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Boys playing marbles at the Farm Security Administration farm workers' mobile unit, Friendly Corners, Arizona, March 1942. *Farm Security Administration Collection (LCUSF-34-72125-D) Photo by Russell Lee.* An ancient game originally played by adults, marbles is an example of the competitive activity usually favored by boys, according to British folklorist Iona Opie, who was honored this year by the American Folklore Society. Story on page 12.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Yellow Ribbons

For the past ten years, the American Folklife Center has been building a collection of materials pertaining to the display of yellow ribbons for absent loved ones. In February, Reference Librarian Gerald Parsons, who has been responding to innumerable calls and letters about the custom, asked Penne Laingen if he might interview her on how it began. In the fall of 1979, Mrs. Laingen had tied a yellow ribbon "round an old oak tree" in her front yard for her husband, Ambassador Bruce Laingen, who was being held hostage in Iran.

Parsons was invited to the Laingens' home on April 15 to look over "memorabilia" they have collected, and Mrs. Laingen offered to donate that original yellow ribbon to the Archive of Folk Culture. In this issue of *Folklife Center News*, Parsons describes the process by which the display of yellow ribbons has become a new American folk custom.

Lifetime Achievement

When questions about the display of yellow ribbons first came to the main switchboard of the Library of Congress, the General Reference Service was hard put to know who on the staff might take them—until the phenomenon was recognized as a folk custom. In directing the questions to the Folklife Center, the Library set in motion a process that has helped to create both a collection of material and a resident expert in the person of Gerry Parsons—who has since ably demonstrated the scholarly virtue of concentrating on a single subject for an extended period of time.

When British folklorist Iona Opie and her husband discovered their shared interest in children's rhymes during a country walk shortly after they were married, they could not have anticipated that they would de-

vote a lifetime to the subject. In the age of sound bites, short attention spans, and instant gratification, it is good to be reminded that the most satisfyingly successful results usually come from long-term commitment. The Life Achievement Award presented to Iona Opie by the American Folklore Society is a symbol of this belief as applied to the study of folklore. Such a complex subject cannot be understood on the run. The best work is bound to be done by those willing and able to look and listen and think and look again, year in and year out.

More on Jimi Hendrix

A comment about Jimi Hendrix's performance style in Joe Wilson's article on the history of guitars inspired several letters. One was published in the winter 1991 issue. Here's a second:

I recently read Joe Wilson's excellent article on guitar history in the spring 1990 issue of *Folklife Center News* [volume XII, number 2, "Instrument of Blind Men and Kings: A Mini-History of the Guitar"]. In order to conclude the matter of the mention of Jimi Hendrix, the facts must be presented in their proper perspective. Misconceptions about Hendrix were as prevalent during his lifetime as they are today. A Memphis newspaper reported on a 1969 concert I attended, stating: "Jimi didn't do what he was supposed to. He didn't even break up his guitar." Out of approximately 560 performances between October 1966 and September 1970, it would be unfair to assume that an artist based much of his act on something he did only a few times. If anyone should be recognized for this act requiring no musical skills, then Pete Townsend of The Who might be appropriate. They actually had a warehouse called "Who, Inc.," where remnants of destroyed equipment were stored and rebuilt.

It should not be ignored that Hendrix introduced a new form of creative showmanship. Examples include playing with his teeth, behind his head and back, hands and elbows over the neck, etc. These were mostly done early in his career simply because he felt like doing them at the time. He was not afraid or ashamed to break any rules or go beyond any boundaries in performing.

It should be cited that Hendrix contributed more to the instrument than many other musicians. The Fender Statocaster guitar was about to be discontinued after twelve years until Hendrix revived its popularity. It is still the most popular guitar in the world. The same holds true for the Marshall amplifier, which he was one of the first to use. By using the guitar's effects and the neglected tremelo bar, he was able to shape new sounds from feedback and turn them into music. In the recording studio he pioneered applications that are used in today's digital effects processors. Of course, his playing technique, ability to improvise extensively, and songwriting, even played acoustically, were probably his greatest achievements.

In conclusion, Hendrix was a giving, spiritual musician who projected various musical styles through his many inspirations. I myself have been fortunate to have been inspired by him through my playing guitar and touring with his friend and bass player Billy Cox. He initiated a new musical language that will influence generations of players and listeners to come.

Gary Serkin
Nashville, Tennessee

Joe Wilson Responds

Okay, so Jimi didn't break up a lot of guitars and I erred in saying he based much of his act on smashing his ax and grinding it into the stage. But Gary, I admire Jimi's music and I liked that part of his act. Moreover, Jimi is not the only artist remembered for something he did only a few times. Van Gogh cut his ear off only once, and only one of Lady Godiva's rides is remembered. It that fair? Of course not, and I propose a compromise. Send me your most beat-up and worthless guitar and next time I'm on

FOLKLINE

For timely information on the field of folklore and folklife, including training and professional opportunities and news items of national interest, a taped announcement is available around the clock, except during the hours of 9 A.M. until noon (eastern time) each Monday, when it is updated. Folkline is a joint project of the American Folklife Center and the American Folklore Society. Dial:

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FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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stage in front of a big audience, I'll stomp it. You'll thereafter be able to say Jimi was a trendsetter even in this aspect of his performance and I'll be

able to shock a lot of concert-goers. No, I will not play it with my teeth before I stomp it. Thank you for your support of the arts. □



In the Folklife Reading Room, Marsha Maguire (left) directs Folklife Center staff in an effort to organize and describe unprocessed collection materials, known as arrearages, part of a Library of Congress-wide project. With Maguire are Jennifer Cutting, Camila Bryce-Laporte, Joseph Hickerson, James Hardin, and Stephanie Hall (60997-27) Photo by Greg Jenkins

ORIGINAL YELLOW RIBBON PRESENTED TO THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Librarian of Congress James Billington receives the “original” yellow ribbon from Penne and Bruce Laingen. (LCUSP6-12962-6) Photo by Reid Baker

“Just as the Stars and Stripes had its Betsy Ross, the yellow ribbon has its Penne Laingen,” said Librarian of Congress James H. Billington in accepting the “original” yellow ribbon for the Library of Congress on July 2. “People know what [the yellow ribbon] has meant to millions . . . and also what it means to those who continue to wait for their loved ones,” said Mrs. Laingen. “We want the hostages in Lebanon to experience the same euphoria on their welcome home that we did.”

The heavy, waterproof bow of vinyl upholstery fabric that weathered more than a year on an oak tree in the Laingens’ yard and started a custom that swept the country was presented to the Librarian by its creator. Inspired by

a song that had been popular six years earlier, Mrs. Laingen made the ribbon soon after November 1979, when her husband and fifty-two other staff at the U.S. embassy in Tehran were taken prisoner by Iranian revolutionaries. Bruce Laingen was acting ambassador at the time.

The song that inspired Penne Laingen was “Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree,” copyrighted by Irwin Levine and L. Russell Brown in 1972. It set to music a folk tale about a prisoner’s homecoming. In 1973 it was a big hit for Tony Orlando and Dawn (see page 9).

On January 27, 1981, Bruce Laingen returned home, took the yellow ribbon from the tree, and packed it away with

other mementos of his long ordeal and jubilant homecoming. In January of this year, Penne Laingen put up a new ribbon—this one for her sons Charles and James, Navy flyers in the Persian Gulf campaign. Shortly after that she was contacted by American Folklife Center reference librarian Gerald Parsons, who has been building a collection of material on the custom of displaying yellow ribbons, and their conversation led to Mrs. Laingen’s offering the original ribbon to the Library.

After the presentation ceremony, the ribbon was put on display in the lobby of the Library’s James Madison Building, near an exhibit on the Persian Gulf. It will eventually become part of a permanent exhibit at the American Folklife Center. □

CENTER LAUNCHES SURVEY OF ACADIAN TRADITIONS IN MAINE

By David A. Taylor

The American Folklife Center has signed a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service to conduct a preliminary survey of Acadian culture in Maine's St. John Valley, located in the state's northernmost county of Aroostock. According to Center director Alan Jabbour, "the survey provides an excellent opportunity to cast the spotlight of national recognition upon a significant but little known cultural group in the United States. Unlike the Acadians of Louisiana, who have received a great deal of attention in recent years, Acadians in Maine are virtually unknown, even within the state of Maine."

The Maine Acadian Culture Pres-

ervation Act (P.L. 101-543), sponsored by Maine senators George J. Mitchell (D) and William S. Cohen (R), requires the secretary of the interior (who administers the National Park Service) to prepare and transmit to Congress a comprehensive study of Acadian culture in Maine. The Park Service has requested the American Folklife Center to assist the agency in the preliminary study.

A central goal of the act is to "recognize an important contribution made to American culture and history by the Acadian immigrants from France who settled in Nova Scotia and, following expulsion by the British in 1755, resettled in various North American colonies, including the territory that eventually became the State

of Maine." Responding to the bill's directive to conduct a comprehensive survey of Acadian culture in Maine, the Center's researchers will present the collected information to the Park Service with recommendations for future research and programs on Acadian culture. The Park Service will present the draft research to the Maine Acadian Culture Preservation Commission, also established by P.L. 101-543. The commission shall advise the secretary of the interior with respect to the selection of sites for interpretation and preservation, and the development of an interpretive program concerning the Acadian culture of the State of Maine.

(Continued on page 8)



At Lavertu Settlement during the Lavertu family reunion on the Fourth of July, a memorial honoring the original family members who settled there. (MAP-DW-B031-27) Photo by David Whitman



ACADIAN PORTRAITS

Above: Twin barn in St. Agatha, Maine, owned by potato grower Danny Labrie. (MAP-HM-B015-19) Photo by Howard Marshall

Right: Rachel Ward making traditional Acadian *ployes*, thin buckwheat pancakes, at the Acadian Festival in Madawaska, Maine. (MAP-DW-B022-33A-34) Photo by David Whitman

Opposite, above left: Merrill Oakes from Connors, New Brunswick, at a family barbecue and music party at the home of his brother, Sam Oakes, in Fort Kent, Maine. Many families were split by the establishment of the international boundary at the St. John River in the 1840s. (MAP-DW-B002-36) Photo by David Whitman

Opposite, above right: Camille Devost in his workshop garage in Lille, Maine, carving an ax handle using a "crooked knife," which he draws toward himself in the carving process. (MAP-DW-B028-10) Photo by David Whitman





Twin barn in Hamlin, Maine. The barn burned in July, after this photograph was taken. (MAP-DW-B009-25) Photo by David Whitman



Folklorists Howard W. "Rusty" Marshall and Ray Brassieur examine furniture at the Fred Albert House, a typical mid-nineteenth century Acadian house moved by the Madawaska Historical Society to St. David Village, Maine. (MAP-DW-B017-17) Photo by David Whitman

The Folklife Center team carried out fieldwork in northern Aroostook County communities during June and July. Fieldwork included interviewing a representative sample of local residents of Acadian descent, talking with community leaders, visiting sites of significance to Acadian history and culture, and documenting cultural events. Research investigated the geographic range of Acadian culture in Maine, explored the ways people identify themselves as Acadians, identified a wide range of ongoing Acadian traditions, and surveyed the organizations, institutions, and individuals engaged in conserving and celebrating Acadian cultural heritage. Because Acadian culture does not stop at the border separating the United

States from Canada, the research also took communities in New Brunswick into account.

The survey was directed by Center folklife specialist David A. Taylor, who is a native of Fairfield, Maine. The coordinator of field research was folklorist C. Ray Brassieur of the Missouri Cultural Heritage Center, a native of Louisiana who is of Acadian descent. Other field researchers included Lisa Ornstein, archivist at the Acadian Archives at the University of Maine at Fort Kent; folklorist Howard W. Marshall, director of the Missouri Cultural Heritage Center, and David A. Whitman, research specialist with the Missouri Cultural Heritage Center.

John L. Martin, Speaker of the

House of the Maine legislature, who is of Acadian descent and a native of the Aroostook County town of Eagle Lake, was a forceful advocate for the passage of the Maine Acadian Culture Preservation Act. "My ancestors continue to be a source of pride to me and thousands of my fellow Maine Acadians," he testified in a congressional hearing. "But, to this day, we are often a misunderstood culture because there has never been any concerted effort to educate the general public about the intricate and unique history of Maine Acadians. We have a story to tell and a rich heritage to preserve and protect for the next generation of Maine and American citizens, not just for those of French descent." □

HOW THE YELLOW RIBBON BECAME A NATIONAL FOLK SYMBOL

By Gerald E. Parsons

During the last decade, no single form of expression documented in the Archive of Folk Culture has stimulated more letters, more phone calls, more in-person inquiries than the yellow ribbon. The questions began in 1981 when the Library of Congress received a blizzard of inquiries, particularly from the news media, about the history of yellow ribbons then being displayed everywhere in America in support of our troops in the Persian Gulf. The basic question that reporters had in mind was how the symbol came into being. Many callers had ideas of their own on the subject; some had interviewed the authors of relevant popular songs; others had spoken to wives of hostages in Iran in 1980–81.

Still others had talked to historians of the Civil War.

Eventually a body of information accumulated, and I wrote an article for *Folklife Center News* entitled “Yellow Ribbons: Ties with Tradition” (volume IV, no. 2, April 1981). The article outlined the symbolic use of the ribbons in story, song, and real life; and the Folklife Center staff made good use of the article this year, ten years after its publication, when a second blizzard of questions came in about the ribbons displayed for soldiers serving in the Persian Gulf.

Is the custom of displaying yellow ribbons for an absent loved-one a genuine American tradition? That question was, and remains, “number one” on the American Folklife Center’s hit pa-

rade of yellow ribbon reference inquiries. Often this same question has been asked in a more focused form: People will say, “Is this a *Civil War* tradition?”—as if an association with that central experience in American history would certify its authenticity.

In the last year or so, we of the reference staff at the Center have become aware of a certain shift: a movement from asking about a Civil War connection to asserting one. Some assertions on this subject have verged on the pugnacious; nearly all have made reference to the song “Round Her Neck She Wore A Yellow Ribbon.” That song was recorded for the Archive of Folk Culture in 1938 by Sidney Robertson Cowell in California, but it is much older. For example, there is a Philadelphia printing



Penne and Bruce Laingen at the old oak tree in their front yard, where Mrs. Laingen tied her yellow ribbon for her husband in 1979, when he was being held hostage in Iran. *Photo May 1991 by Greg Jenkins*

from 1838 that copies still older British versions. Indeed in the last act of *Othello*, Desdemona sings one of the song's lyric ancestors.

One version or another of "Round Her Neck She Wore A Yellow Ribbon" has been popular now for four hundred years; so it would not surprise me to learn that someone sang it sometime during the Civil War. All I can say for sure, however, is that it was sung in a movie that was set in the western United States at a time just after the Civil War—a 1949 release starring John Wayne and Joanne Dru. In fact, *Round Her Neck She Wore A Yellow Ribbon* (the movie) took its title from the song. This film remains the only demonstrable connection between yellow ribbons and the Civil War that has come to my attention.

If the custom of displaying yellow ribbons doesn't trace to the Civil War, where does it come from? It begins, as far as I can tell, not as a custom at all, and not as a song. It begins as a folk tale—a legend, actually. Here it is in the earliest version I've found:

It is the story of two men in a railroad train. One was so reserved that his companion had difficulty in persuading him to talk about himself. He was, he said at length, a convict returning from five years' imprisonment in a distant prison, but his people were too poor to visit him and were too uneducated to be very articulate on paper. Hence he had written to them to make a sign for him when he was released and came home. If they wanted him, they should put a white ribbon in the big apple tree which stood close to the railroad track at the bottom of the garden, and he would get off the train, but if they did not want him, they were to do nothing and he would stay on the train and seek a new life elsewhere. He said that they were nearing his home town and that he couldn't bear to look. His new friend said that he would look and took his place by the window to watch for the apple tree which the other had described to him.

In a minute he put a hand on his companion's arm. "There it is," he cried. "It's all right! The whole tree is white with ribbons."

That passage comes from, of all places, a 1959 book on prison reform. The title is *Star Wormwood*, and it was written by the eminent Pennsylvania

jurist Curtis Bok. Bok says it was told to him by Kenyon J. Scudder, first superintendent of Chino penitentiary. I take this information as evidence that the story was in oral tradition as early as the mid-1950s. I note also the implication of a certain occupational interest in the tale.

During the 1960s, the returning prisoner story appeared in religious publications and circulated in oral tradition among young people active in church groups. In this environment, both the versions that appeared in print and those collected from oral tradition highlighted similarities to the New Testament "Parable of the Prodigal Son."

In October of 1971, Pete Hammill wrote a piece for the *New York Post* called "Going Home." In it, college students on a bus trip to the beaches of Fort Lauderdale make friends with an ex-convict who is watching for a yellow handkerchief on a roadside oak. Hammill claimed to have heard this story in oral tradition.

In June of 1972, nine months later, *The Readers Digest* reprinted "Going Home." Also in June 1972, ABC-TV aired a dramatized version of it in which James Earl Jones played the role of the returning ex-con. One month-and-a-half after that, Irwin Levine and L. Russell Brown registered for copyright a song they called "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree." The authors said they heard the story while serving in the military. Pete Hammill was not convinced and filed suit for infringement.

One factor that may have influenced Hammill's decision to do so was that, in May 1973, "Tie A Yellow Ribbon" sold 3 million records in three weeks. When the dust settled, BMI calculated that radio stations had played it 3 million times—that's seventeen continuous years of airplay. Hammill dropped his suit after folklorists working for Levine and Brown turned up archival versions of the story that had been collected before "Going Home" had been written.

In January 1975, Gail Magruder, wife of Jeb Stuart Magruder of Watergate fame, festooned her front porch with yellow ribbons to welcome her husband home from jail. The event was televised on the evening news (one

of the viewers was Penne Laingen). And thus a modern folk legend concerning a newly released prisoner was transformed into a popular song, and the popular song, in turn, transformed into a ritual enactment. Notice that Jeb Stuart Magruder's return to his home exactly parallels the situation in both the folk narrative and the popular song. The new development, at this point, was that Gail Magruder put the story into action.

The next big step was to make the ribbon into an emblem—not for the return of a forgiven prodigal—but for the return of an imprisoned hero. And that step was Penne Laingen's: On November 4, 1979, Iranian revolutionaries seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and held Ambassador Bruce Laingen and the rest of the embassy staff hostage.

Six weeks later, on December 10, the *Washington Post* printed two short articles by Barbara Parker: "Coping With 'IRage'" and "Penne Laingen's Wait." The first article began "Americans are seething" and went on to quote psychologists concerning the widespread and intense emotional distress caused by the hostage crisis. The article presented a helpful list of things to do to "vent irage": "ring church bells at noontime . . . organize a neighborhood coffee to discuss the crisis and establish one ground rule only: no physical violence . . . play tennis and 'whack the hell' out of the ball . . . offer family prayers or moments of silence . . . turn on car headlights during the day . . . send gifts to the needy 'in the name of the hostages,'" and, of course, the old standby, "conduct candlelight vigils."

Then in the *Post* article came the words "Laingen, who has 'tied a yellow ribbon round the old oak tree' . . . suggests that as something else others might do." The article concluded with Penne Laingen saying, "So I'm standing and waiting and praying . . . and one of these days Bruce is going to untie that yellow ribbon. It's going to be out there until he does." According to my current understanding, this is the first announcement that the yellow ribbon symbol had become a banner through which families could express their determination to be reunited.



Penne Laingen at the Library of Congress on July 2. (LCUSP6-12961-14)
 Photo by Reid Baker

The next major step was to move the ribbon out of the Laingen's front yard and into most of the front yards in the United States. That move came about in a particularly American way. With a wonderful exhibition of the spirit

that Alexis de Tocqueville thought was a cardinal virtue of our society, the hostage families met and formed an association: the Family Liaison Action Group (FLAG). FLAG quickly found allies among existing humanitarian

organizations, most notably an organization called No Greater Love.

The goal of FLAG and its allies was to find a way to bring moral force to bear on behalf of the hostages. They seem to have formed their strategy around Emerson's maxim that "A good symbol is the best argument, and is a missionary to persuade thousands." The symbol they choose for their argument was, of course, the yellow ribbon. Aided by support from four AFL-CIO unions, No Greater Love made and distributed ten thousand "yellow ribbon pins." These went to union members, members of hostage families, college students, and in a stroke of marketing genius, to TV weather forecasters. Meanwhile FLAG sent the pins to Junior Chambers of Commerce, scouting organizations, and governors' wives.

Ultimately, the thing that makes the yellow ribbon a genuinely traditional symbol is neither its age nor its putative association with the American Civil War, but rather its capacity to take on new meanings, to fit new needs and, in a word, to evolve.

And it is evolving still. During the Persian Gulf Crisis, for example, there emerged a new impulse to combine yellow ribbons with hand-painted signs, American flags, conventional Christmas ornaments, seasonal banners, and other such elements to create elaborate, decorative displays—displays that one scholar has termed "folk assemblages."

Because the yellow ribbon is very much a living tradition, there is no way to tell who among us may help to steer its course, or in what direction. Last winter, I was in a distant city and needed to buy a spray of flowers. I found a flower shop and explained to the proprietress that I needed an arrangement that would be appropriate for a cemetery ornament. "And would you like some yellow ribbon to tie around it," she asked matter-of-factly.

Well, it's a long way from a folktale about an ex-convict's homecoming to an incipient funeral custom. I had to stop and think about that for a minute. But never one to thwart the evolution of a custom, I said, "Yes, ma'am. I will take some yellow ribbon. Thank you." □

AMERICAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY HONORS IONA OPIE

On April 19, the Folklife Center hosted a special breakfast program for British folklorist Iona Opie, in honor of her being presented with the first Life Achievement Award from the Children's Folklore Section of the American Folklore Society. A handsome medallion was presented by Priscilla Ord and C. W. Sullivan III, representing the society.

Iona Opie and her late husband, Peter, are known throughout the world for their work as folklorists, collectors, and anthropologists of childhood. Their long careers began soon

after they were married, when they encountered a ladybird on a country walk and instinctively repeated to one another the same childhood verse. Surprised that each had learned it in a different part of the world—she was born in England, he in Egypt—they wondered about its origin. But when they sought to investigate the subject, they found themselves in uncharted territory. Next to nothing was known or recorded about the rhymes of childhood.

For nearly forty years after that, they worked together. They became

insatiable researchers and collectors of all things relating to children: stories, rhymes, songs, books, toys, dolls, and games. They assembled, not only a library at their home in Hampshire, but a museum as well. After her husband's death in 1982, Iona Opie divided the books from the rest of the collection and presented them to the Bodleian Library at Oxford University in England, some twenty thousand children's books. The collection of toys, games, and other trappings of childhood remain in Mrs. Opie's home, Westerfield House, in Hampshire.



Play period at the Alexander community school, Greene County, Georgia, November 1941. *Farm Security Administration Collection (LCUSF-34-46409-D) Photo by Jack Delano*

In an interview a few days after the program, Mrs. Opie talked with the Library's public affairs specialist Helen Dalrymple about her current book, *The People in the Playground*, which is based on fourteen years of weekly observations at her local school playground. She discussed the striking differences between girls' and boys' games, and said that boys and girls tend to segregate themselves on the playground. "Girls play games with movement and words; they must enjoy the union of songs and movement." Thus, she noted, they play games like jump rope, or ring games, and games that involve clapping and singing. "Boys are more aggressive, competitive; one of their amusements is messing up girls' games."

One of the things the Opies discovered in their research into children's games is the durability of the games they play. The characters may be updated to fit the times, but the basic rhythms and movements go on and on. And, Mrs. Opie said with a twinkle in her eye, as children grow older and their younger siblings and friends pick up where they left off, "You don't need to have new games, you have new children."

On the evening of April 19, some four hundred teachers, librarians, folklorists, collectors, and book sellers gathered at the Library of Congress to hear Iona Opie present the 1991 May Hill Arbuthnot Lecture, established in 1969 by Scott, Foresman and Co., administered by the Association for Library Service to Children of the American Library Association, and hosted by the Library's Children's Literature Section. The following is an excerpt from the lecture:

Before we go any further, perhaps I should remind you of the difference between private, creative play and the traditional games that have survived through countless generations. Both may be going on in the same playground, though creative play exists best at home. The private play of children contains a small grain of that sublime harvest reaped by artists, composers, dramatists, poets and novelists, and provides the same rich satisfaction. But whether it is an entrancing game for one, played by a

four-year-old who mutters away to himself as he plays it, or whether it is a family game of make-believe—that continues and evolves over many years of childhood—it is highly unlikely that the game is sufficiently structured or inventive enough to be handed down to future generations of children. The fun, indeed, lies largely in the inventing.

Traditional games, on the other hand, have survived because they are efficacious. They were once played by adults and children alike—the adults being the skilled exponents and the children, on the fringe of the community, watching and copying. (You have only to attend the annual marbles championship on Good Friday at Tinsley Green in Sussex, near Gatwick Airport, to appreciate the skill in a so-called children's game when it is played, as it used to be, by

adults. . . . Most of the major games played by children today were once played by young adults, and still are on occasion.)

Through centuries these games have fulfilled all the requirements of human recreation: the exuberant pleasures of running, leaping and throwing; the more precise skills of aiming and hitting; the other-worldliness of singing and dancing in a ring; the excitements of guessing, of chasing and catching, of hiding and seeking, as well as those more basic needs, such as the need to exert oneself, mentally and physically, as a proof of being alive, and an anesthetic in times of stress. □

Patricia Strickland of the Library's Children's Literature Center and Helen Dalrymple of the Public Affairs Office contributed to this report.



Iona Opie (second from left) on the top-floor terrace of the Library's Madison Building with C.W. Sullivan III and Priscilla Ord of the American Folklore Society's Children's Literature Section and Center director Alan Jabbour (right). The section presented Mrs. Opie with its first Lifetime Achievement Award. (LCUSP6-108786-3) Photo by Jim Higgins

CENTER HOSTS MEETING ON TRAINING AND MINORITY PARTICIPATION

By Timothy Lloyd

On June 20 and 21, 1991, the American Folklife Center sponsored a planning meeting to discuss two topics: better training for folklorists seeking public-service careers, and increased minority participation in the discipline of folklore.

Those present at the meeting included the chairs of the three largest American graduate programs in folklore (John McDowell, Indiana University; Kenneth Goldstein, University of Pennsylvania; Joseph Nagy, University of California, Los Angeles); the convener of the Public Programs Section of the American Folklore Society (Gary Stanton of Mary Washington College, Fredericksburg, Virginia); minority folklorists (Alicia Gonzalez, director of the Smithsonian's Office of Quincentenary Programs; John Roberts of the University of Pennsylvania, head of the Association of African and African-American Folklorists); the president of the American Folklore Society (Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett of New York University); and representatives of the Center's staff (Peter Bartis, who organized the meeting, Mary Hufford, Alan Jabbour, Timothy Lloyd, and David Taylor).

This was a small preliminary meeting, intended for an exchange of ideas that might lead to recommendations for future efforts by the Folklife Center and others. What follows is a summary of the participants' comments and discussion, followed by a list of recommendations:

Training for Public Service Careers: Public sector folklore is not separate from academic "theory." On the contrary, it helps focus theoretical issues of importance to the entire discipline, particularly those issues concerning the presentation and representation of folklore. Fundamentally, the ability to think critically about folklore is the most important skill for folklore graduates to possess, whatever their area of

specific interest.

The chairs of the three departments represented estimated that about 60 percent of their graduates find public sector jobs, 30 percent find academic positions, and 10 percent combine academic and public sector work. (Not all these positions are full-time or permanent.) These percentages were reversed as recently as ten years ago. The training academic departments provide should reflect this current situation and anticipate the future development of the entire discipline. At the same time, public sector folklore programs should take a more active and collaborative role in the education of folklorists.

The best way within the academy to train students for the public sector is through the recruitment and development of faculty with both public sector and academic experience, who can present integrated approaches to the entire discipline.

Outside the academy, the best way to train students for the public sector is through internships, workshops, and other learning opportunities designed to develop students' critical ability and cultural sensitivity through carefully planned, problem-oriented exercises.

Minority Participation in the Field: Truly increased participation by minorities requires fundamental change throughout the field. This includes promotion of the field to undergraduates, financial support and professional mentorship of students through graduate training (including training for public service careers), active recruitment inside and outside the academy of folklorists at all career levels, and development of academic curricula and public programs that address minority perspectives and issues of cross-cultural sensitivity throughout.

The field of folklore is invisible to most minorities, as it often is throughout the academy and the larger society. Without active promotion of and public education about the field in

addition to all the above efforts, it will be difficult to encourage those who have historically been on the periphery of society to participate in a field that may itself seem peripheral.

The Health and Presence of the Profession: The field seems to have lost a healthy, growing core at the same time as it opens up new topics and approaches. A disciplinary core—the materials and issues that all folklorists should know—needs to be redefined and made a central part of future curricula. This new core must include attention to the work done over the past quarter-century—including public sector work—in folklore and in other fields, and to the entire intellectual history of the discipline.

At the same time, other fields, including anthropology, cultural studies, and ethnic studies, have appropriated materials and approaches folklorists once considered their own, and have established themselves in the academy and in public opinion in places where folklorists should be. Thus, as suggested above, the discipline needs to become more active in professional and public education about folklore and the work of folklorists. Establishing a healthy disciplinary core, ensuring minority participation in the field, and integrating public sector and academic approaches through attention to the central themes of the discipline will all contribute to this effort, and will make the profession healthier.

One example of a central disciplinary theme joining public sector and academic folklore work is research, including fieldwork. Public sector research, often done by collaborative, interdisciplinary teams of professionals from several fields and leading to presentations for a broad public, offers a welcome alternative to the solitary approach and solely professional audience that often characterize the research models presented in graduate school.

At the same time, academic re-

search can be done in depth, in specific communities, and over a long term, thus providing the insight that can be missing in public sector surveys that are often too quick and superficial.

Recommendations for American Folklife Center Action (*Minority and public sector folklorists must have a strong voice in carrying out all these recommendations.*)

1. Training Opportunities: The American Folklife Center should explore ways to advance the training of folklorists preparing for careers in the public sector. For example, the Center might consider sponsoring residencies, internships, and workshops devoted to technical training, the operations of federal agencies, and issues germane to research and the development of the discipline. Whenever possible, these should be offered in collaboration with other academic and public folklore programs.

2. Certificate Program: In collaboration with academic and public folklore programs, the American Folklife Center should explore the possibility of establishing a certificate program that would integrate the academy with the public sector. Such a program would be offered to folklorists who have completed post-graduate degrees. The goal of the program would be to provide young professionals with experience in the application of theoretical and practical skills generally needed for successful work in the public sector.

3. Minority Fellowship Program: The American Folklife Center and the American Folklore Society should cooperate to explore ways to develop a fellowship program for minority students. The goal should be to create an endowment that would support five four-year fellowships per year, each at a significant financial level (an annual rate of \$10,000 was suggested). Universities would be expected to participate in the program by matching these fellowship funds (for instance, through tuition waivers for fellowship recipients). In addition to funding, the fellowship program would provide students with faculty mentors.

4. Meetings: The American Folklife Center should sponsor a series of meetings addressing training for public service careers, minority participa-

SELECTED LIST PANEL MEETS



Jennifer Cutting, coordinator of the American Folk Music and Folklore Recordings Project, prepares to record discussions at the annual selection meeting, which took place at the Library of Congress on March 28 and 29. During the meeting, panel members Kip Lornell, Portia Maultsby (left), Terry Miller, José Reyna, and Joe Wilson examined 214 folk recordings to choose the best 34 for annotation and inclusion in *American Folk Music and Folklore Recordings 1990: A Selected List*, which is available free of charge from the American Folklife Center. (60346-17) Photo by Greg Jenkins

tion in the discipline, and other issues of great concern. These meetings should involve all folklore departments and programs, significant numbers of minority colleagues, and colleagues working in the public sector. In addition, meetings should be coordinated in consultation with other federal agencies concerned with cultural heritage. The issues and problems

described above are too crucial and complex to be seen as the "territory" of only one organization.

Comments or suggestions about these recommendations, or about the issues discussed at this meeting, may be sent to Peter Bartis, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540. □



Dufours Market at St. David Village, Maine. A sign greets the Sirois/Duplessis family, the honored family of the year at the annual Acadian Festival. The Folklife Center conducted a cultural survey in Maine's St. John Valley this summer. Story on page 5. (MAP-HM-B004-27) Photo by Howard Marshall

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