

PENINSULA TODAY

STUDIO

MARK KATCHES, Peninsula Today Editor (415) 853-5249

Saturday, March 30, 1991

Curtain may drop soon on dance studio

ROSANNE SPECTOR / STAFF
EAST PALO ALTO

Thanks to the folkdance classes she takes from Raices de Mexico, Elisia Guerrero was able to stamp and twirl with her cousin when she met her in Mexico several years ago.

"My grandmother showed us some of the dances she used to do. I put on my cousin's skirt and we started dancing," said Elisia, 9, a student at Palo Verde Elementary School in Palo Alto.

But Elisia and the dozen or so other youths learning dance at the East Palo Alto dance school may have their progress halted in September. Raices de Mexico is so low on funds the group may not be able to pay dance instructors' salaries past the summer.

Earlier this year the group had hopes of moving to Redwood City, concerned that vandalism at the studio on the old Ravenswood High School campus was scaring dancers away. But now Executive Director Maria Elena Varela is focusing her attention on just keeping the group alive.

"Our prognosis is, we may not be around in the fall," Varela said. "That's

Please see **STUDIO, B-2**

Continued from B-1

our priority now - just staying afloat."

The group - which is the only Mexican folk dance group in San Mateo County - subsists on tuition and grants. But grants are becoming rare and tuition is hard to come by.

"The bad thing is, the majority of the people in the group are low income, so only about 25 percent pay," Varela said.

Tuition of \$35 covers several months of twice-weekly classes.

Despite the financial struggle, the group is in high gear preparing for performances at Cinco de Mayo celebrations in the area. On May 3 the children's group will dance at Selby Lane Elementary School in Atherton, Orion Elementary School in Redwood City, and Eden Dale Elementary School in San Lorenzo. Then on May 4 the children's and adult's groups will perform at the Civic Center in San Francisco at Carnival 1991.

Redwood City resident Columba Castaneda, a member of the adult group, said she will sorely miss the program if it goes under.

"Dancing really relaxes me. It's a way to forget your problems, to forget about work and everything," Castaneda said.

"I would really miss it if we wouldn't be able to continue."