

People Worth Knowing

MILLIE von KONSKY

By Walter Grothe

The name, and a good sounding one at that, is known to every folk dancer anywhere. In 1948 it took me four hours to talk Millie into accepting the Editorship of "Let's Dance" magazine, but the other day it took Millie 10 seconds to talk me into writing the article about her, and I am honored that I was selected.

I could fill this space by merely enumerating all the things Millie von Kinsky has done in the folk dance field, and particularly for the Federation, but instead, I will make this a less formal and more personal report, and give at the end a listing of some of Millie's activities from 1942 until today.

Many of you, who will read these lines, have had the pleasure of meeting this striking looking person, or at least you have seen her or heard her speak and have admired her beauty and poise. Many of you who have had the opportunity of working with her and of getting to know her better have learned to admire her great ability to organize, to handle situations and people, and her genuine desire to serve the folk dance movement and the Federation in every way. The data given below speaks for itself. Only a person of outstanding talents could hold so many offices and positions successfully over so many years.

Millie and her husband, Vernon, have, among other things, the distinction of being native Californians. (Both were born in San Francisco). Millie is of German, French, English and Irish parentage, and Vernon, generally called "Von", of Scottish, English and German Extraction. The result of this marriage is two handsome children, a beautiful daughter, Sondra, who will get her degree from Oakland City College this June and will then marry Robert Dwyer, and a good looking son, Richard, who will graduate this June from Bishop O'Dowd High School. Both children are, also, outstanding in their dancing ability.

One could call the von Kinskys a dancing family. They must have been born with this talent in their blood. Millie tells that she danced the Viennese Waltz with her grandfather when she was three, and Von has been exposed to country dances from the time he was a small boy. Both started folk dancing with "Buzz" Glass in 1942. But the outstanding events in their folk dance life were probably two trips to Europe centered around the dance; the first, conducting a tour of people interested in folk dance; and the second, the attendance of the World Folk Dance Festival Congress, in Biarritz, France and Pamplona, Spain. Word comes now that Millie and Von have been invited to give a full Folk Dance Conference at Brigham Young University this summer.



Millie and Vernon von Konsky

Since 1942 Millie has been a folk dancer and a teacher of numerous clubs and organizations, as well as a teacher of folk dancing and rhythms in four parochial schools. Since 1944 she has been Director of the Oakland Recreation Dance Arts (Exhibition). In 1947 Millie became the instructor of the San Leandro Folk Dancers, and in 1949, Director and Instructor of East Bay Women's Dance Circle.

In 1946 Millie was General Chairman of the first Federation Festival held in Oakland Civic Auditorium, and has since been chairman of many Festivals, Exhibitions, Committees and Institutes.

During the year of 1948 Millie von Konsky was Editor of "Let's Dance" magazine.

From 1953 to 1958 Millie was Staff Teacher at Idyllwild Arts Foundation; from 1956 to 1958, at the University of California at Santa Barbara; in 1954, at the College of Pacific, and in 1955, at the College of Holy Names.

Since 1957 Mrs. von Konsky has been Co-ordinating Vice President of the Folk Dance Federation of California. As of January of this year she is Co-Ordinator of the new Federation Teacher Training Program.

Through the years of folk dancing Millie has collected over 2000 folk dance records and a very complete library of costume descriptions and customs of people in foreign countries. In her travels she has collected many beautiful authentic costumes.

I would like to conclude this article with a personal comment; namely a word of thanks to Millie von Konsky on behalf of all of us who have chosen folk dancing as our interest and form of recreation. We all are very much indebted to Millie, because it is due to persons of such ability, leadership qualifications and driving force that our folk dance movement stays alive and progresses.

