

"MEET MILLIE" (Libaw, that is!)

. . . By Liesl Barnett

An old European adage proclaims that the blood of a true Magyar contains not red and white corpuscles, but six ingredients:

1. Romance
2. Melancholy
3. Vitality
4. Rhythm and Music
5. Idealism
6. Paprika

This, in a nutshell, could be a character sketch of Millie Libaw, the Southern Federation's roving ambassadress of goodwill.

Millie was born in Budapest, Hungary, at the turn of the century. There she lived and attended grammar school until the age of ten, when she moved to the U.S.A. Millie continued her schooling in America until she reached the ripe old age of 13, when she traded classes for a job in a factory. At 17 she met and eloped with Oscar Libaw, to whom she is still happily married. They have two married sons and three handsome grandchildren of assorted ages.

In the early 1940's Millie was attending women's gym classes at the Queen Anne playground in Los Angeles, where circa 1944-45, she happened to see some folk dancing and decided to try it because it looked like everyone was having such a gay time. For Millie it was "love at first sight". Soon her enthusiasm infected Oscar, too, and they were now "hooked for life". Millie's enthusiasm has been infecting people ever since.

The Libaw's first teacher was Helen Schyler and the first of the many groups they were eventually to join was the now-defunct L.A. Co-op Folk Dancers. In this group Millie eventually became an officer, serving in various capacities: Treasurer, President, etc. Eventually she joined, in rapid succession, Berendo, Hollywood Peasants, Pasadena Co-op, Santa Monica



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Folk Dancers and Westwood Co-op. Since then she has added the badges of so many other Clubs to her supply, that to list them all would make this biography look like the directory of the Southern California Folk Dance Clubs.

It is not in keeping with Millie's impatient bubbling nature to be merely a *member* in a group — she has to be ACTIVE. No group has ever asked her help in teaching, no matter how last-minute the request, and has been turned down. Her ways with beginners work wonders to break the ice for people who are slow to make friends. The more gregarious ones very quickly feel as though they have known her all their lives.

An inveterate traveller, Millie takes at least one long trip every year and always teaches the dances so popular in California, in the far-off places she visits: Hawaii, Israel, Greece, etc., even on board ship, while going to and from these places. This "live wire" lets no grass grow under *her* feet! In 1959 she went to Hawaii "for a rest" and ended up teaching not only to adults in the evenings, but to school children during the day, also. Some *rest* that must have been!

Millie is a champion of causes. She needs only to hear of individuals or groups in trouble and she comes to the rescue, giving freely of her time, effort, and, not infrequently, her money.

Many Southern California groups have had Millie as their guest teacher. Among the groups who have benefited from her experience are Berendo, Garden Grove, Pasadena, Saturday Mix-ers, Westwood and many more, not to mention the many, many groups she teaches in foreign countries on her yearly trips. Millie recently taught at the Friday Night Workshop of the Westwood Co-op. Not too long ago Millie was approached by members of a temple in Los Angeles with a request to organize a new beginner's group. From this emerged the Beverly Folk Dancers, and, if Millie has her way (and she usually does) they will become Federation members before their group is one year old.

Millie has introduced many dances to the folk dance movement in California. Among those which were standardized and are being done on a Federation-wide level are: Hava Nitze Bemahol and Bona Habanot, two Israeli dances; Debka Raffieh, an Arab dance and Adarim, where no country was mentioned, though this too, is probably from Israel. Two other dances which enjoy a modicum of popularity, but were not standardized, are a "Canadian Samba", which Millie learned in Israel, and Ropogos Czardas, which she learned in her native Budapest in 1961.

It seems a bit foolish to ask anyone as perpetually active as Millie Libaw what her hobbies are, but she was asked just the same. Other than folk dancing, there is travelling, helping her fellow-men (and women), feeding her friends Hungarian goodies, collecting costumes and dolls in costumes in every country Millie visits, and daily thanking her Maker for her blessings,

which, she feels, are manyfold.

So, here you have the story of a live wire. She could sit on her laurels as a senior citizen, but not Millie - she'd rather dance with her friends and stay young just simply by being too much on the go to gather the moss of old age. Her enthusiasm has infected many non-dancers and made avid fans of them. Meeting Millie is a pleasure and I hope she will be a folk dancer for many years to come so others, too, may have the fun of knowing her.

