

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 25, 1955

### Visitors From Chicago

Sitting in the sun in the Carmel Valley one day last week we had the extreme pleasure of lunching with Mr. and Mrs. David B. Itkin of Chicago. The salad of good cold fruit topped with mint sherbet was prepared by the hostess, was incidental to the inspiration we received through our talk with the host.

Russian born, an American citizen by choice, an actor through love of the theater, and a director for the same reason, Mr. Itkin came to the United States 27 years ago. He came not knowing one word of the English language, as a professor who was privileged to come into the country outside the quota, and became a citizen as soon as the law would allow.

Mr. Itkin is on the Peninsula for his summer vacation of three months, relaxing and enjoyed the old and new friendship he and his artist wife, Ida Berry Itkin, have gathered around them since their arrival a few weeks ago. He is the valued director of the Goodman Theater at the Art Institute in Chicago, with which he has been connected ever since his arrival in this country. It is, he declared, the most beautiful theater in the United States. It was built 31 years ago by William Goodman, a German settler, with a gift of a million dollars, as a memorial to his son, Kenneth Sawyer Goodman.

In addition to his work at the Goodman Theater Prof. Itkin has been for 24 years the director of the Evening Drama School at De Paul University, an outstanding Catholic Institution in Chicago. From this work he has now retired in order to devote his entire time to the Goodman Theater and to create there the actors and actresses of the future as he thinks they should be—real persons acting in real scenes—only these persons can convince an audience that they have witnessed a real-life drama.

In Moscow, where Prof Itkin got his first training as an actor and a director, he studied and worked with Stanislavsky, a great theatrical producer, actor, and co-founder of the Moscow Art Theater. He came to the United States with the Habima Players, a portion of the Moscow Art Theater. Last summer his vacation was spend in Vancouver where he directed at the British Columbia University, to which students of the drama came from all over Canada to study with him, and

experience he thoroughly enjoyed. This summer he is relaxing until September in the warm, restful atmosphere of our Carmel Valley.

“Without dreams, what is left?” The foregoing is the motto by which Prof. Itkin lives, we are sure, after hearing him recite the exciting moments of his life, his love for his work, the supreme joy of creating an actor and a play.

“One must have a love for the theater, a voice and a flexible body to be a great actor and a successful director must be one who can inspire the person who has a capacity to be inspired, otherwise that person is a puppet. When this is accomplished the work becomes a creation.”

During his years in the theater Prof. Itkin has directed the plays of Shakespeare, Ibsen, Shaw and many American works, bringing the total to over 300 productions. He was proud to say that as he works the originator of the theater in Russia, his beloved teacher and co-worker for a dozen years, Stanislavsky, is ever before him, inspiring him as he in turn strives to inspire those with whom his is associated.

Mrs. Itkin plans to paint during her stay here. She is anxious to work with her palate, brushes and paints on the old wharf which she knows is alive enough to be a challenge to her art. She has studied with Harry Mintz of Chicago and internationally known painter, and in Mexico, She has entered her canvasses in the Chicago Institute gallery and elsewhere throughout the east.

This interesting couple have become so enamored with the beauty of the Peninsula that they hope to return to reside here when his retirement from the Goodman Theater becomes a reality. We are sure they will be welcome and valuable addition to our every-growing colony of residents who are interested both in the theater and in art in all its varied forms.