

A PIONEER FOLK DANCER

By . . Trelle Hastings

Robert Shinn is exactly what the title implies - a pioneer folk dancer.. He watched the growth on international folk dancing from its very beginning in the United States. He was with Song Chang during the planning and organization of the first international group, now the oldest and well-known Changs International Folk Dancers. Mr. Shinn is still pioneering. If you want to know where the younger set is, just go to any one of the parties of KOLO, one of the newest Federation groups, organized by him. There you'll find them, dancing hard and strong, but with lots of style and seriousness.

Bob was born in Coehabanba, Bolivia, when his school teaching father was there on missionary work. The photograph shown is pretty explanatory of his artistic ability. By profession he is a free-lance sculptor. The beautiful piece of work he is standing beside is his "Egrets", which stands at the entrance to the Walnut Creek Shopping Center. It is about eight feet tall and is made out of magnesite, a granular carbonate of magnesium. When I asked him which was his most outstanding work, he modestly replied that he hadn't done it yet. However, he finally agreed that one of the most notable ones was his six ton figure set, "The Life Givers", made out of cast stone and standing at the Marin General Hospital. He has done a group of lovely bronze figures for a Hindu organization, and many exquisite bust carvings of known people. Although he doesn't consider himself a painter, he has done some lovely water colors.

They say that behind every successful man there's a woman, and Frances is the one in Mr. Shinn's life. Frances was born in India of missionary parents, but came to Canada at the age of six to be reared with two school teaching aunts. She can remember folk dancing at the Y.W.C.A. when she was that age. She first began with Scottish dancing. Frances graduated from Ohio Wesleyan with a major in English and a minor in Dance. Then she returned to India for four years, where she worked on an international youth magazine called "The Treasure Chest". It is now published in fifty languages. She went to Mills College to take her Masters Degree in History of Asiatic Art. She met Bob when directing the museum and gallery in Stockton. The two of them organized the present Stockton Art League before moving to their Sausalito home.

The forty by twenty dance room overlooking the Bay has been the subject of many overcrowded, fun-filled parties for both young and old. One of the most anticipated is Mr. Shinn's annual Christmas party when Santa Claus comes to give gifts. The parking problem at the Shinn's during party time would put San Francisco to shame! They built their home, themselves, shortly after they were married.

Anyone who knows the Shinns know they have two dancing offsprings, but few know they also reared a third dancer. When their nephew, Art Noble,

was orphaned at 9, he was most fortunate to have the Shinn's open door standing before him. He became an enthusiastic dancer, also, and danced with the formerly well-known Viltis group in San Diego. He is now married and attending University of the Pacific. Their daughter, Norma, who has exhibited in Sokoli for some time now, recently married the chairman of the group. In 1956 she became the first to receive a folk dance scholarship from Changs; then in 1958 she received another one. Their son, Eric, is also a dancer with Sokoli. He went to the College of Marin and is now entering a career in furniture design.



Robert Shinn and his "Egrets" (Details in story pages 6 & 7)