

Folklife Today Podcast

Season 5, Episode 3

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Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories

Announcer: From the Library of Congress in Washington DC.

[Music]

[00:25]

Allina Migoni: Welcome to the Folklife Today Podcast. I'm Allina Migoni, a reference librarian at the American Folklife Center, and I'm joined here today with Michelle Stefano, a folklife specialist at the Center. And, in honor of Women's History Month-- we're doing a takeover of the podcast! Sorry John and Steve for giving you the boot.

[00:43]

Michelle Stefano: Hi Allina! A takeover! We'll be co-hosting this episode highlighting women's stories found throughout the American Folklife Center's Archive. As Women's History Month is winding down, our team decided to take a look through our collections to find insights into how women have shaped those around them, passed down their cultural traditions, and to listen to reflections about their identities and lives.

As we know, women's lives are multifaceted and dynamic, obviously, and in this episode we will listen to a few describe their life's journeys, how they came to be artists, their relationships with their families, and their impact on their communities, and more. We hope by hearing these women discuss in their own words their craft and professions, we can celebrate the many ways in which women impact our society.

Allina Migoni: We'll begin in Montana with audio from our Montana Folklife Survey Collection, a regional survey conducted in 1979 in cooperation with the Montana Arts Council. We'll then jump to

Gaithersburg, Maryland to speak with Sarah Sohn, a farmer-gardener at the Young Sohn Gardens. We'll return to our survey collections, and this time in the Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Collection in Sparta, North Carolina, and then New Jersey via the Pinelands Folklife Project.

We'll later be joined by our colleague Thea Austen, our public events coordinator extraordinaire and producer of our Homegrown concert series, who interviewed Maryland artist Mary Sheppard Burton to discuss the impact Mary had not only on her community of artisans, but also discuss the impression she left on Thea in their time together.

[02:26]

Michelle Stefano: Let's begin with hearing from the Nagashima family, with matriarch Iyo, her son David, and David's wife Yoshiko. In this first clip you'll hear Yoshiko describe the family's foodways traditions. This interview is rich with food discussion as well as musings on their community and traditional Japanese folklore. You can also briefly hear interviewer and translator Miiko Toelken speak about her own shared experiences.

Again, this is taken from the Montana Folklife Survey Collection, a regional survey conducted in 1979. The online presentation includes photographs of the Nagashima family and all three parts to this interview. It also includes about 145 sound recordings and over 10,000 photographs. It covers a wide variety of occupations, such as sheep herding, ranching, blacksmithing, as well as traditional music such as fiddle and accordion music, Irish music, hymn singing, and more. It's definitely worth exploring.

[03:30]

Yoshiko Nagashima: Well, our breakfast is American breakfast, isn't it? But at dinner as a whole he thinks if you have rice it's filling. So we have the regular Japanese meat and vegetables, you know, okazu, otsukimono or osuimono. Not all the time. Depends on how hot or how cool the weather is. So our main menu in Japanese would be dinner. Or—now, what's the difference between dinner and lunch? We call a twelve o'clock meal a dinner.

David Nagashima: When you have a sandwich and a cup of coffee it's lunch.

Yoshiko Nagashima: Oh is that right?

David Nagashima: And when you have something bigger than that, it's dinner.

Miiko Toelken: Do you call your ban gohan "gohan?"

Yoshiko Nagashima: Yuhan. Or does that refer to supper?

Miiko Toelken: Yuhan means dinner.

Yoshiko Nagashima: Oh, is that what it is? Oh, I see.

Miiko Toelken: But in our home, when my mother said "Gohan!" then we knew that it was dinnertime. But of course gohan...

[Inaudible crosstalk]

Miiko Toelken: Did you ever pack nigiri?

David Nagashima: Just when I go fishing.

Miiko Toelken: Just when you go fishing. And nigiri is just gohan?

Yoshiko Nagashima: Yeah, you make omusubi and then sometimes otsukimono. But once I put some osushi in his lunch, and he works at Sears in the automotive, and he eats with other men. And those people kept on saying what are you eating those things wrapped with black paper, you know that seaweed around it and he didn't know it. He cleaned his lunch but he said don't give me any more of those things for lunch. He has to keep answering all kinds of questions! Everyone was curious what he was eating.

David Nagashima: I lose my lunch hour answering questions!

Yoshiko Nagashima: He said it was good. But my daughter said she always packs a Japanese lunch for her husband because it's more filling than a sandwich.

David Nagashima: But now when I go fishing, my friends they're getting to like it! They have fried chicken...

Yoshiko Nagashima: They really do. Nigiri. Otsukimono. And we put in namasu. Onigini.

David Nagashima: And they're getting to like it!

[5:49]

Allina Migoni: What originally drew me to this 3 part interview with the Nagashima family is how relatable their back and forth is. There are 2 generations in this room discussing the food that connects them, and how their friends and coworkers receive and then grow to love their food, and as a result, cement these social bonds. The fieldworkers also relate to this very human experience, breaking bread together so to speak. I know I'm super proud of my cultural background and the food I grew up with, but it is interesting - that moment of pride when others who aren't familiar with your cuisine become addicted and ask for more! Here is another snippet from this interview where they discuss how they're the hit of the community picnic!

Yoshiko Nagashima: Because when we go to a picnic with hakujin—you know, this is the American people, the white people? Well it's either coleslaw, potato salad.

David Nagashima: But she always has to take chow mein.

Yoshiko Nagashima: Chow mein. They love chow mein and tempura. That's my specialty. And when we have people here for guests, American people—no roast, no nothing—all Japanese food. They love chow mein. That's what my daughter says. How come the house eats so much rice when there's only three of you? But it's not us. It's when I have company, that's what we eat, rice. Like maze gohan, osushi, or whatever the occasion is.

David Nagashima: We've got them to like sashimi.

Miiko Toelken: Yeah, my husband, he loves sashimi.

Yoshiko Nagashima: Does he?

Miiko Toelken: He LOVES sashimi.

Allina Migoni: Listening to this interview, it's clear how the attention and effort that goes into their cooking can be understood as the love and care they have for their family and friends. Here at the AFC we frequently reference cultural tradition bearers and artistry, but we chose this interview to show how the women in our lives can be cultural tradition bearers even if they don't think of it in such formal language.

Michelle Stefano: Yes, the connections to our culture and ancestors we create through these daily duties and acts of service for one another are vital for keeping our traditions alive, for educating newer generations on what it means to be part of our cultures, and for identity formation. It must be said, so often this labor falls upon the women in our lives to be responsible for these connections to home and tradition.

We also hope showing these types of interviews in our archive may generate interest from our listeners to learn more, and maybe take part in your own cultural documentation. You can even start at home, around the dinner table, reflecting about where you learned to cook and your favorite foods just like this interview.

Allina Migoni: And to also know that these stories matter; remember, they're collected in the world's largest library, and these musings on place and culture are valued. To hear stories so similar to your own experiences, across time and place, is remarkable. The Montana Folklife Survey Collection, as well as our other survey collections, include so many reminiscences and musings on daily life in their region.

Here is one more selection, this time from part 3 of their interview, where you can hear this really lovely moment of Kay and Miiko, the fieldworkers discuss with Yoshiko how David's mother, Iyo, has created this beautiful cat out of yarn and soap.

[Iyo speaking Japanese in the background, Kay and Miiko exclaiming "So cute!"]

Yoshiko Nagashima: She couldn't get the eyes for it. She loves them. Every time I see something and she makes little soap bars of soap and

maybe we'll put sheets over it. And then at this extension when we have this hobby day at the extension, people want to buy something. I'm having a terrible time at the craft shop to get the eyes. You know, sometimes when they're there and I'm not there. I'm taking my chances. She made several like that. But she's way better than I am. She sees something she wants to make it right away, where I don't. I say it's just a dust-catcher or something. You stitch all that yarn by thread. You wrap it around cardboard and then you get a thread and go right through it. So many times my friends come here and say "can we come and visit you?" They spend a whole day, they bring their craft, and mother is teaching them.

Kay Turner: That's amazing!

Yoshiko Nagashima: It is! Everybody marvels. This is just a part of the thing, you know. But this is how she spends her day.

Kay Turner: That's wonderful.

Yoshiko Nagashima: It is, isn't it? As the saying is, if you've got your health.

Miiko Toelken: it's rare.

Yoshiko Nagashima: She goes for a checkup every two times a year, because she has a heart condition. And she loves doing this type of work. And I don't. I couldn't care less.

Kay Turner: It certainly is fussy work, it is. Some of us have it and some of us don't!

[11:28]

Allina Migoni: Yoshiko is a riot when she says exactly what's on her mind at the end of there "I couldn't care less." Honestly, this was my favorite part of the interview. It felt so familiar. My grandmother inspired me to pursue art because she is an artisan in her own right. She actually for a time supported herself making traditional Mexican artwork and clothes to sell to tourists in a big shop downtown by her home. We call her a spider, since she can crochet blankets in a day, and has made me purses and blouses. Just like Iyo, as Yoshiko said, if she sees it she can make it. And just like

Yoshiko when it comes to my own talent... well, I wouldn't say I couldn't care less, but I certainly cannot crochet like my grandma can.

All that is to say, that brings us to our next interview!

[12:15]

Michelle Stefano: This interview is part of our Finding Roots: Asian American Farmers in Contemporary America collection, of the Occupational Folklife Project. The Occupational Folklife Project, which began in 2010, works to document the cultures and traditions we create in our work lives. Fieldworkers apply for a grant to conduct this documentation and conduct 50-60 minute interviews to discuss with participants their current jobs, as well as formative experiences that led to their profession.

Allina Migoni: Sarah Sohn is a farmer-gardener, and I loved this interview, because she said it so clearly how her cultural background and upbringing, as well as her high school job, all came together to create this sort of epiphany of identity.

Michelle Stefano: In it, Sarah says that her coming out coincided with her discovery of organic produce and gardening with her father, and even states that “vegetarianism” was “code” for so many things in her life, namely being queer. To think her rebellious stage, as her parents put it, was when she decided she was a vegetarian!

This also speaks to the theme of this month's podcast. Women are dynamic, and highlighting these intersectional stories where who we are is shaped by our culture, our family, when our parents immigrated (or not), and our gender and sexuality, is important to showcase the makeup of our society.

Allina Migoni: Exactly. I could connect to this interview and see myself in Sarah's words even if we have different ethnicities and professions. This interview from 2021 really resonated with me. She has this really poignant observation, where after discussing how she ate American food for school lunch but was also never was bullied for being Korean (or at least for eating Korean food), she states there's this misconception from mainstream White culture that all first, second, third generation immigrants want to assimilate

and that's just not true. I want to agree, that there's a pride of where we come from, and one of the ways we show it, while also maintaining a connection to our homeland, is through food.

[14:33]

Sarah Sohn: I think there's a phenomenon that people don't like, you know, that the mainstream kind of white culture doesn't really know about which is that...it's not like we're particularly longing to have you know, access to white culture for to have white mainstream culture to be our home. It's not like, and there might even be actually a lot of ways in which we feel superior to...you know, this is going on the record. But...

Michelle Stefano: Another poignant moment in this interview is listening to Sarah discuss her evolution from home gardener to farmer, contemplating her connection to her dad and his influence along the way before he passed.

She sets the scene discussing looking at the field of garlic she worked with her father after hours, and their bond. She describes their moment as a “very quiet exchange, a very sensory exchange,” and you almost feel like you're there with them.

[15:41]

Sarah Sohn: The other crop that we grew there in a big way was garlic and it was a hard neck garlic, and I remember my dad being kind of like just confounded I'm just like mystified by my at once both mystified and like having a kind of like, he was sort of amused by my interest in this stuff. And also like, there was something about it that like, I...respect may go too far, but like there was something about it that, I don't know, never went said between us. He didn't belittle. He was definitely like, both but my mom was just like, why? Just my mom now she she wasn't...but like my mom, like if she had her way like would never touch dirt, like ever. My dad more like you know, I remember us, we would like squish, you know, the Japanese beetles on roses. There would be certain things that we would do. Ritually I kind of like, you know, not talk but do it like as parallel play. You know, I mean, like, occasionally, he'd like swear be like ah, these [bleep], and like, it

was like our bonding and we'd be like, Ah, look at these [bleep]. So like I did more of that kind of gardening stuff with him.

But anyway, I remember him coming to visit me at my apartment in Ann Arbor and then he wanted to go see the farm and it was like, after hours or whatever it was so I remember us, I guess you can say guess it's okay, but I didn't even you know, nobody had cell phones. I didn't call my boss or anything, but we just drove by and it was kind of dusky. And it must have been kind of in, it must have been kind of like June-ish because the garlic was scaping and I remember us like driving out I remember the farm had like a German Shepherd and my dad being like, but it's like and yeah it's like very cinematic in my in my memory you know, my dad passed away and like this is like a core memory I have of like, yeah, just like standing together looking at the garlic field and like the swamp light escapes that look really, really beautiful on this in this dusky light. And they just haven't you know, that kind of powdery like sheen that they have at that point in their growth. And we just kind of looked at it and like admired and I don't really remember, what exactly, he said, except he kept going, oh, it's garlic, uh, you know, it's garlic, you know, you know, and it's like looking at it and yeah, I think, something kind of shifted after that. I hadn't made any kind of, particular commitment. It was just literally a summer job. I wasn't like, now I'm going to be a farmer. But, there was something you know, different about me that had kind of recurred throughout my childhood and adolescence in relationship to this stuff that I think maybe made some kind of sense in that moment between my dad and I, at least. And yeah, obviously garlic been such a core Korean crop, it'd been a crop that he would have seen in Korea. Growing in that way.

Allina Migoni: This is such a moving image, a father and daughter quietly contemplating their lives, the impact they have on one another, seeing an image of garlic - a Korean staple, and as Sarah notes - a view that her father may have seen countless times back in Korea. These are the imprints we leave on one another, via through explicit storytelling, or through quietly gardening and smashing bugs side by side. Honestly Sarah's laugh is so contagious, and this description of a core memory for her has really sat with me for some time since I first heard it. These are definitely the stories we should be sharing!

Michelle Stefano: Another contemplation on how our parents impact our worlds, and how we as women impact others, can be seen throughout the Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project Collection, and in the interviews with women who are expert quiltmakers. In it Donna Choate and Zenna Todd reflect on the women who taught them to quilt. The Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project was conducted by the AFC in cooperation with the National Park Service, through 1977 to 1981. Ten folklorists conducted fieldwork in August and September of 1978, and you can hear the product of their efforts in the online presentation (as well as here on the podcast!).

Listen to Donna Choate in her own words:

[20:55]

Geraldine Niva Johnson: Have you ever quilted with a group of people?

Donna Choate: No, Ma'am. No. Older people would have quiltings, my mother would have quiltings, and ladies would come, maybe three or four. And they'd quilt out a quilt or two that day!

Then they had a way, a thing they called tacking quilts, you've heard of that too, haven't you? They tacks 'em. That was just one, one stitch. But that takes an awful lot of time. Cutting them threads.

Geraldine Niva Johnson: Did you ever do that? Tack a quilt?

Donna Choate: No, I haven't tacked a quilt, not since I've lived here I don't think. No I don't tack 'em. My mother wasn't much for tacks. She said they come apart too easily. And she wouldn't...a lot of people used old clothing, but I never did see her...she might use an old blanket which was getting kinda thin and worn. Sshe might use an old blanket, but I never did see her use old clothing in a quilt but I have seen others do that.

Allina Migoni: Here's Donna again, describing another woman in her life, Mrs. Thompson's mother, who never seemed to stop making quilts

Geraldine Niva Johnson: Has quilting changed a lot since you started quilting?

Donna Choate: Pattern quilting? Yeah, no. Oh, yes, quilting in general has has has ceased. You hardly ever hear tell of anyone making a quilt. Now, Mrs. Thompson's mother. She's an elderly woman and she liked it. She loved to make quilts. She had two daughters and she she had enough quilts to last her a lifetime and the girls too but she still liked to quilt, and she would work upstairs in her bedroom. She made quilts and she get a quilt in the frames and sometimes I have to help maybe once, one or two days to get that quilt out because she was getting older. She died at 78 and then she couldn't hold on to it long. And she said, Donna, if I ever get this one out, I'm not I'm gonna try and make another one. After dinner every day when I was there, I'd have to go upstairs and help her for the rest of the day with her quilt.

Michelle Stefano: Donna learned to quilt from her mother and at the time of the interview had not made a quilt and several years. However, she was a prolific builder and made them exclusively for her family. And circle. This next interview with Zanna Todd is hilarious. Then it discusses her first

Michelle Stefano: Donna learned to quilt from her mother, and at the time of the interview had not made a quilt in several years. However, she was a prolific quilter and made them exclusively for her family and circle.

This next interview with Zenna Todd is hilarious. Zenna discusses her first time quilting and the woman who “taught” her, or really left her to her own devices.

Allina Migoni: Honestly, this whole interview sounds like something I would do.

[23:32]

Zenna Todd: But I'll never forget the first quilt that I cut, the pattern on it was a monkey wrench, and my mother in law she was going to show me how to quilt you know and how to do it. So she helped me to get started and the lining was kind of a deep rose color. And I said to her, I said, what kind of thread should we use to quilt this? We have, oh, I was really tickled to get started you know, on that quilt, and she says well I'd just use black since you've got an awful lot of dark colors in it. So, should we hang the quilt from the ceiling with cords you know, and put it in the frame and she

helped me to get started. And she didn't tell me to put to pull the knots through the lining. You know and have 'em on the inside. So they wouldn't show? She says well, that you just go ahead and quilt all the way across there and I'll be back tomorrow and see how you're doing.

So I quilted all across one side. And she didn't tell me about the knots and where I'd tied those knots you know, and I hadn't pulled them through, and there they showed just them black knots on the underneath side. So when I rolled the quilt up, rolled it up, you know, so we can walk under it and around it, and I looked up under it and it looked like flies just settin' on the quilt. And I said when she come back I said my goodness, I've just ruined this quilt. I said I've got, looks like flies just settin' on the lining. She says, "my goodness she says why didn't you pull them through?" I said, well you didn't tell me!

25:18

Michelle Stefano: These clips with Donna and Zenna also demonstrate the level of patience and perseverance this type of artistry entails. These forms of art, and by extension care, are so meaningful. In that, when you pour yourself into these difficult artforms, and you give the end product to the people you care about, you're effectively telling a story without saying a word. There's definitely a thread between all of these interviews with how women through their work with their hands, by cooking or working the land or quilting, are building our history and sharing a piece of themselves along the way. That is to say, we are very grateful for the women in our lives who have molded and cared for us along the way.

Again, these recordings were from the Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project, which includes sound recordings, video, photos, manuscripts, and ethnographers field notes.

Allina Migoni: Next, we will bring in Thea to discuss her experience interviewing Mary Sheppard Burton.

Mary Sheppard Burton was an internationally renowned rug hooking artist who was nominated for the National Endowment for the Arts National

Heritage Fellow Award from 1996-1998. Mary also co-founded the International Guild of Hand-hooked Rug Makers. The AFC also holds a collection of 12 of her hooked rugs, as well as videotaped interviews of her in her home with Carl Lindahl and Thea Austen, who we are happy to welcome onto the podcast now!

[26:49]

Theadocia Austen: Thank you! It's lovely to be able to talk about Mary. She was incredibly full of life and always bursting with ideas for her next projects. I met her when she came to the AFC to talk about finding a home for her 12-rug cycle of stories from her family that she had designed and completely created from scratch.

Allina Migoni: Born in 1922, Mary didn't discover her rug-hooking talent until later in life, right? Or at least, she didn't learn as a child, correct?

Theadocia Austen: That's right. Both her mother and grandmother had hooked rugs, but she didn't really get interested in exploring this textile art until she was an adult. She was inspired by the hooked rugs her minister's wife was creating and so she tried making them herself. She started experimenting with different wools and techniques, learning both on her own and from more experienced teachers. She didn't have a lot of time during the day raising 4 children, so she did this mostly at night! She was always really interested in color, from a tiny child when she would wear out crayons by coloring anything she could get her hands on. So she got very interested in working with natural dyes, rather than manufactured ones, and since they weren't readily available, she did her own experiments in her home, including finding out some natural ingredients like walnuts can be poisonous if you don't know how to handle them. She went on to develop a huge range of natural dyes she used in her own designs as well as some manufactured dyes. She was so dedicated to dying her own yarn, that she actually built a dying room in her home, which Carl Lindahl and I saw when we visited her home for an oral history we conducted.

Michelle Stefano: Tell us more about Mary's work, and how your interview came to be.

Theadocia Austen: I met her when she came to the AFC to talk about gifting the rugs. Carl Lindahl happened to be doing some research in DC at this time and met her too, so we decided it was a great opportunity to do some fieldwork and go out to her home, interview her and see her studio.

Allina Migoni: What was it like, being surrounded by such impressive artwork in her home? What did it look like? An explosion of color and texture I'm sure.

Theadocia Austen: She had such an artistic eye. Her home was beautifully decorated with traditional crafts and folk art that she had collected over the years. I particularly remember something unusual she'd done in her kitchen. She had collected stereoscopic glass magic lantern slides from the 19th and early 20th century. She had installed them like a frieze at the top of the molding of her kitchen cabinets and lit them from the back, so that when the lights were on you saw a beautiful ribbon of colored scenes from magic Lanterns wrapping around the kitchen. She had quite a well-developed studio space with a special room for dyeing wool and experimenting with color, and a big workroom. She was incredibly generous with her time and information and I think is how she inspired and influenced so many others who wanted to learn from her to create their own art.

Allina Migoni: Thanks, Thea, your memories are so vivid.

Michelle Stefano: I really do feel like I'm there with you. Thank you so much for sharing that.

Theadocia Austen: Absolutely.

[31:33]

Allina Migoni: Let's hear from Mary in her own words now.

Mary Sheppard Burton: At 17, he left to go to business school. And came back whereupon as he walked through the post office door its eyes met my mother's eyes. She was a beautiful young woman with long black, almost black, brown hair. Very wavy but not curly. And she wore it high like a Cossack's hat. They courted a long, long time before they married because

life was very hard. Together they built that house which they hoped to move into as soon as they were married.

[32:19]

Allina Migoni: Again. That was Mary Sheppard Burton, internationally renowned rug hooking artist. See her collections in the AFC archive. It would be interesting to bring in the perspective of an AFC folklorist from our online collections to hear their thoughts on learning about people's traditions and connections to the environment.

Michelle, I know you were listening to audio recordings made by Christine Cartwright, who served as a fieldworker in the Pinelands Folklife Project, one of the Center's field survey projects that focused on the cultures and livelihoods of people living in the Pine Barrens region of Southern New Jersey.

Michelle Stefano: That's right. The project took place over 1983 through 1986, and was led by AFC folklorist Mary Hufford, with photographer Carl Fleischhauer co-planning it with her. And like you said, it centered on drawing out –through interviews with residents and other documentation—traditional knowledge and ways of life of people in the region.

As one of several fieldworkers, Cartwright interviewed a number of residents and families in the region, such as farmers – including blueberry and cranberry growers – as well as quilters, and others living in and near the Pine Barrens. Her interviews generally focused on learning about their lives, their families, and their relationships between their cultural livelihoods and the landscape and ecological contexts.

And I love to read fieldworker field notes, so it is something I naturally gravitate towards when delving into the Center's many online collections. In field notes, you learn not only about the subject of their research and documentation activities, but also –at times—the experiences they themselves had and their own personal thoughts on their research, the research process, particular interviews or events that they conducted or were at. Sometimes field notes paint vivid pictures of the scene, taking you into the places and spaces where the fieldworker was through their written reflections and, thereby, their eyes.

But what is interesting with Cartwright's "fieldnotes" is that, in addition to her written audio logs and contributions to project reports, she chose to audio record some of her fieldwork reflections – that is, she spoke them aloud into a recorder while driving across the region, and even in between interviews.

It's a really smart idea, and I wish I had thought of doing that in some of my own long-ago research! In the recordings, she reflects on interviews she had just conducted and that were fresh in her memory, which again is super smart to document one's experiences, observations, and impressions right away...especially including what was talked about once the recorder was turned off, or before it was turned on.

Allina Migoni: I love that we get to listen to her reflections in almost real time, so to speak...do you want to share a particular clip?

Michelle Stefano: Yeah, let's listen to Cartwright in what was likely the fall of 1983. She was driving on Route 70 near to the town of Medford, from what I can gather, and she discusses something very interesting and rather philosophical; I'd say it's more so a general reflection on the project as a whole, and even on the skills one develops when engaging in cultural research and documentation work, especially when exploring the connections between culture and place.

[35:39]

Christine Cartwright: I'm now driving on route 70. Going west, from the project house. And I just want to record some general thoughts about the region and some of the things I've been driving past. Our eyes are now getting...well, we're getting visually literate is what's happening. Now that we're into the last few weeks of the project. We're not as bewitched, bothered, and bewildered by the, the wilderness of equipment that we had to learn to use and the different types of paperwork that we had to do and the the crush of trying to, to keep sight of the forest while recording the trees as it were. For I think for a long time each of us was absorbed in getting down the mechanics of the project, figuring out our relationships and our social roles as fieldworkers. That is, our relationships to our informants, to the people we're working for—the Center—and to one another as a group. We've just returned from the American Folklore Society

meetings. So we've had a break to rest our eyes and our minds on other things and reaffirm our professional identities. And I think it's done us a world of good—it certainly has me. And now as I drive down this road, which I've driven over several times, maybe 10 I suppose, I'm just coming into the Medford circle. And I see so much more meaning in what's around me in the cuteness of Medford. that Stuart Brooks called sportique. I see. I see what is sometimes called ruburbia: the middle class, trying to become rural.

Allina Migoni: That was an excerpt from Christine Cartwright's recorded field notes from 1983, as part of the Center's Pinelands Folklife Project Collection. It sounds like she was also reflecting on demographic changes, too, in the rural areas of Southern New Jersey.

Michelle Stefano: Yes, in my interpretation, she was speaking about learning the language of the region through observation alone; that is, learning the visual cues of culture as written into the landscape... and how she had been observing that the suburbs were creeping into these traditionally rural areas, how city people were moving into the region and the changes to the landscape and towns, like Medford, that were more and more noticeable. And that was the 1980s, we can only imagine the changes that have taken place since then.

Allina Migoni: You mentioned that she also recorded her thoughts in between interviews, capturing her post-fieldwork reflections as they were fresh in her mind?

Michelle Stefano: Yes, for instance, on September 19, 1983, she interviewed Henry Webb about his work on his farm in Chatsworth, and also about how he uses the woods – that is, his relationship with ecology, essentially, the vast woodlands around him and his family's home, and the knowledge that has been passed down to him with respect to gathering and hunting in the woods. After her interview, she recorded her thoughts while driving on Route 503. So, in this next clip, you can hear her introducing her recording, providing the metadata as it is often called for this audio collection item:

Christine Cartwright: Today's September 19 1983. My name is Christine Cartwright, and this is my tape F notes CC 0919. I'm recording field notes

on the road between interviews for the Pinelands Folklife Project. The area we have marked number two, starting down at 503, through Chatsworth, and continuing through the area as described on the tape following.

Michelle Stefano: So, that was how she announced the recording, setting the scene for those of us listeners. And like I said earlier, sometimes fieldnotes provide glimpses into the conversations that were had before or after the recorder was turned on and recording. So, it sounds like after she interviewed Henry Webb, she ended up talking with his son, Mr. Webb Jr., about his job as a heavy equipment operator, as well as his own traditional knowledge of the surrounding woodlands. In fact, Cartwright finds it funny that Henry's son seemed to be very keen on being interviewed himself.

Christine Cartwright: I got the impression that he would like to be interviewed, because he kept me standing on the side of the road for an entire hour telling me all about the equipment he operates and the different injuries that he's had when he left school to help his father work, a lot of things. So perhaps an interview will be scheduled later on in the fieldwork. He's going to try to come home a little early tomorrow afternoon in order to be there when Carl and I are there photographing.

Allina Migoni: Again, that was a clip from Christine Cartwright's recorded field notes on September 19, 1983, as she was driving on route 503 after her interview with Henry Webb and talking with Webb's son in Chatsworth, New Jersey. So, I'm curious about the Webb family's traditional knowledge of the Pine Barrens, and I see on the map that Chatsworth is smack in the middle of them...

Michelle Stefano: Yes, on the map you'll see that it is surrounded by the pinelands, and a number of nature preserves and wildlife management areas. In the same recording, Cartwright shares more about her conversation with Webb Jr., Henry's son. After all, she says they talked for an hour!

In this next clip, we hear about Webb Jr.'s "local awareness" of plant species and woodland growth, knowledge that has been passed down to him by his family. In particular, he was telling a story in reference to a job of his on a construction site, and how young birch trees were going to be cleared:

Christine Cartwright: He commented that the grapevine if it's cut will grow back twice as thick the next year. He said the same thing about young birch sprouts or young birch saplings. He works on a construction crew. He operates heavy equipment, heavy equipment operator and so he works by contract with construction operations and moving heavy equipment from place to place. And the job that he's about to start on involves clearing out an area that has a heavy growth of young birch, just a couple of feet tall. And he said that he was going to ask his boss about letting his brother in law cut the birch since they were going to go in and destroy it. And he said that if they weren't going to destroy it and his brother in law went in and cut the young birch it would grow back twice as thick the next year too. This local awareness on the part of gathering families of the species that are benefited in their in their regrowth by cutting and the knowledge of how to cut them so that they will regrow is bound to be important in the local traditional uses of the land and an important in the whole concept of traditional guardians of the landscape that this kind of practice has been traditional.

Allina Migoni: Once again, that was a clip from Christine Cartwright's recorded field notes on September 19, 1983. That's a good excerpt as it encapsulates what the Pinelands Folklife Project was about – people's traditional knowledge of their environment, and how it is shared and kept alive.

It's also a bit sad, since Christine Cartwright was tragically killed in a car accident later in the fall of 1983.

Michelle Stefano: Very sad. How about we honor her memory, and her important contributions to the field with ending on this final excerpt from her audio field notes.

Allina Migoni: Absolutely, but, lets thanks AFC audio engineer Jon Gold and staff at LOC who help deploy the podcast. Also, thanks to all those women who appear in this episode through recordings held at the AFC, and thanks to John and Steve for getting out of the way!.

Michelle Stefano: In this last clip from Cartwright, we will return to her reflections on – and observations of – the demographic and landscape changes of the Pinelands region, as the suburbs were obviously spreading

into the rural areas in which she was working. In the full version of the recording, she calls this a “tremendous juxtaposition of the urban and the rural,” which she notes is strikingly evident when driving near Pemberton and areas nearby.

Nonetheless, in the following excerpt, you can hear that she called the urban dwellers who were moving out into the country “ruburbians” – which I’m thinking means rural suburbians, as she describes, while driving on Route 70 near to Medford.

Allina Migoni: Thanks, Michelle. We will end with an excerpt from folklorist Christine Cartwright’s recorded field notes from 1983, as part of the AFC’s Pinelands Folklife Project Collection.

[45:11]

Christine Cartwright: The people, the ruburbians in Medford that I've spoken with, don't notice it, they don't see it. They see their community, not in terms of who used to be here or whose community it used to be their sense of history is very much a romantic one. They'd like knowing about the past and they want to make it their own. But they don't really want to face the fact that by coming in, they're taking it away from somebody else. Or they're changing, changing it making the present into the past by changing the present by making it impossible for older Patterns of Life to continue. Although it might have been impossible. Anyway.

[46:00]

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