

Folk dance as education

There is much to learn in the area of movement

By TONI MERLINOS

News-Sentinel staff writer

Henry "Buzz" Glass was born a child of the Great Depression and with a desperate need to belong. Living in intercity ghettos in San Francisco, Glass described his life during the very lean times as lonely.

"I wanted to belong, to be part of things," he said Wednesday during a visit to Parklane Elementary School in North Stockton.

He found his niche in folk dancing, having hooked up with a group of artists in North Beach.

"I went every week (for the folk dancing)," he said. "We had a lot of respect and admiration for each other. There was a mutual togetherness.

"We would go around San Francisco and dance in very colorful costumes," he said. "We lived a very bohemian existence."

He likened folk dance to a religious experience, people coming together to share a love unconditionally. More than 50 years later, he's sharing his love for music and dance with children throughout California, stopping at Parklane School for a morning of rhythm, dance and song.

Glass, now on the verge of his 72nd birthday, decided long ago to put his love for folk dance to good use. He began his teaching career more than five decades ago in Lodi when the number of schools could be counted on one hand and the population was only 13,000.

By promoting folk dance, "I wanted to advance a belief in unity and the brotherhood of man," he said.

But getting a job in 1939 when the depression was just beginning to wind down wasn't easy, he said. Luckily he caught the fancy of a young woman named Frances, then-Superintendent Leroy Nichols' secretary. She put in a good word for him and Glass' dance experience caught the eye of at least one school official. He was hired and began teaching fifth-grade at Needham School.

to what transpires on the front line of education and children's lives.

"Children learn by experiences," he said. "We still have a job to teach that movement education is part of the total curriculum. You cannot eliminate the body from education."

Glass has helped produce more than 20 educational records, has authored several books and magazine articles and served as the editor for *Let's Dance Magazine*.

His visit to the Lodi Unified School District was coordinated by Dave Mende, an LUSD curriculum coordinator; Doris Meyer, professor of physical education;

UOP; Floyd Bonet, a physical education mentor at Lincoln Unified School District and Steve Falco, a Stockton Unified School District physical education coordinator.

Much of what Glass teaches and promotes as part of his movement education is used by the LUSD physical education specialists, Mende said.

Lawrence School kindergartners through third-graders got to learn from the master as Glass led them through various songs and movements. Imagine you're going down

He lived with the other single male teachers in a house near Lodi High School. "It was like a fraternity," he remembered.

While in Lodi, he organized folk festivals for the children at Mickle Grove Park and founded the Folk Dance Federation of California, Inc. For \$10, he hired a sound truck and put on a folk dance festival at Lodi Lake.

"We put on this magic festival," he said. "It was a good beginning to something that still exists today."

In 1942, he married Frances, and they left Lodi a year later to settle in Oakland. He was given an "opportunity class" when he began at Bret Harte Junior High School in Oakland.

"They were 22 problem children. These kids were street wise and con wise," he said. "Fortunately I had street knowledge" after having grown up in the ghettos of San Francisco.

He taught mentally retarded children for 15 years even though he was chastised by his peers for trying to reach students they felt were unreachable, Glass said. Later he became the consultant for special education for the Oakland Unified School District.

Glass never stopped dancing. He worked for nine years as the supervisor for elementary physical education in OUSD and taught at the Arthur Murray Dance Studio. He passed along his trade for 20 years at the Univeristy of the Pacific Folk Dance Camp which he described as "the best in the world. No one can touch the teachers there."

He is a volunteer teacher with the OUSD every Tuesday and he says it helps him stay informed as

Paddle to your left and paddle to your right, he said, as the students made imaginary strokes of the oar. They simulated the rapids and rocks by frantically waving their hands over their heads. Successfully through the rapids, they leaned forward to their toes, gliding through the calm waters.

The students at Parklane School, one of the most racially diverse schools in the Lodi district, were just up Glass' alley.

"It's getting to be a smaller world," he said. "There's a real need to understand all cultures and appreciate them and to work toward a movement of peace."

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