk dance movement.

When the Greater East Bay Council had problems and the board actually voted to disband, Max stepped in, offering to be the President along with Genevieve Pereira as Secretary. As a result several other members stayed and the Council was able to keep going until 1998, unfortunately it was necessary to announce that due to declining membership there was no longer any way to continue. They have sponsored the annual February Festival of the Oaks, with Max as chairperson.

Max and June live on a farm outside the Contra Costa city of Martinez. During recent years many folk dancers have accepted invitations to join them for a real "Hoe-down down on the farm". Their farm has also been the site for such events as the 1996 Statewide picnic and served the same function for this year's "Golden Gate in 1998."

Many of us living in the city have never experienced farm life. You can get a taste of it down at Max and June's farm. They have other things to offer as well. There is a large collection of ethnic dolls. Their large collection of costumes is available for loan to schools and special functions and there is much more. Max and June also host animals from the Alexander Lindsey Junior Museum to give them a rest from being on display, and June cares for baby deer, raccoons and squirrels people bring in to the museum.

Something Max failed to mention when furnishing material for this article was the many jobs he has handled for the Federation. It has been this writer's observation that when there has been a request for a volunteer to handle a special job, the fellow who time and again raises his hand is Max Horn.

Max says the farm remains open for groups to use and probably will remain so for the next several years. Like so many of us who in our hearts will always remain folk dancers, Max feels their folk dance days may be approaching the end. Say not so Max, folk dancing needs you.