

Dayton couple dancing their way onto Miami Valley's honor roll

By Cathy Mong

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Ann Ballinger's feet haven't been still much of her 71 years, certainly not for as long as she can remember.

Two left feet are not in this folk dancer's arena of vast dance knowledge, but thousands of happy toes are.

Mrs. Ballinger and her dance and life partner, Sam, have been honored by the Miami Valley Dance Council as its Honor Roll Dancers of 1992. Among their contributions to the area include teaching folk, round, square and contra dancing through their club, the Miami Valley Folk Dancers.

The couple, who live on Virginia Avenue in Dayton, were chosen from among 54 nominated by each of the dance clubs in the council.

"It's quite an honor, considering the majority of the council clubs are square (dance)," Mrs. Ballinger said.

Mrs. Ballinger's German parents emi-

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— Rosanne Gessel, publicity chairwoman,
Miami Valley Dance Council

grated to Dayton when she was 2. She still considers German dance her specialty and the one closest to her heart. Ballinger prefers couple dancing.

Growing up during the Great Depression afforded Mrs. Ballinger the opportunity to dance at the old Liederkrantz hall on Wayne Avenue, in what was known as the Hay Market district.

She and her husband will celebrate their 47th wedding anniversary Sept. 15, a union that produced two daughters,

Marie Suzanne McCollor of Springboro and Jeanette Adams of Dayton.

It was through her daughters' Girl Scout involvement that Mrs. Ballinger formed one of her most lasting bonds.

"She has taught more than 2,500 scouts and leaders," said Rosanne Gessel, Miami Valley Dance Council publicity chairwoman.

"I got in it through Grace Wolff who started teaching folk dance. I took classes from her and just kept going. Then I took over for her," Mrs. Ballinger said.

Ballinger, 75, and his wife, 71, enjoy the council because it is fun and keeps them fit. "We've been asked, 'How do you do it?'" she said.

Ballinger retired in 1975 from Dayton Power and Light Co., where he worked 30 years in the service department. He has been a folk dancing regular since.

While not the only male in the club, Ballinger said there are many more women who click their heels than men.

"Women dance together. There's nothing wrong with that," Mrs. Ballinger said. Ages of participants range from early 20s to 90.

The folk dance group meets every Thursday at Michael Solomon Pavilion.

Forty-four members will present a program July 31 at Ameriflora in Columbus.

Besides her work with Scouts, Mrs. Ballinger teaches a newcomers' class from 7 to 8 p.m. every Thursday before the regular meeting.

Ballinger has been treasurer for 16 years.



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Folk dancers Ann and Sam Ballinger