

THE OXFORDS

Oxford. This is a name familiar to people in the folk dance community, not only in Sacramento but also throughout California.

Jim and Irene Oxford began folk dancing in Mt. Shasta with the Dudes and Daisies Folk Dance Club. They were members of the Mountain Mixers, the Hedge Hoppers and the Square D, which was a square dance group. They next came to Sacramento and joined Whirl-A-Jigs and Pairs and Spares and are charter members of Pairs & Spares. They also formed Kaleidoscopes from a beginners class they taught at the Clunie Clubhouse in Sacramento. Also, they were honorary members of the Left Footers Folk Dance Club because they taught the dance "Left Foot One Step." Jim was privileged to hold the office of president in every club he has been affiliated with.

Jim and Irene were instructors of Family Circle for many years. They accepted this position as a memorial tribute to their son, Ted. Many will remember Ted Oxford, a shining light in folk dancing for too brief a time. Ted followed in his parents' footsteps (and dance steps, too). All three were invited to call squares at all Federation, Regional and Statewide Festivals throughout California. They also called at the local weekly (yes that's right, in those days in Sacramento, there was at least one party every Saturday night) parties in Sacramento. Ted belonged to the Buttons and Bows, with Omega Graham, and the Dionysians exhibition group, and he was the square dance caller for the Goofers Teen Square Dance Group. He was also a dancer and choreographer for a teenage exhibition group called the Silhouettes. This group was scheduled to perform in Europe but unfortunately, Ted passed away before that occurred. Ted was awarded a Sacramento Council scholarship to the Stockton Folk Dance Camp for two consecutive years but his untimely death occurred two weeks prior to his second year. Ted will always be missed by all those who knew him. One can only imagine how far this talented young man could have gone if his time had not been cut short. However, his talent and enthusiasm should be a beacon for young dancers today.

Jim and Irene continued in Family Circle for fifteen years until insurance issues became a problem. For that reason and the fact that the children were growing up, the decision was made to dissolve the club.

Jim was President of the Sacramento Folk Dance Council from 1964 to 1965 and Irene served in that capacity from 1997 to 1999. They both served the Federation and the Sacramento Council in various roles over the years and continue to do so to this day.

Jim instructed at the Rio Hondo Teachers Training Class for the Federation. His agenda was "Sound Systems and One-Night Stands."

Jim and Irene both taught weekly folk and square dance classes for the Sacramento City Recreation Department for twenty-five years. They also did one-night stands at regional fairs, churches, lodges, retirement facilities, weddings, scout meetings, malls, etc. In 1955, they attended a square dance course class as "guinea pig dancers." Their job was to exactly follow the caller's instructions. Jim had such a good time with their goofing that he was handed the mike, given an "idiot sheet" to memorize for the following week and so began their career to be square dance callers.

At one time the Kaleidoscopes, under the direction of Jim and Irene, had the largest membership of all the folk dance clubs in Sacramento. Club members appeared on Channel 10 Television Station for a Sears commercial and danced on a morning show, too.

For twenty years the Oxfords hosted New Year's Eve parties in their home where there was "standing room only." They also had summer-long patio dance parties and classes. The Kaleidoscopes differed from other folk dance clubs in that their program consisted equally of traditional folk dances and basic square dance figures. The club costume was pink and green and the badge was a kaleidoscope consisting of those same colors with figures of dancers in the center doing a "kaleidoscope" of dances. The club, along with many others, decorated the Memorial Auditorium for Camellia Festivals throughout the years.

For fifty years Jim and Irene have been going strong. They are still active well into the new millennium. They are currently members of Pairs & Spares Folk Dance Club and the First & Last Dancers (country line dancing). Jim is Vice President of Pairs & Spares; Irene is Hold-Over Officer for the Sacramento Council and is on the Executive Board of the Federation serving as Chairperson of the North/South Committee. Irene is also on the Board of the First & Last Dancers. These are their official titles. Both of these popular people serve on numerous committees, call squares, dance at various functions around the city, and other activities too numerous to mention. Irene's love is decorations and you can always depend on her to "fancy up" a room for a folk dance event. Just look for "happy faces" all around the room and you'll find Irene. At the same time look for a tall, blonde fellow in western wear. That's Jim. He is always willing to call a square or contra and can be depended upon to offer instructions, when needed or requested, on folk dances, new and old.

Anyone who knows Jim and Irene are aware that they are loyal, dedicated members of the clubs they belong to as well as the Sacramento Council and the Federation. They never miss a club class night or party unless it is absolutely impossible to be there. They are equally dedicated to the other groups, as well. They tirelessly bring their music equipment to classes and parties and call squares willingly. They are usually the first ones at Pairs & Spares class and party nights and the last to leave. As members of the First & Last Dancers, which is not only a dance club but a service organization, you can find them serving on bingo nights at a local convalescent home, often dancing with that group and Pairs & Spares to entertain the residents, and generally spreading a little fun and laughter to those around.

Their true loves are each other, family and folk dancing. Oh, and let's not forget their little dog, Misty!

We are all richer for having this couple in our midst. We know we will continue to reap the results of their experience for a long time to come.



Jim and Irene - 50 years together and folk dancing.

NADINE MITCHELL