
FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

January-March 1984

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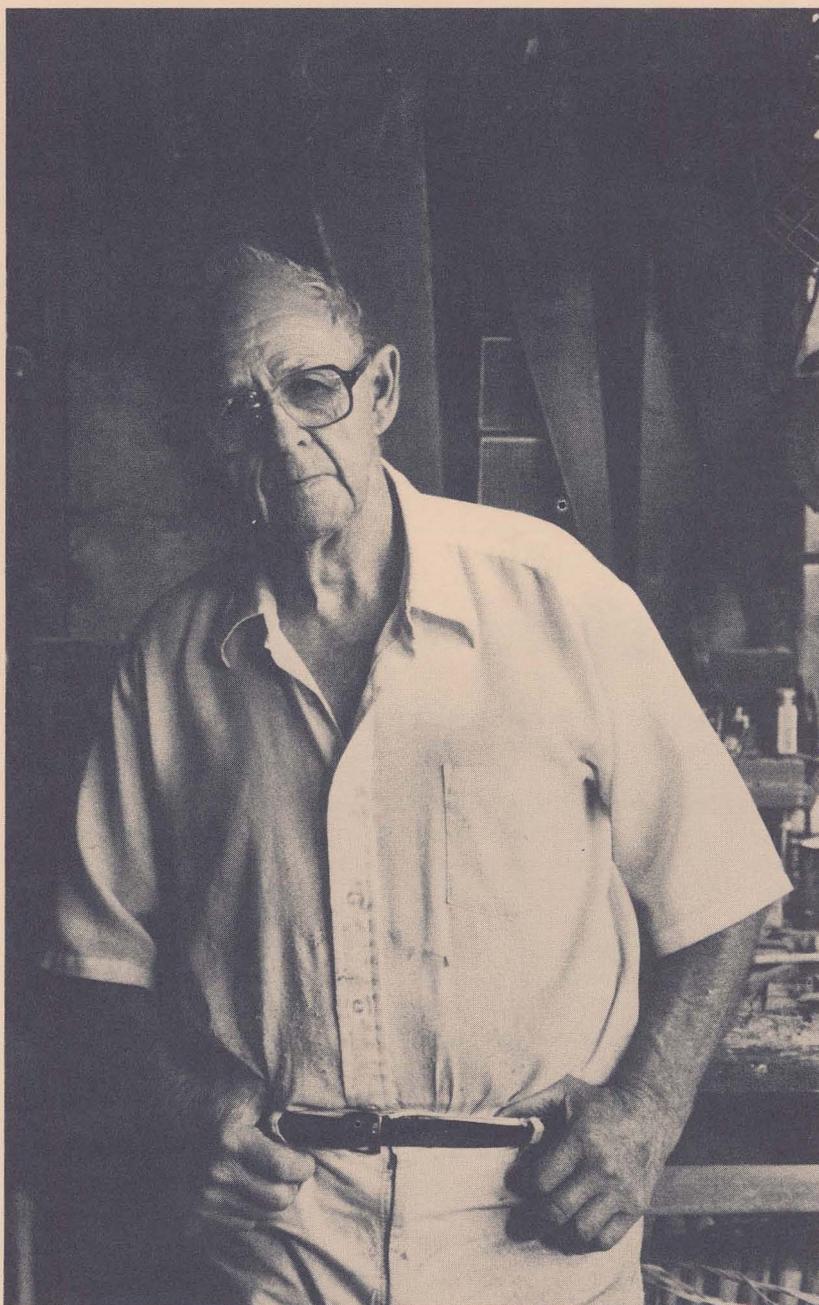
Volume VII, Number 1

Washington Folk Art Meeting

New Jersey's White Cedar

**In Memoriam: Christine
Cartwright**

**Automation and the Folklife
Center**



FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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Alan Jabbour, Director

Ray Dockstader, Deputy Director

Elena Bradunas
Carl Fleischhauer
Mary Hufford
Folklife Specialists

Peter T. Bartis, Folklife Researcher

Eleanor Sreb, Executive Assistant
Brett Topping, Writer-Editor
Doris Craig, Administrative Secretary
Lisa Oshins, Staff Assistant

Tel: 202 287-6590

Archive of Folk Culture

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Sebastian LoCurto, Staff Assistant

Tel: 202 287-5510

Washington, D.C. 20540

Managing Editor: Brett Topping

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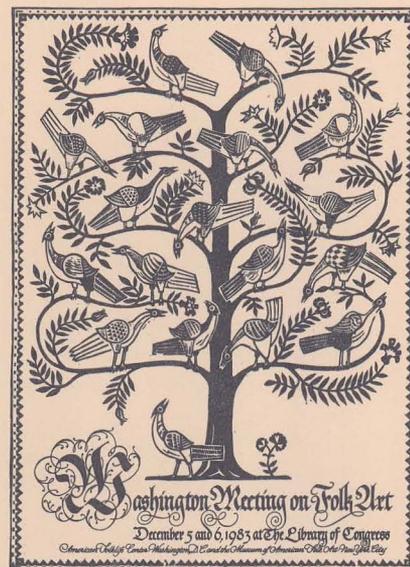
Introductory remarks at conferences are generally either old news or no news at all, once the conference is over. The remarks I am appending here, given at the beginning of the "Washington Meeting on Folk Art," are no exception to that stern rule. Yet the issues I glossed then still hover about the subject, as the vivid memories of the meeting begin to fade. We all resolved to keep the conversation going about folk art, so I am offering my remarks again here in the spirit of that resolve.

Regarding folk art, neither the American Folklife Center institutionally, nor any of us at the Center personally, thinks there are easy answers. To be sure, the phrase "folk art" conjures up certain images and

ideas to us. When I survey the stars in the sky, I see constellations; thus do my schooling and cultural background assist me in making sense of the bewildering variety of a starry night. Similarly, when I think of folk art I draw upon my schooling and personal experience to conjecture pattern—to hazard sense—out of the riot of shapes and strivings I see. Surely we must be sensible, as we converse about folk art today and tomorrow, of the diversity of the subject matter, the complexity of the subject, the limitations on the eye of the beholder, the difficulty in seeing clearly. Surely any thoughtful person approaching the subject of folk art must mix enthusiasm with a liberal dose of humility. We have assumptions and questions aplenty, but the answers have only begun to reveal themselves.

Let me begin our two days of conversation, then, by trying to state my own assumptions—not so much about folk art, but rather about *us* as a convocation. You may feel free to disagree with my assumptions, and if our conversations are useful I may leave the conference with my assumptions modified in various respects. Nevertheless, here they are—and to make a show of orderliness and discipline, I have even numbered them.

1. We are all here because we have been touched profoundly by a kind of art we have learned to call folk art. We may have begun our interest with mere curiosity, whimsy, or other causes, but we lingered because of a kind of devotion. It is that devotion that has brought us together here.
2. Folk art, whatever else it means to all of us, seems as a term to possess a strong and persistent democratic strain. Homemade and grassroots in origin—one might say, "of the people, by the people, and for the people"—it serves as an alternative touchstone, providing us, in the democratic values it seems to express, with a challenge to the centrally integrated, hierarchically organized values of our civilization.
3. Thus challenged, we approach the subject through the channels,
4. and with the blinders, of our particular circles and networks of devotees. We are vaguely aware of other networks approaching the same general subject area, and using the same overarching term "folk art." But we remain uninformed about and suspicious of these other interlopers, knowing the divisions and nuances of our own group but supposing the other groups to be monochromatic and united against us.
4. We seem to hover helplessly between thinking of folk art as a form of individual creativity, and thinking of it as a collective cultural expression. It is a good rule of thumb in all art that, the closer we are to it culturally, the more we focus on it as individual creation; and the further away we stand, the more we see it as a collective cultural expression. But surely all art is both.
5. We similarly hover between a psychic desire to identify, in some broad cultural way, with this folk art we love, and a sort of anthropological detachment and dispassionate regard for it as an interesting but fundamentally



Multi-colored poster designed by John Crank. Signed, hand printed and colored, limited edition, \$50; printed edition, \$10. Add \$2 to mail orders from the Library of Congress, Information Office, Box A, Washington, D.C. 20540.

other artistic achievement. Does American folk art represent us, or something quite *other*? When it seems to express values we espouse as citizens, our devotion to folk art understandably clouds our rhetoric at times and confuses those to whom we wish to communicate.

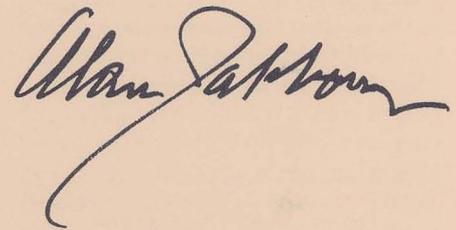
6. When we think of the word "folk," we all seem to sense a collective dimension. But some of us define collectivity in terms of small, homogeneous communities. Others seem to have in mind something much larger, like regional or ethnic identification. Yet others seem to use the word to evoke elements of "national character." And when that national character is our own, we fall inarticulate about it and simply focus on individual creativity instead.
7. We badly need to add an international dimension to our reflections on folk art. The exhibition *Precious Legacy*, featuring the cultural legacy of the Jews of Prague up until World War II, now on view at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, is a case in point. Its gloriously adorned sacred and ceremonial artifacts are certainly folk art to many in this room. Its 18th- and 19th-century paintings, reminiscent of similar American art at a certain remove from contemporary academic standards, qualify as folk art to others here today. Yet others may regard the whole exhibition as a celebration of folk art. But examination of art in other cultures—from the Jews of Prague to the rugweavers of the Middle East and beyond—will help us escape the shackles of our own provinciality.
8. We need to understand better the way folk art intersects and interacts with the marketplace. Some of us seem to worship at the shrine of the marketplace, while some of us fear and despise it. It may be a god or devil from time to time, but usually it is nothing more than a sensitive

barometer of our social and cultural currents of interest and energy interconnecting community, region, class, nation, and the wide world. It behooves us to pay more attention to the marketplace and all the social and cultural crosscurrents it represents.

9. Finally, we seem to be showing a growing awareness of and interest in the makers of folk art themselves as artists and as people. Such a trend is most welcome, for several reasons. First, we will know infinitely more about the nature of any art if we examine closely the artist in his community and milieu. Second, our view of the art itself will be more humane when it is tintured with awareness of the artist as a fellow human being. And third, the growing interest in folk artists will increase our sensitivity to the fragility of folk

art. More and more Americans are becoming concerned about conservation, husbanding of our precious natural and cultural resources and preventing their wanton destruction. We, too, who praise folk art, must be careful—to echo Shakespeare's sonnet—that folk art is not, at our instigation, "consum'd by that which it was nourish'd by."

With these general assumptions, I approach our meeting today hoping that we can take a step forward together. We are not likely to resolve the many questions that confront us. But our conversations can help all of us to deepen our perspectives, and if we are wise we shall continue the conversations beyond these walls. Our sense of urgency, our sense that much is at stake, must not make us impatient; rather, we must school ourselves to listen and share, to contribute and reflect, for the sake of the art we espouse.



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The American Folklife Center is pleased to announce the availability of *Traditional Crafts and Craftsmanship in America: A Selected Bibliography* by Susan Sink. The indexed, 84-page publication is reprinted with additions from *Traditional Craftsmanship in America: A Diagnostic Report*, published by the National Council for the Traditional Arts. The bibliography, produced in cooperation with the National Council for the Traditional Arts, is available free of charge from the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

Folk Art Meeting : Calm and Placid on the Surface

"Context" may have been the most often-used word during the two-day "Washington Meeting on Folk Art" held at the Library of Congress on December 5 and 6, 1983. An ongoing theme of the meeting was that to appreciate fully the artistic and cultural significance of an object, one must consider the circumstances under which it was made—when, where, by whom, and for what purpose.

The consideration of context is equally valuable for understanding an event such as a meeting on folk art. The Washington meeting came six years after another meeting on folk art held at the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum in November 1977. At that conference art historians, folklorists, collectors, and anthropologists voiced disparate, often contentious opinions in an atmosphere that became "electrically charged." "Participants readily took sides and clustered with their ideological peers, almost as if at a political rally," says Scott T. Swank in his introduction to *Perspectives on American Folk Art*, which grew out of the Winterthur meeting.

From its inception the "Washington Meeting on Folk Art," heir to Winterthur's theme, participants, and potential for rancor, was structured by the Museum of American Folk Art in New York City and the Library's American Folklife Center as a forum for conciliation. For months prior to the meeting Center staff coordinator Peter T. Bartis and others had been making every effort to anticipate the needs and calm the anxieties of everyone involved, panelists and audience alike, to insure that everything would go smoothly. The enthusiastic, nationwide response to the meeting—approximately 400 people from all parts of the country in attendance—demonstrated that it was indeed time for such a conference.

Monday's opening remarks, reiterated as the meeting progressed, invoked an image of the proceedings as a polite exchange of ideas. "I am con-



Raye Virginia Allen (L), Alan Jabbour, and Robert Bishop (R).

fident we will achieve a dialogue between friends," said Center Board member Raye Virginia Allen in her invocation. Folklife Center director Alan Jabbour further defined the nature of the proceedings envisioned by the meeting's hosts: "Our conversations can help all of us to deepen our perspective, and if we are wise we shall continue the conversations beyond these walls. Our sense of urgency, our sense that much is at stake, must not make us impatient; rather, we must school ourselves to listen and share, to contribute and reflect, for the sake of the art we espouse."

From there the meeting proceeded with nearly perfect civility to consider questions of definition, the history of folk art collecting, the nature of creativity in relationship to folk artists, the beneficial and destructive features

of the marketplace, and so forth. The fear of verbal fireworks generated a cautious atmosphere. Panel presentations and comments from the audience seemed muffled. Direct interchanges concerning specific points or issues were largely avoided, with non sequiturs and statements disguised as questions predominating. The cumulative effect of these features was summed up by Dean Failey of Christie's International Ltd. during the final panel discussion. He said the conference reminded him of the George Booth cartoon in the November 28, 1983 issue of *The New Yorker*. A typical Booth drawing shows an array of scrawny cats busily making themselves at home. Through the open door is a slightly wild looking fellow sitting in his bathtub declaiming, "Like a duck. Calm and placid on the surface, but



The Southwest Curtain of the Library's Jefferson building, the meeting location on the second day.

paddling like hell. That's me!"

But what of the paddling feet? There was indeed opposition, differences of opinion, and controversy below the veneer of politeness assumed by the conference participants. Take for example the matter of definition. In his paper "Properly Speaking": The Need for Plain Talk About Folk Art," folklorist John Vlach argued the urgency of clarifying terms and concepts—for more precise application of terminology in the field.

Folk art for public consumption is generally folk art by fiat—declared to be so, it is so. Thinking and reasoning are suspended, so that items as distinctly different as quilts from Alabama, cast iron stove panels from Philadelphia, sam-

plers from young ladies' seminaries from Massachusetts, furniture made by Shakers in New York, yard art made by a hermit from Iowa are all called the same thing and consequently are considered to be generally equivalent to one another. The anything-goes, free-for-all approach that engenders this kind of lumping cannot be allowed to persist.

His view was directly opposed by collector Herbert W. Hemphill, Jr., co-author of *Twentieth-Century American Folk Art and Artists*, who wants to get on with the activities at hand: "It seems a waste of time to backtrack into semantics while the art can disappear, undocumented and unappreciated."

The beneficent role of the collector

was alternately asserted and disputed. Louis C. Jones, Director Emeritus of the New York State Historical Association, recounted the history of the collection and exhibition of folk art by such luminaries as Holger Cahill, Edith Halpert, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Electra Havemeyer Webb. The current appreciation of American folk art, said Jones, can be traced largely to the pioneering work of those early collectors, enlightened dealers, and the museums with which they worked. Eugene Metcalf from Miami University took issue with that. He argued that the early collectors distorted the public's view of folk art by applying the aesthetic criteria derived from high art to its collection and appreciation.

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NEW JERSEY
PINELANDS

TRENTON

PHILADELPHIA

FORKED RIVER

BARNEGAT BAY

MULLICA RIVER

ATLANTIC CITY

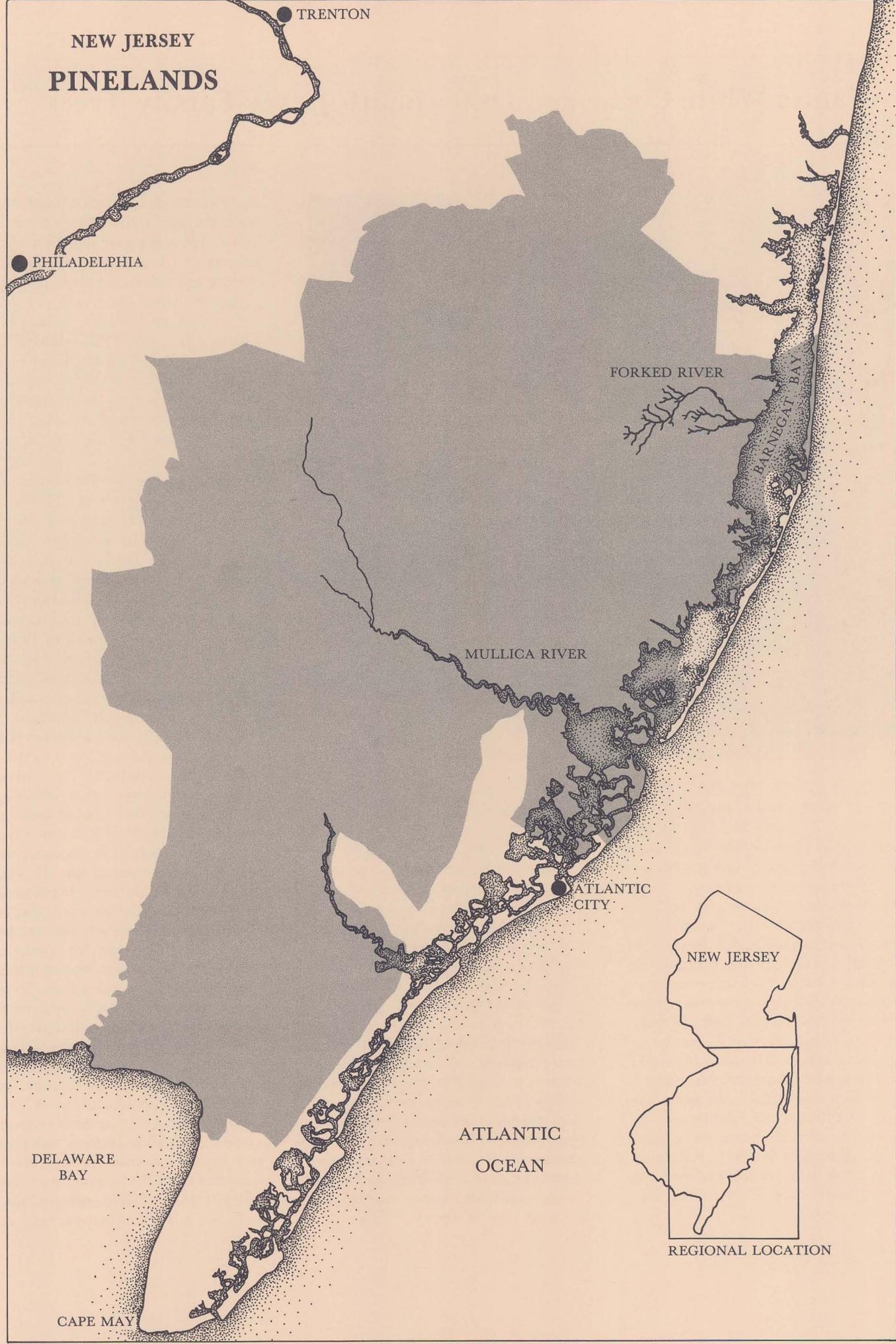
NEW JERSEY

DELAWARE BAY

ATLANTIC OCEAN

REGIONAL LOCATION

CAPE MAY



Atlantic White Cedar and Other South Jersey Family Trees



George Brewer and Leroy Creamer felling a tree in Great Cedar Swamp near Dennisville, N.J. (Photo by Joseph Czarnecki)

Not far from where the Forked River empties into Barnegat Bay, in the town that is named for the river, Clifford Frazee lives, with his wife Lucille. Almost fifty years ago their house was a garage for the Forked River Bottling Works, operated then by Cliff's uncle. They have two sons and two daughters, all grown up and living in South Jersey. Clifford Frazee, Jr. lives next door to them, in the yellow clapboard house where Cliff was born sixty-three years ago. Just to the east of them is the house that Cliff's father built, in which Cliff was reared.

In the 1920s Barnegat Bay teemed with oysters. Cliff and his father harvested them, like other baymen, tonging and dredging for them from Jersey garveys. That industry sub-

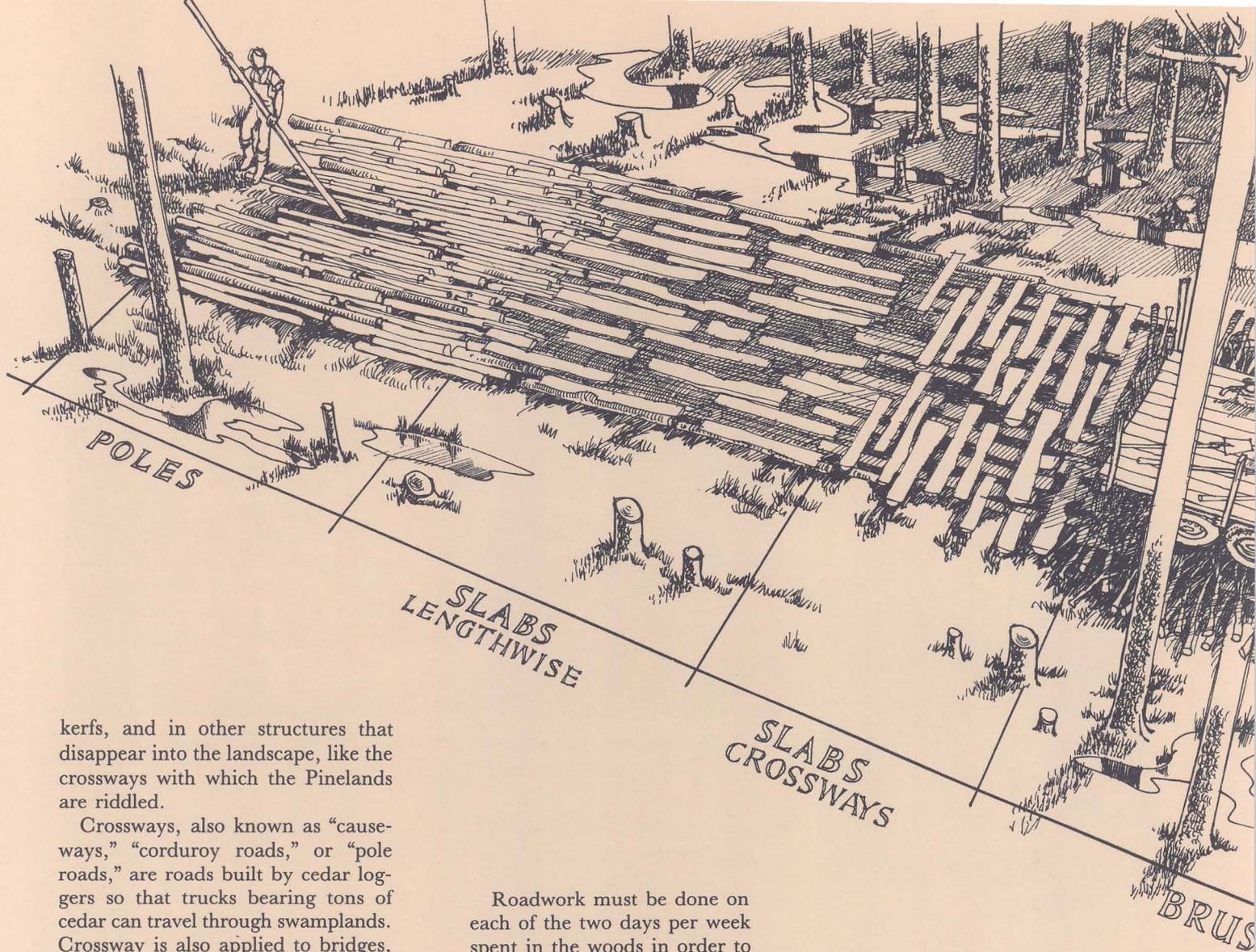
sided in the 1930s, with the advent of the oyster drill. Some say the construction of the Manasquan Canal also increased the salinity of the bay beyond the tolerance of oysters.

Harvesting oysters was not the only way to make a living, however. For years, Cliff worked for six or eight weeks each fall, picking cranberries for the Penn Producing Company. Their bogs are located at the head of the Oswego River, on the other side of the ridge where the Forked River begins to flow. In the colder months he cut pulpwood, and in the warmer months he worked the bay for clams. He also trapped on the meadows—salt marshes east of the Forked River that are now laid out in tract housing. He trapped for muskrat, mink, and

raccoon, and skinned them after nailing their tails to the steps behind the house. He was seven years old when he started to trap, and as he grew older the nail holes ascended the steps. They are still there. (Interview by Mal O'Connor and Elaine Thatcher, October 21, 1983. PFP83-RMO009)

In the 1950s Cliff began to make most of his living at the other end of the Forked River, in the swamplands upstream, harvesting Atlantic white cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*). His son Steve now operates the sawmill near Double Trouble that Cliff purchased more than thirty years ago. Their partnership, with each other and with the land and its resources, typifies the sort of independent, family enterprise that fieldworkers encountered throughout the Pinelands National Reserve during the initial phase of the Pinelands Folklife Project in the fall of 1983.

Cliff's logging operation is located about four miles west of town, as the crow flies, in densely packed stands of cedar along the North Branch of the Forked River. His grandmother used to walk along the ridge that stretches from the town into the pine woods near his logging operation, where her father and brother tended charcoal pits, converting the pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*) that grows in the uplands into charcoal for industrial use. It was a scary walk for her then, because she occasionally saw a bear; but she had to carry food to the men who watched the smoldering wood for weeks on end. Cliff, who brings his own lunch, has to drive about eight miles to get to the sixty-acre stand he is currently harvesting. The place is designated as North Branch on the Brookville quadrangle map of the United States Geological Survey. Though it might not appear so to the casual visitor, even one armed with a quadrangle map, the place is steeped in history. For Cliff, that history is evident everywhere—in barely discernible remains of charcoal pits, some of which contain "butts" indented with hundred-year-old axe



Drawing by Jan Adkins.

kerfs, and in other structures that disappear into the landscape, like the crossways with which the Pinelands are riddled.

Crossways, also known as “causeways,” “corduroy roads,” or “pole roads,” are roads built by cedar loggers so that trucks bearing tons of cedar can travel through swamplands. Crossway is also applied to bridges, many of which were built in connection with woodland industries. Most of them are not named on maps, though woodsmen know their names and whereabouts intimately. Frankie’s Crossway, which is the oldest one Cliff knows of, was built around the turn of the 18th century, about the time when nature reporter Peter Kalm predicted the imminent extinction of the Atlantic white cedar. Clifford recently constructed a causeway capable of supporting fifty tons out of creosoted lumber. He named it Collins Crossway, because, as he explained, “Collins was a predominant name around here for woodspeople.” (Interview, Mary Hufford, September 23, 1983. PFP83-RMH011)

The construction of a corduroy road is a painstaking and time consuming process, which Cliff approaches with a certain spirit of craftsmanship, as fieldworker Mal O’Connor observed:

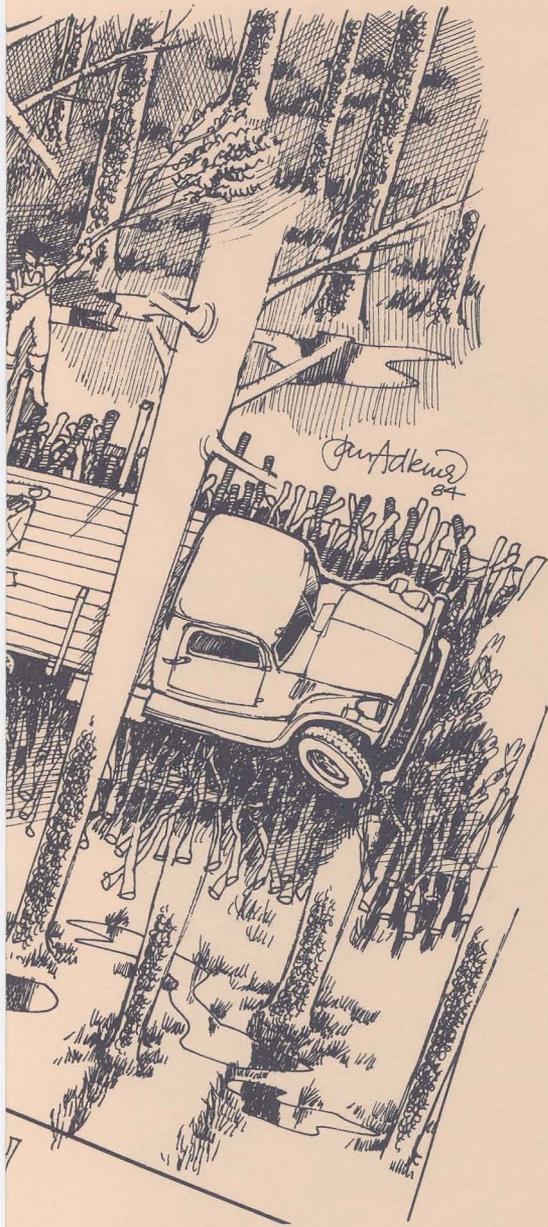
Roadwork must be done on each of the two days per week spent in the woods in order to get the truck back to where the logs are, and to take advantage of the low water table during dry season. First, Steve carved out the road by marking the borders with his chain saw. Then Cliff and Steve leveled the roadbed, removing all stumps within the borders by running the chainsaw, first, horizontally along the desired level (the bottom of the stumps), and then slicing pieces perpendicular to the initial cut. Roots are then discarded and the moss and dirt is forced into the mushy, level floor that remains. The thinnest cedar logs (less than four inches at the butt), together with maple and gum logs (swamp hardwoods, called “junk trees” by Cliff) are positioned longitudinally along the road. The thinnest logs are placed in the middle, flanked by

thicker logs where the wheels of the truck will need the most support.

Although I did not see it today, the next step on the road is to bring a load of slabs from the mill on the next trip to the woods and place them in between the logs to level that section of the road. Following this, more slabs are placed perpendicular to the first layer. Finally, limbs that had been trimmed from cedar trees are placed on the top. Two sets of limbs meet in the center, mirroring each other, crotch ends out, brush ends in. Again, everything is used. (Fieldnotes, Mal O’Connor, October 14, 1983. PFP83-FMO1014)

Atlantic White Cedar

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Clifford Frazee standing on the first layer of a corduroy road on the North Branch of the Forked River. (Photo by Joseph Czarnecki)

Not only is everything used, but used to its maximum advantage. Cliff pointed out that by placing slash or brush on the road to improve its passability, he also improves the growing conditions for the miniscule saplings struggling to come up underneath it. Brush is useful as cover to protect the seedlings from browsing deer, but ultimately it must come off the seedlings and onto the road. The road itself becomes a strategy for managing cedar.

The old timers did it that way. We put the brush on the crossway, and that holds the slabs in position. We leave the slabs right there and the cedar won't reseed in the road, and the trees'll grow up on both sides and meet at the top. I can show you a couple of places

where it was cut off like that a hundred years ago. It's rotted out, but the trees don't grow up in it. The advantage [of the crossway] is that it gives a tree five extra feet for growth. You should thin out cedar, but if you thin it too much the wind'll blow it over. We fall 'em all toward the crossway, and most of 'em fall right on it. You have to notch 'em just right to have 'em fall. (Interview, Mary Hufford, September 23, 1983. PFP83-RMH012)

Atlantic white cedar, one of the most valuable timbers on the east coast, takes about a hundred years to mature. It could grow faster if it weren't so crowded. One hastens the harvest at the expense of the product, however. Cedars, which compete with one another for sunlight, also support each other against windthrow. "Clear" cedar, cedar that is free of knots, is the product of many years of crowding. The crowding subdues and eliminates many of the branches beneath the canopy towering sixty feet overhead.

Given the years that it takes cedar

to mature, experiments with cedar, and the evaluation of those experiments, are spread out over several generations. George Brewer, who cuts cedar in the Great Cedar Swamp near Woodbine, told fieldworker Jens Lund of his father's experiments with thinning out cedar. He tried to eliminate the weaker, "bean-pole" sized cedar from a stand of sixty-year-old trees. A great snowstorm blew the standing trees to the ground. Eventually they stood back up, producing what is known among sawyers as "boxy" or "kinked" wood—compressed wood where growth occurred in the crease of a leaning tree. (Interview, Jens Lund, October 15, 1983. PFP83-RJL007)

Brewer speculates that fire is an important agent in regenerating cedar. One that occurred almost a century ago in the area known as Burnt Causeway has given him some of the best cedar he has ever harvested. Fire can eliminate the competition between cedar trees and junk wood, but it cannot be so hot that it burns the turf where the seeds are buried, and the

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Jersey Cedar

Continued from previous page



Charles DeStefano of Pleasantville, N.J. loads clams with a shinnecock rake into his Jersey garvey. (Photo by Joseph Czarnecki)

turf, for its part, must be wet enough to inhibit fire at ground level. (PFP83-RJL008)

For Cliff the critical agent in the regeneration of cedar is water. He compares cedar, with its acute sensitivity to environmental changes, to oysters. Everything has to be just right or the swamp will come back in junk wood. The idea is to maintain the optimal supply of pure water in the swamp, but the perfect balance between wet and dry is difficult to achieve—cedar that grows in too much water is too hard to use. The old timers called such wood “brazil,” and,

as Cliff said, “You could get killed trying to saw it.”

In Cliff’s backyard there is a long, arching cedar log, painted pale green. He placed it there years ago for his kids to play on. That tree grew along the edge of a stream, and each year it would fall into the stream and continue growing. “It grows like a rainbow,” Cliff explained. “It’s quite rare.”

Some of the most beautiful aspects of woodwork have to do with the same crowding that makes this valuable timber so costly and difficult to harvest. In Warren Grove, Jack Cervetto, who continues to log cedar

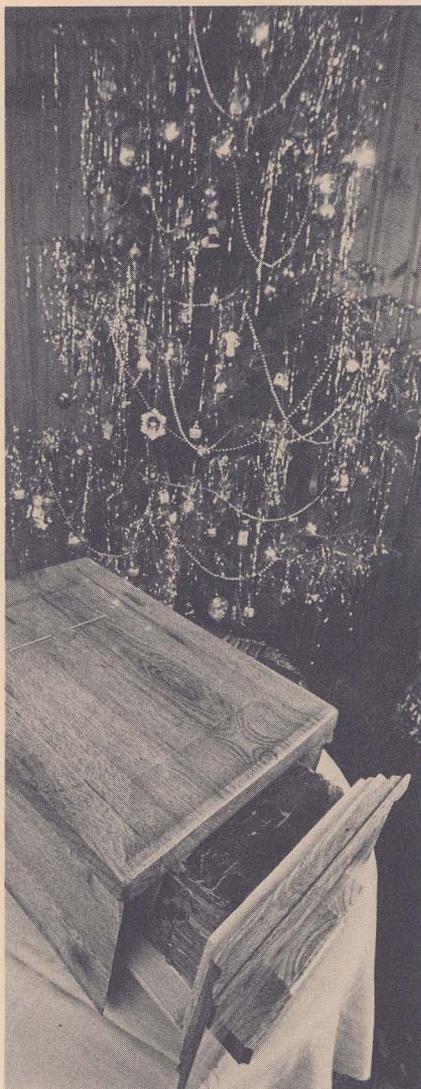
in his seventies, spoke to John Sinton of cedar music: “You’re standing there in the cedar bottom, there’s a light breeze blowin’, you got these trees rubbin’ against one another. They make all kinds of music. You think it’s an instrument there. Boy what a sensation that is. . . . (John Sinton and Jonathon Berger, *Water, Earth and Fire*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming.)

Salt intrusion is bad for living cedar. George Brewer notes the presence of salt-loving cattails near a swamp with some concern, since cedars, like oysters, won’t tolerate increased salin-

ity in the water. By way of contrast, milled cedar is superior to any other wood in salt water. More than a century ago that intrepid adventurer Nathaniel Bishop observed:

No wood used in boat-building can compare with the white cedar in resisting the changes from a wet to a dry state, and vice versa. . . . The wood is both white and brown, soft, fine-grained, and very light and durable. . . . The tree grows tall

A white cedar Christmas tree in the Frazee home. The box in the foreground, also of white cedar, encases the century-old family Bible. (Photo by Dennis McDonald)



and straight. The lower part of the trunk with the diverging roots furnish knee timbers and carlines for the sneak-box. (*Four Months in a Sneak-Box*. Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1879, pp. 9-10.)

Cedar remains, in fact, the favorite material of traditional boatbuilders along Delaware and Barnegat bays. Boatbuilders depend on the wood for its resilience and its capacity to bend, among other traits. One of the Frazee's regular customers is Joe Reid, who, in his seventies, is regarded as a master boatbuilder along Barnegat Bay. His specialty is the Jersey garvey, a square-bowed work boat made of Atlantic white cedar which is used as a floating platform by clambers. It's the kind of boat Cliff and his father used to build for their own use when working the bay. Joe Reid, who worked the bay with his father, now builds and repairs boats in his workshop behind his house in Waretown, assisted by his son James. Like the management of cedar in swamps, the transformation of cedar into salt water vessels is underwritten by generations of trial and error combined with critical observation, much of which occurs in the context of the family enterprise.

"It's a beautiful wood, cedar," said Joe Reid to fieldworker Tom Carroll, "The best wood that grows, for boats." Reid has experimented with various species of wood, and spoke of the merits and shortcomings of each. Oak is too heavy, and is prone to rot. White oak can be used for sprung timbers in a round-bottomed boat, such as a sneakbox. For cut timbers, Douglas fir is best, because it holds a nail better than cedar. Pine soaks up a lot of water and would weigh twice as much as a cedar boat.

Some of the old boats were built out of pine around here, and when you'd pull them up on the bank, their seams would open up three-eighths of an inch—the wood would shrink, then the seams would go back together again when put in the water. But sometimes they'd even get gravel in them, and you couldn't get it to go tight again.

Spruce? They use that for boats farther north, but it doesn't hold up well in warm water, and won't hold a nail the way cedar does. Southern cedar makes big boards and is tough, but is no good on the bottom of a boat because it is so short-grained that it breaks off. Jersey cedar is the best wood for Jersey waters.

Our cedar has a long grain, and you can steam it. Every night we'd steam a board up in the bow, clamp it, and leave it overnight, next morning it'd be shaped. If we did that with southern cedar, next day it'd be broke right in two. We didn't know that until we started using it.

Fiberglass? It doesn't handle itself in water the way that cedar does. Cedar takes in just the right amount of water. For the first few weeks it tends to sit right on top of the water. Then it settles down and handles really well. "You can't beat cedar for a boat," said Joe, "White cedar's the nicest wood to work with, for boatwork or anything like that. . . . In most places they use pine and spruce, or some other wood. But here, we think we have to have cedar here for a boat." (Interview, Tom Carroll, November 16, 1983. PFP83-ATC001)

In and of itself, cedar is durable. Boats built of cedar are made to last. Those who preserve cedar have found that it reciprocates, providing them with closets and chests that preserve clothing and family memorabilia. "All our closets are made of cedar," says Lucille Frazee, "and I've never had a problem with moths." After thirty years a sweetly pungent smell issues from the wood, freshened now and then when Lucille rubs the wood with sandpaper. At the turning point of each year there is a cedar Christmas tree in the Frazee living room. The Frazees keep their family Bible, which is more than a century old, in a cedar box with one Bible-sized drawer. Cedar, with its resistance to moths and mildew, is a fitting substance for sheltering the history of a family whose minds and memories guard so much of what's known about Jersey cedar.

—Mary Hufford

In Memoriam



Christine Cartwright. (Photo by Elaine Thatcher)

On the night of November 7-8, 1983 Christine Cartwright, a full-time fieldworker on the Folklife Center's Pinelands Folklife Project, was struck by a car and killed while walking from the project headquarters to the fieldworkers' apartments. Christine, who had completed her Ph.D. in folklore only a month earlier at Memorial University of Newfoundland, was working in both the core woods area of the Pinelands and some of the rapidly developing suburban fringes. She was particularly interested in studying the traditional technologies related to cranberry and blueberry agriculture, and gathering local plants, along with investigating local religious groups, women's clubs, and recreational activities.

Among the Pinelands residents with whom Christine spoke extensively

during her work on the project was Elizabeth Carpenter who works for the New Jersey State Department of Agriculture at the Blueberry/Cranberry Research Center in Washington township. Mrs. Carpenter composed and read the following tribute at the memorial service held at the Landmark Baptist Church in Brown Mills, N.J. on November 13.

I suspect many of you have seen the Pine Barrens gentian. It's a flower supported by a slender stalk and its bud unfurls to reveal an exquisite electric blue blossom. It thrives in distressed areas and often mystifies me with its ability to flourish along railroad tracks and by busy roadways. Nature shares this subtle beauty with us each fall and photographers come from miles around to capture it on film.

Christine Cartwright came to us this fall and in many ways I think this ethereal flower symbolizes her. She was a slim girl with a professionalism and ability beyond her years. Like the flower, she was able to thrive in an often harsh world and she brought grace and warmth to those who knew her. The people of the Pines that met with her, and I was fortunate enough to be one of them, sensed she was special and often seized the opportunity to share their insights with her.

I've heard it said that a person's eyes are the windows to his or her soul. If this is so, then I believe Christine's soul is beautiful. Her eyes almost seemed to drink up the agriculturally related experiences I shared with her and they reflected, when appropriate, compassion, concern, or joy that let me know she understood. Agriculture's experience became hers and she cared as the farmer does. Her sensitive questioning, gentle guidance, and researcher's precision led me and several area farmers to create an accurate reflection of our Pinelands' experience for the Pinelands folklife study.

It didn't take long to develop a rapport with the knowledgeable young woman. She inspired my trust as few others have and I was not alone in wanting to open my heart and home to her. Her gentle manner won not only my respect and cooperation, but that of several discerning farmers. In my earthly opinion, she was taken from us far too soon. There were still so many joys to share and so much work to do.

'Good-by' is cold and formal. It's not for Christine. After all, we still have her meticulous fieldnotes, dozens of photographs, and hundreds of feet of tape that, in part, record her soft, well-modulated voice and perhaps her bell-like laughter. I'd like to say, "Until we meet again, Christine."

FOLK ART MEETING

Continued from page 5



The meeting's concluding panel: Henry Glassie (L), Michael Durham, Dean Failey, and Robert Bishop (R).

Folklorist Suzi Jones from the Alaska state arts council discussed the negative effects that collecting can have on traditional communities. In "Collectors of Art, Inhibitors of Belief" she noted that when outsiders reduce Native American ritual objects to the status of valuable art, the resulting market pressures can be highly disruptive to traditional cultures. Rosemary Joyce, drawing on her experience with Ohio folk artists, voiced her concern that the craft market is accelerating the normal, wholesome evolution of traditional styles to an alarming degree. "What we have is change run amuck," she said. Other speakers disagreed.

Participants also disagreed about whether the term "folk art" actually masks an economic or social judgment. The question of whether "bad art" deserves consideration as well, or indeed exactly what constitutes bad art, was not resolved. The challenging suggestion that the manager of a shipyard welding crew could be considered a folk artist was not taken up, though it seemed potentially quite

controversial.

After two days of meetings during which there was an opposite view expressed about many of the points made, and no apparent consensus was reached, *Americana* editor Michael Durham summed up what many conference participants may have felt. He said he had come to the meeting hoping that the experts would tell him what to think, but had concluded, "When it comes to folk art, I guess I'm really going to have to learn to think for myself."

The Washington meeting did lead to increased dialogue between the factions represented, the purpose for which it was intended. During the meeting's concluding session of commentary and discussion Alan Jabbour remarked that the meeting had been an opportunity to assess where we have been and where we are going. Folklorist Henry Glassie from the University of Pennsylvania said that he felt hopeful about the fact that there no longer appeared to be a stereotypic division of opinion between the social

scientists and collectors participating in the meeting. If there was a new line of division, he suggested, it might be between those seeking to reduce the content of what is studied and those who do not seek to reduce it. Dean Failey added that with each meeting on the topic of folk art he senses that people are taking small steps closer together. All of which was summarized in the final assessment offered by Robert Bishop, Director of the Museum of American Folk Art. "Since the Winterthur conference in 1977 there really have been some major realignments on what appear to be the two sides of the trenches. Certainly the people involved with the folklore world have in some ways softened their positions; and the people on the other side—the folk art collectors, the folk art historians—have come to see that some of the ideas presented at that conference by the folklorists did indeed have a great merit and great value, and they have incorporated those particular ideas into their own thinking about this field."

Automation and the American Folklife Center

The first of two articles on the subject of automation

Over the last two years the American Folklife Center, the Archive of Folk Culture, and the Federal Cylinder Project have been using computers and word processors to tackle a variety of tasks involving the storage, retrieval, and dispersal of information. Large institutions like the Library of Congress have had "mainframe" computers for years; only recently have microcomputers (often called personal or business computers) emerged as tools suited to confronting and solving certain small-scale problems of data control often encountered in the archive and in the field. Where computer muscle was once considered appropriate and affordable only for shouldering the heftiest of processing burdens, microcomputers can now ease the weight of smaller tasks, such as writing fieldnotes, captioning slides, or cataloging grant files. Microcomputers have become almost as common an office tool as the typewriter, though far more useful, since they give us the ability to edit and manipulate text easily. They also allow us to create "data bases" which combine many different items into a large body of information which can be searched quickly.

In the past year the Folklife Center, with invaluable assistance from the Library's Automated Systems Office (ASO), has used computers for two purposes. While producing the Center's videodisk *The Ninety-Six: A Cattle Ranch in Northern Nevada* we used a computer to caption and index a large group of color slides. Pinelands Folklife Project fieldworkers and staff have used computers in the field to produce documentation (tape and photo logs, fieldnotes, and so on) in machine-readable form. Although computers were used in both instances, each project had unique characteristics requiring different strategies.

In this issue I will discuss the use of computers in the Center's Pinelands Folklife Project, initiated in the fall of 1983. The Center's laser videodisk will be treated in the next newsletter issue.

In planning the Center's project in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey, project director Mary Hufford and Carl Fleischhauer thought that we might anticipate and alleviate problems of classification, arrangement, and retrieval of data by creating documentation in machine-readable form from the start. Toward that end we considered two options.

The first involved ongoing classification to be carried out by the fieldworkers as they compiled their documentation. Just as a librarian cataloging a book summarizes it in a few words and phrases, our fieldworkers would analyze a log or fieldnotes and distill terms, including generic categories and proper nouns, that might help the future user search the data base. The fieldworker, or some other person, designated as the "data enterer" would then create the equivalent of a cover or summary sheet listing relevant terms in machine-readable form. In essence, these terms would be "keywords."

This option offered certain advantages. For one, it seemed that we could enter data in a minimum amount of time. In addition, the data base would have some ongoing intellectual organization provided by the fieldworkers as they analyzed their documents, and the keywords would serve as ready-made points of access for future users.

The disadvantages included the fact that each fieldworker would have to spend valuable time analyzing the data—in essence, doing cataloging work in the field. Terminology also was a problem: since we could not determine relevant subject categories in advance, we could not offer a thesaurus or authority file as a guide to data entry.

The second option, which we eventually adopted, involved using portable computers as word processors in the field for writing all fieldnotes, tape logs, photo logs, interview forms, and place-name forms. The method makes it possible to combine all of these machine-readable documents later into a larger data base, which we can then search for any word, set of words, or string of characters imaginable. From this data base we can also generate various "reports," such as informant lists or inventories, which will be useful to us in our work. In addition, capturing data in machine-readable form has data entry and editing advantages, and we expected it to make the process of creating all the fieldwork documentation more efficient.

The disadvantages of our second option were that it required more available machines to handle the larger volume of data to be entered. It meant that each fieldworker had to learn to use a word processor, and the data base, created by twelve people working fairly independently, will have to be edited later for consistency.

Hardware and Software

The Automated Systems Office—particularly Assistant Director William Nugent, James Godwin, and Lela Beth Criswell—has given us valuable design assistance in the endeavor. They helped us select a powerful search and retrieval software package called "BRS Search" for our final data base. It runs on a microcomputer using the Unix operating system.

Next we pondered which machine to use in the field, and how many we would need. The Kaypro II was recommended as a sturdy, relatively portable microcomputer with a larger display screen than most other portables, a significant advantage since fieldworkers would spend many hours looking at the text displayed there. The Kaypro also offered WordStar, a popular word-processing program, and there were a number of lessors in the area with available machines.

Kaypros run on a CP/M operating system. Transferring files from the CP/M to the Unix operating system may cause complications. We have not confronted this problem yet, but various friends consulted have offered solutions, and our allies at ASO are optimistic about the transfer.

Once we unite the files into a single data base on the Unix-based microcomputer, we will be able to conduct searches for words, combinations of words, and strings of words or characters. It will be possible, for example, to call up all instances in which turtle soup and Waretown occur in the same paragraph or sentence.

Forms and Word Processing

Using the WordStar word processing program and imitating forms used in previous Folklife Center field projects, we developed appropriate formats. We knew enough about the requirements of BRS to incorporate certain design characteristics to facilitate the final transfer of files to the larger data base. We placed only one kind of document on each diskette. We also formatted diskettes specifically for black-and-white photo logs, color photo logs, open-reel tape logs, audiocassette logs, fieldnotes, interview forms (biographical data sheets), and place-name forms (data on place names not found in the United States Geological Survey's gazetteer for New Jersey).

When fieldworkers gathered in Washington in early September for their pre-fieldwork orientation, we passed out "hard-copy" examples of logs produced on the computer. Fieldworkers then plunged into an interactive training program on WordStar. Fieldwork began a few days later, and every member of the field team had to use the system we had devised.

Data Entry

As we expected, data entry brought miscues, false starts, and occasional mutterings from fieldworkers struggling to adjust to the demands of "high-tech" fieldwork. We prepared several handouts with detailed instructions and explanations of every characteristic and requirement of our system. These carefully worded guidelines were mostly ignored. Folklorists will be gratified to know that oral transmission proved the most common and effective method for sharing information and learning new skills. Indeed, we found it frustrating at times to discover as we observed our charges that some strange custom had become current as a result of fieldworker A's well-intentioned attempt to communicate to fieldworker B instructions that we had imparted orally for accomplishing such arcane tasks as "pipping" a file, or reformatting a document, or printing out hard copy.

Once the adjustment pains ended the team came to regard the word processors as a blessing, since they made it easier to edit text and increased productivity. Indeed, they increased productivity so much that it appears the Pinelands project may be word heavy regarding the proportion of text

to other forms of documentation. ASO leased six microcomputers and two "dot-matrix" printers for the field team's use, so that machines were always available when needed. Generally speaking, the daily routine found fieldworkers heading out in the morning to meet appointments and explore their communities and returning in the evening to the waiting computers. The combined activity of several fieldworkers in the "computer room" generated a cacophony of clicks and blips, set off against the printers' high-pitched whines.

Follow-up

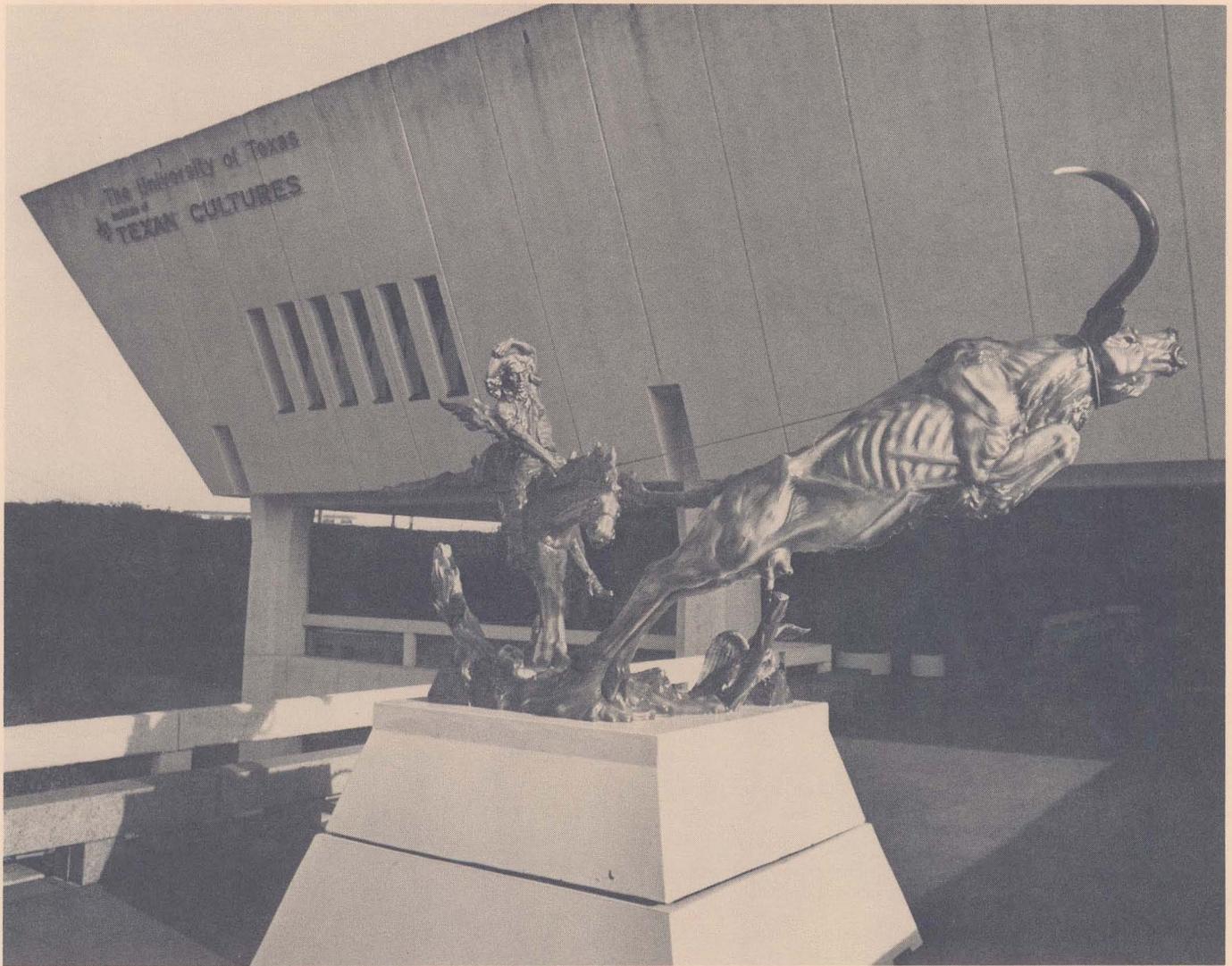
With the first phase of fieldwork completed, the team has amassed an impressive quantity of data to be transferred to the BRS/Unix microcomputer system. First, however, we will edit the data to assure standardization. We must bring all accumulated data into conformity with BRS Search requirements and add broad, organizing terms, or keywords. We also hope to generate a cross-referenced index.

Many questions remain. Although we have read about the capabilities of the BRS search and retrieval program, we will know its full capabilities only after we have edited our data base, loaded the files into the larger microcomputer, and begun to conduct searches. Will searching data created by individuals trained in different academic disciplines yield meaningfully comparable results? Will our efforts to establish intellectual control over the body of data by editing it and adding terms to aid searching increase the accessibility of the material? Can we conduct searches that will link cultural phenomena with place so as to reveal previously undetected patterns of distribution? Will we be able to share the information gathered in New Jersey more efficiently, with both Library patrons and colleagues in other locations, by having captured it initially in machine-readable form? Can our experiment help others confronting similar problems of remote data entry in the field of folklore and in other disciplines? Can our colleagues adapt other smaller and more generally available data-base management systems for future projects? Has using computers affected the character of the documentation produced in the field? Do fieldworkers write more when challenged by such a system? Better? Can we improve on our technique? Is it worth the expense?

"The Washington Conference on Folklife and Automated Archives: Interdisciplinary Approaches," to be held at the Library of Congress April 26 through 28, 1984, will offer the opportunity to discuss these questions with colleagues and to raise many other related issues. Continuing dialogue will serve us well as we seek to harness the potential offered by the computer for information management in the archive and in the field.

—Jay Orr

Jay Orr, who has been a consultant to the Folklife Center on archiving and automation, is now on the staff of the Country Music Foundation.



Luis Jimenez's fiberglass sculpture "Progress II" in front of the University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio, where The American Cowboy was displayed from December 1, 1983 through February 5, 1984. (Photo by Robert Welch, Institute of Texan Cultures)

Front Cover: *Garvey builder Joe Reid of Waretown, N.J. Story begins on page 6. (Photo by Joseph Czarnecki)*

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