

Marian Gault – A Long Life Dedicated To Dance

by *Loui Tucker*

Marian Gault will be 100 years old this April and she has spent the bulk of the 100 years dancing, primarily folk dancing.

Marian grew up in Idaho, lived in Hawaii and Yosemite National Park, traveled many places in the world, and now lives in Monte Sereno, a town on the southern end of the San Francisco Bay. In college she studied fine arts and education and, after graduating, taught in the public schools, mostly at the junior high level.

Both Marian and her husband Ned began dancing as ballroom dancers. Marian got hooked on folk dancing when she worked in Yosemite and attended classes held for the park employees. She moved to San Jose and met Ned in an adult education class taught by Ned's parents. In 1958, Ned's parents decided to stop teaching and Marian and Ned took over that class, an advanced class with over 100 dancers in it. This was the heyday of folk dancing when the Adult Education Program schedule included twelve large classes a week and enough dancers to fill the San Jose Civic Auditorium for their annual festival.

In 1962 they were married, with the local dance groups giving a huge party for them. Ned became president of the Folk Dance Federation of California (1964-66). Marian and Ned both served in many capacities for the Folk Dance Federation and have been members since the late 1950s.

Lawton Harris invited them to teach at Stockton Folk Dance Camp in 1963. They remained on the teaching faculty of the Stockton Camp for 28 years, first teaching tangos and later presenting the teaching techniques for folk dance classes and the basic repertoire classes. Marian, as an artist and calligrapher, designed the syllabus covers for 25 years and did the artwork for publicity. Because of their long study of German and Austrian dances, they twice taught as specialists in the dances of Austria at Stockton Folk Dance Camp. The two of them also choreographed several tangos, including Tango Poquito, El Gaucho Tango, Tango Campana, and La Encantada Tango. She and Ned still teach a once-a-week folk dance class in Santa Clara.



The Gaults in 1960.



Marian Gault with husband Ned in October 2019. *Photo by L. Tucker.*

In 1966, at the urging of dancers in their classes, they formed the Ensemble International, as a performing folk dance group. For 37 years, Marian and Ned directed, taught, managed, and were choreographers for Ensemble International, which included many performances and full concerts all over California, and three performing tours in Europe. In the 1990s, Ensemble International's concerts were part of the City of San Jose's Performing Arts Series at the Montgomery Theater.

Ensemble International was a nonprofit organization, and Marian did all the correspondence, bookkeeping, reports, and grant writing, as well as designing and making many of the folk costumes worn by the dancers. She scheduled rehearsals and danced in all the performances.

Happy 100th birthday and congratulations to Marian on reaching this remarkable milestone – and thank you for all you have done in your long life to promote international folk dancing.