

FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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American Folklife Center • The Library of Congress



The American Folklife Center was created in 1976 by the U.S. Congress to "preserve and present American folklife" through programs of research, documentation, archival preservation, reference service, live performance, exhibition, publication, and training. The Center incorporates the Archive of Folk Culture, which was established in the Music Division of the Library of Congress in 1928 and is now one of the largest collections of ethnographic material from the United States and around the world.

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American Folklife Center publications (including *Folklife Center News*), a calendar of events, collection guides, general information, and connections to a selection of other Internet services related to folklife are available on the Internet.

LC Web is available through the World Wide Web service (<http://lcweb.loc.gov>). The Center's home page can be accessed from the Library's main menu. The direct URL for the Center's home page is: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/folklife/>

Folklife, an information service providing timely information on the field of folklore and folklife, including training and professional opportunities and news items of national interest, is available through the above Internet server. For telephone service, call the Folklife Reading Room: 202 707-5510.

EDITOR'S NOTES

Happy Birthday

April 24, 2000, is the two-hundredth birthday of the Library of Congress. Plans are underway for an all-day celebration, including presentations and performances by Gen. Colin Powell, David Copperfield, Tito Puente, Kathy Mattea, Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys, Pete Seeger, the U.S. Army Band, "Big Bird," and others. Bicentennial stamps and coins are being issued for the occasion, and commemorative merchandise will be on sale. More than sixty Americans who have achieved distinction in their particular fields of endeavor will be honored as "Living Legends." Readers of this journal will be
(Continued on page 19)

Cover: Crowds at the Lamb Day celebration, Fountain Green, Utah, engage in a spontaneous blanket toss at Fountain Green City Park, July 1980. Lamb Day was first held in 1932 to promote the local product. Local Legacies project sponsored by Sen. Robert F. Bennett. Photo by Richard D. Menzies

Local Legacies Come to the Library of Congress



Sacred Harp sing led by David Lee (center left, facing camera, with open book), Hoboken, Georgia, November 19, 1999. Sacred Harp singing in Hoboken dates from the 1820s. Project sponsored by Rep. Jack Kingston. Photo by Laurie K. Sommers

By James Hardin

Preservation boxes line the shelves of a large corner room on the first floor of the Library's Adams Building, a squarish, serviceable, art-deco structure completed in 1939. White labels with bold black letters hang from the shelves, naming the states and territories: Alabama, Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona. . . The orderly arrangement, however, belies the profusion of American folklife

documented within, in photograph, video and audiotape, and descriptive essay: the explosion of firecrackers at a Chinese New Year parade in Portland, Oregon; the crackling conflagration of a bonfire, as "Old Man Gloom" burns in Sante Fe, New Mexico; the strong, joyful voices of a community Sacred Harp sing in Georgia; the cries of the crowd as a young boy flies aloft in a blanket toss in rural Utah. From around the country "Local Legacies" have come to the

Library of Congress.

It was, at first, an elegantly simple idea (fraught with the possibility for going wrong): invite senators and representatives to identify grassroots traditions and activities from every state and congressional district, document them in photographs, sound and video recordings, and manuscript, and send a portion of that documentation to the Library of Congress for its Bicentennial. The resulting collection would provide a snap-

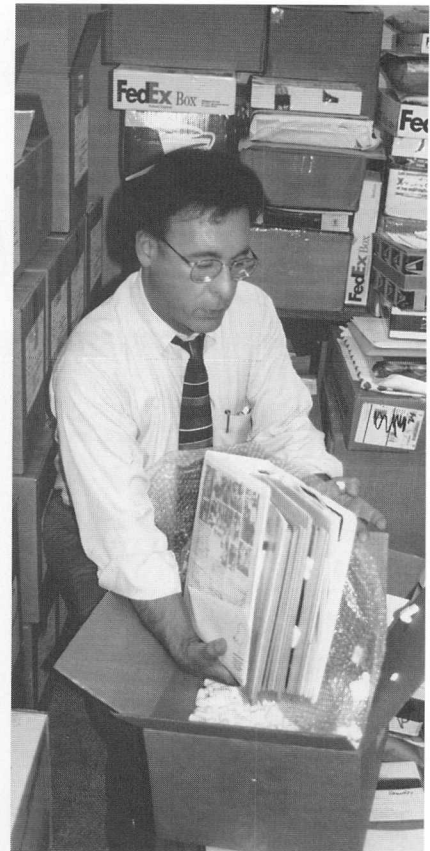
shot of traditional cultural life in America at the end of the twentieth century. No money would be provided, just lots of advice and encouragement.

Librarian of Congress James H. Billington proposed the Local Legacies project at the May 1997 meeting of the American Folklife Center's Board of Trustees in New Orleans, a city well known for its own grassroots cultural life. Local Legacies would take its cue from other community-based Millennium projects and activities, and celebrate the two hundredth birthday of the Library of Congress. Each state and congressional district might place their examples of "ex-

Surrounded by hundreds of boxes containing Local Legacies project materials, coordinator Peter Bartis opens a box sent in from the state of Montana. Photo by James Hardin

traordinary creativity" in the national folk archive at the Library of Congress (as a birthday present to the nation's library), and a digital library project would allow them to be shared throughout this country and internationally.

The project would provide an opportunity for Library staff to work with Congress, and for Congress to work with its local constituents. But would Congress respond? Would local



communities understand the proposal? Who would do the work, and what might be sent in? There were many questions. The Center's Board was polite but skeptical, acknowledged the extraordinary possibilities, worried about the kind and quality of material that might be created (and how it would be handled and stored), and suggested that the Library devise guidelines for participants.

The Center's very successful Montana Heritage Project was cited as an example of a community-based documentary project, and the Library asked Center folklife specialist Peter Bartis to take the lead on Local Legacies, since he had helped devise the Montana project. His first task was to train a small staff to manage liaison with the state and district congressional

Placerita Canyon Trail Ride, 1999, Newhall, California. Led by Scott Dickens, this trail ride was part of the sixth annual Cowboy Poetry Festival, held at the Melody Ranch Movie Studio in Newhall. Project sponsored by Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon. Photo by Jack Hummel



Telluride Bluegrass Festival, near Lyons, Colorado, June 1998. Begun in 1973, the festival now attracts as many as ten thousand people a day for music in this spectacular outdoor setting. Project sponsored by Sen. Wayne Allard. Photo by Jamie Janover

"Belles of West Virginia," at the State Folk Festival, Glenville, West Virginia, from the 1970s. The West Virginia State Folk Festival was established in 1950 by college professor Patrick Gainer to "preserve the remnants of the pioneer life and culture of West Virginia in music, entertainment, education, social and economic activities to the end that citizens may appreciate and respect the achievements of their forebears." Ten "Belles" are selected each year by the Extension Homemakers or Senior Citizens Organization. They must be over seventy years of age and represent the "true pioneer mountain spirit." Local Legacies project sponsored by Rep. Bob Wise. Photographer unknown





Local Legacies staffer Denise Gotay Theunissen reviews one of the many newspaper stories that were published on the projects. Photo by James Hardin

offices, identify and resolve problems, and be available to answer the host of questions that was likely to arise. Bartis himself contacted folklorists in every state and gave presentations at the American Folklore Society meetings, to explain and build support for the project. He understood that one difficulty inherent in the new project was that different interested constituencies (the Congress; state folklorists and cultural organizations; the public) would have different expectations. Project "Guidelines" defined a local legacy



In the Local Legacies processing area, staffer Evie McCleaf sorts and arranges material for storage in preservation boxes. Photo by James Hardin

as "a traditional activity, event, or area of creativity that merits being documented for future generations." Project staff were hoping for representative, or "signature," events and activities that somehow characterized the local community.



Jazz artist Archie Shepp performs at the 1972 Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Project sponsored by Rep. Lynn Rivers. Photo by Ira Lax

As congressional members and staff were notified of the project, said Bartis, "the response was amazing. Members of Congress understood what was being suggested and many knew immediately what signature event they wanted to nominate. As for folklorists and cultural organizations,

they were grateful for the opportunity to work with their senators and congressman. In fact, the project provided a wonderful opportunity for folklorists to demonstrate what they do."

Sen. Pete Domenici of New Mexico expressed the common reaction. He said his state is rich in cultural tradition (many senators and congressman nominated several projects); and that he was delighted to be able to tell others about them. Domenici wrote to Bartis, "New Mexico has so many unique traditions and legacies and we are excited to share our traditions with the rest of the nation."

Rep. Robert Weygand of Rhode Island nominated several festivals, a museum, and the Narragansett Indian tribe from his district to be local legacies. At a program announcing his selection, he said, "today's Library of Congress exemplifies Thomas Jefferson's faith in learning and his determination to make democracy work. He would be proud of this rich heritage we are exhibiting today." [*Providence Sunday Journal*, January 23, 2000]

Rep. John Hostettler, who nominated a Revolutionary War battle re-enactment, "The Spirit of Vincennes Rendezvous," from the Eighth District of Indiana, said, "the Library of Congress worked it out so that each member deals with his constituency on a person-to-person basis . . . that's why it's working



Some project participants could not resist including event paraphernalia with their documentary photographs and recordings, such as these T-shirts from the University of Montevallo's College Night, nominated by Rep. Spencer Bachus from the Sixth District of Alabama. Staffer Rachel Mears, shown here, is arranging and organizing the Local Legacies collection. Photo by James Hardin

so well." [*The Hill*, November 10, 1999]

"Folklorists and politicians have a lot in common," Bartis pointed out. "Both operate at the grassroots level, both have an interest in building community, and both are happy to have local communities and individuals recognized and honored." Many of the participants from the local communities were delighted to discover, through the recognition of the Library of Congress, that what they have been doing for years has "cultural significance."

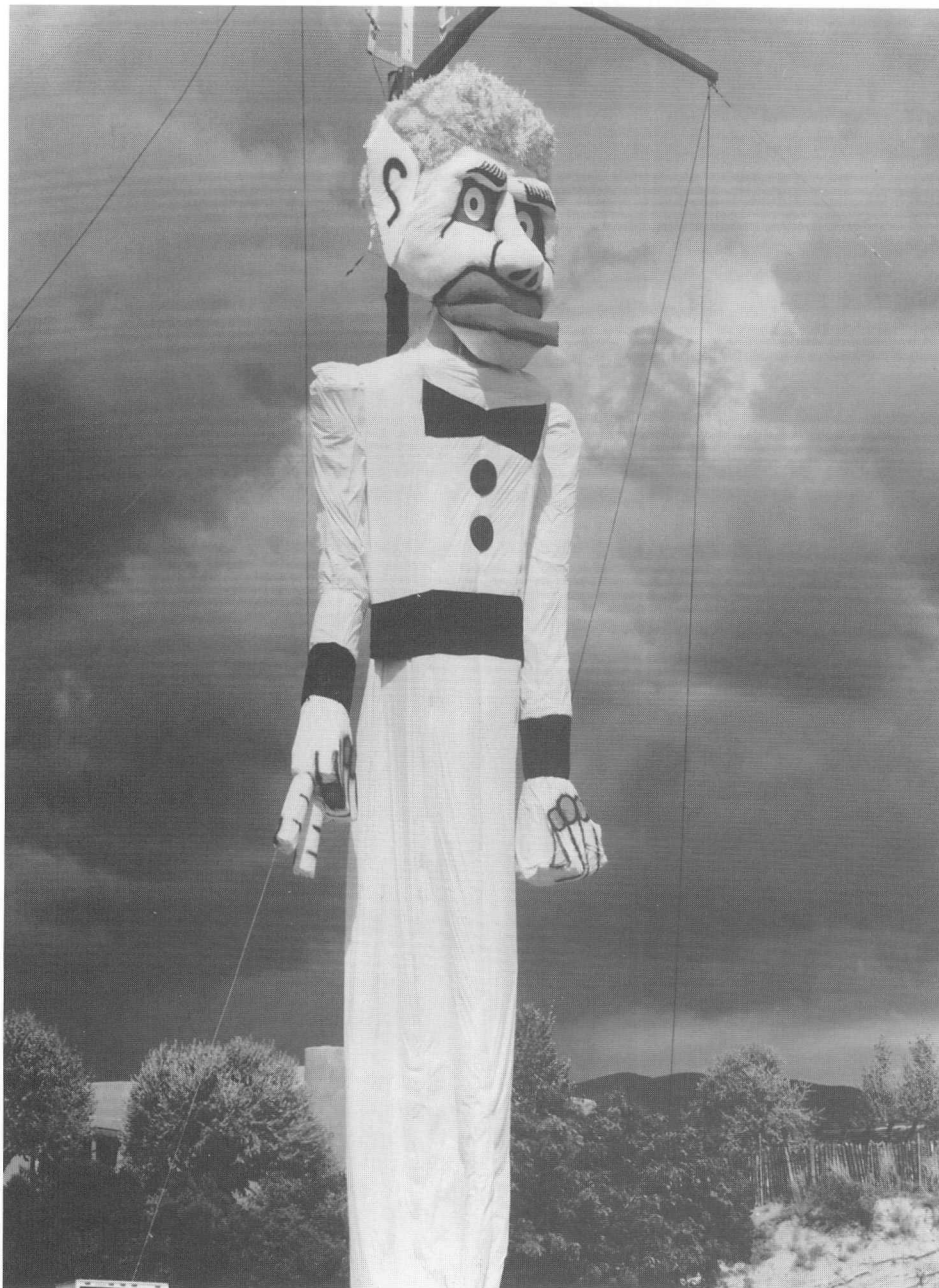
By the end of 1999, over twelve hundred projects were registered, representing 90 percent of the Senate and 70 percent of the House. The Library asked

for ten to thirty photographs, a written report, and administrative data such as permission forms. Video and sound recordings were optional. By the end of March 2000, the documentary material from over 900 projects had been delivered to the Library of Congress for sorting and arranging. More arrives every day, and anticipation is growing for a celebratory reception at the Library on May 23.

Festivals, historic sites, civic activities, occupational culture, and environmental projects were some of the places, activities, and events documented for Local Legacies. In Newhall, California, a trail ride through the Placerita Canyon is part of an annual cowboy poetry festival,

held at the Melody Ranch Movie Studio. Ride leader Scott Dickens calls it "an opportunity to step into the Old West." In Arizona, each year, there is a re-enactment of the two-hundred-mile Pony Express ride from Holbrook to Scottsdale, with actual mail carried and delivered under a continuous contract with the U.S. Postal Service. The riders are members of the Navajo County Sheriff's department, a search-and-rescue team named the Hashknife Posse Pony Express after a famously rough-and-ready band of cowboys, the "Hash-knife Outfit," that worked for the Aztec Land and Cattle Company.

Near Lyons, Colorado, the San Juan Mountains provide a



"Zozobra," or "Old Man Gloom," in his final moments before burning, Sante Fe, New Mexico, September 1999. The tradition of burning the great effigy, which dates back seventy-three years, blends elements of the three local cultures—Anglo-, Hispanic-, and Native American—and attracts a crowd of as many as thirty thousand. Project sponsored by Sen. Pete Domenici. Photo courtesy of Kim Kurianowicz

spectacular backdrop for the Telluride Bluegrass Festival, which attracts ten thousand people on a single day for its outdoor concerts; the college town of Ann Arbor, Michigan, hosts a full weekend of events, inside and out, for the Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival, begun in 1969 as the first blues festival of its kind in North America; and in Hoboken, Georgia, family and community members gather for a capella

singing, using four shape notes (fa, sol, la, mi). This shape-note singing style is sometimes labeled "Sacred Harp," after a shape-note book published in 1844 by B. F. White of Hamilton, Georgia.

In Portland, Oregon, as in many other cities, Chinese New Year is celebrated with a parade through the streets of Chinatown, reminding us that America is a nation of immigrants who bring their traditions with them.

In Sante Fe, New Mexico, the annual burning of the great cartoonish effigy Zozobra (Old Man Gloom) on the second Thursday of September dispels the hardships of the past year and marks the start of Fiesta de Sante Fe. As many as thirty thousand attend the event, which blends Hispanic-, Anglo- and Native American culture.

In many communities across the nation, economic viability depends upon a particular local product that becomes an essential part of the cultural life: watermelon in Hope, Arkansas; wine in Napa Valley, California; cider in Topeka, Kansas; tulips in Holland, Michigan; onions in Orange County, New York; and salmon in northwest interior Washington, all represented by Local Legacies projects. Rep. David Wu, First District of Oregon, wrote that his project, "A Day in the Life of the Columbia Pacific," provides "a glimpse into the life and times of our community through the eyes of our children" and helps the school-aged participants feel a part of their community and "examine and reflect upon what is truly wonderful about our region." [Letter to Local Legacies staff Evie McCleaf]

In Fountain Green, Utah, the third Saturday of July is set aside for Lamb Day, providing young future farmers an opportunity to prepare their lambs for show and auction. The festival dates from 1932, when economic conditions were difficult and the town fathers were looking for ways to promote this local product. The present-day celebration includes a parade, a pole climb, and occasionally a spontaneous blanket toss (see cover).

Commenting on the Lamb Day celebration, Utah Arts Council folklorist Carol Edison said, "these are modern-day manifestations of our heritage. . . . Many of the people who live [in Fountain Green] today



Monserrate Montalvo, "petate" weaver from Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico, August 17, 1999. "Dona" Monserrate, who makes woven mats, is one of a number of Puerto Rican artisans documented for Local Legacies. Project sponsored by Delegate Carlos Romero-Barcelo. Photo by Giovanni Rufino

have some cultural tie to the sheep industry. . . that occupation still symbolizes who they are and where they came from." [Salt Lake Tribune, September 29, 1999]

Mayor Bob Salley of Salley, South Carolina, was tempted to send in chitlings for his Local Legacies project the "Chitlin' Strut," nominated by Sen. Strom Thurmond, but decided that souvenir books, brochures, photographs, and other memento from the event would be less odorous and easier to archive. The annual festival includes crafts, entertainment, hog calling, and, of course, the deep frying of thousands of pounds of hog intestines. The mayor, for whose ancestors the town is

named, said the nomination was a "very high honor." [Augusta Chronicle, December 24, 1999]

The common thread in all these projects is community, says project coordinator Peter Bartis, and in particular "what makes and reinforces community." The Local Legacies projects provide evidence in abundance of Americans celebrating their local customs, landscapes, and history; feeling proud about who they are and where they live; meeting their friends and neighbors; showing off for visitors; and coming together simply to have a good time. "In just a few months we have found new depth in our surroundings, and

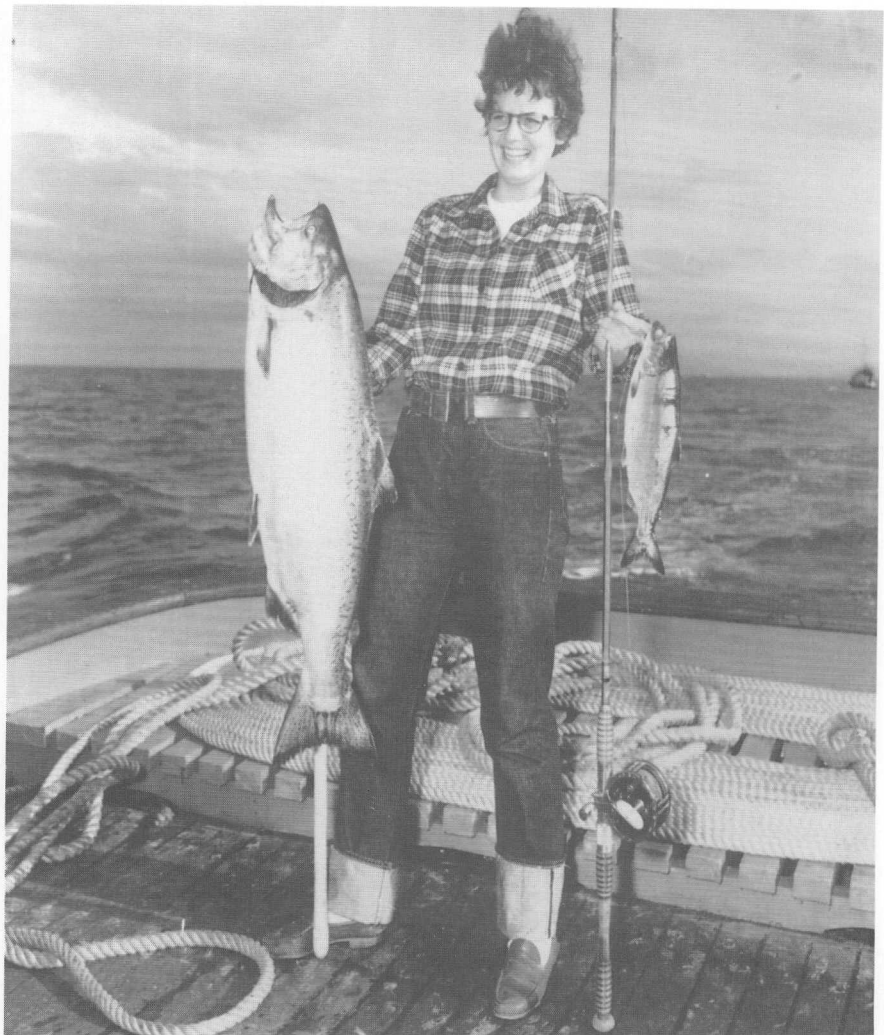
celebration, and Rep. John Larson, of Connecticut's First District, said "I think of the Local Legacies project as a patchwork quilt of American communities; no two [projects] are exactly alike, but each is a true treasure."

It is the mission of the Library of Congress "to preserve, secure, and sustain for the present and future use of the Congress and the nation a comprehensive record of American history and creativity." Across the country a panoply of events and activities bears witness to the endless capacity of the American people to celebrate themselves in creative and fanciful and ingenious ways. What becomes part of the National Library through the

discovered a new connection to where we live," wrote Libby, Montana, high school student Alice Maahs to Evie McCleaf at the Library's Local Legacies Office. Sandee Hansen, executive director of the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce in Florence, Oregon, was "excited and proud" that the Rhododendron Festival was selected for a Local Legacies project. "Our small town is absolutely aglow because of such an honor."

On March 28, the House of Representatives passed a resolution commending the Library of Congress for two hundred years of outstanding service. Many Members of Congress rose to praise the institution and the Bicentennial cel-

Local Legacies project are the festivals and parades and fairs and crafts and music-making Americans have themselves designated and documented as their "local legacies" to the future.



Phoebe Mason of Chicago, with a twenty-three-pound salmon and a three-pound salmon she caught, Puget Sound, August 11, 1949. The project "Cycles of Life in Northwest Interior Washington" points to the centrality of salmon to the economic and cultural life of the state. Project sponsored by Rep. Jack Metcalf. Photo courtesy Jack Carver Collection, Whatcom Museum of History and Art

Folklife Collections in Crisis

There is growing concern around the country about deteriorating and at-risk ethnographic field recordings from the last century—even recordings made as recently as ten years ago may be in danger. The American Folklife Center feels a special responsibility for addressing this problem since it manages the national folk archive. But many private collectors and small archives are also seeking information on the long-term preservation of their valuable material.

The American Folklife Center and the American Folklore Society are making plans to survey ethnographic field collections of recorded sound and bring together at the Library of Congress specialists in various areas of expertise to formulate recommendations for the preservation and accessibility of this important heritage. Using the survey as a guide, the Center will organize a two-day symposium (scheduled for December 1 and 2) to explore the most urgent and current challenges facing sound archives, including preservation, public accessibility, and intellectual property rights. Recommendations arising from the symposium will be published in a "white paper," in print and online. Archivists, recorded-sound technicians, preservation and media specialists, heritage scholars, and recording company representatives will be invited to participate. This symposium will identify and define common problems, encourage the sharing of the best practices, suggest responses to critical issues, and develop plans for the preservation of folk heritage recorded sound resources for future generations. The project is being funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Council on Library and Information Resources.

Omaha Indian Music: Voices of the Past and Present



Host Drum, 1983 Omaha pow-wow, Macy, Nebraska. First row from left to right: Valentine Parker, Jr., Clifford Cayou, Mike McCauley, James Walker, Albert Dick Sr., and Rufus White. Second row from left to right: John DeCorra, Jacob Drum, Rudolph Clark, Alfred Gilpin, James Edwards, Clyde Hallowell, and Charlie Edwards. Photo by Carl Fleischer (AFC 1986/038: FCP/0-CF-214061-6/36; Digital ID 0059)

By Laurel McIntyre

In a letter to the Omaha Tribal Council in 1983, Alan Jabbour, then the director of the American Folklife Center (AFC), wrote: "If [the recording] is to live up to our dreams for it, it should make a special contribution to encouraging the living cultural traditions of the Omaha tribe today, at the same time that it educates others in Nebraska and around the country about the nature and richness of Omaha culture." Jabbour was

describing an initiative of the American Folklife Center to produce an album of Omaha wax-cylinder recordings dating back to 1895-97 that eventually was published as the record album *Omaha Indian Music* (AFCL71).

As it turned out, the idea to collaborate with the Omaha in preparation for the album led to several projects and an ongoing relationship. Interviews with tribal elders, the return of cassette copies of the wax-cylinder recordings and simultaneous documentation of pow-wows,

as well as the production of the album and a concert at the Library of Congress, established this relationship in the 1980s. And, in 1999, the Folklife Center, as part of a National Digital Library Program project, again consulted with the Omaha tribe in preparation for an Internet presentation of traditional Omaha Indian music. On February 3, 2000, *Omaha Indian Music* joined the more than seventy multimedia collections that are part of the Library of Congress's American Memory Historical

Collections. The Center hopes that this recent online project will foster the survival of cultural traditions among Omahas at the same time that it educates others throughout the world.

In 1979, the Center inaugurated the Federal Cylinder Project to catalog, make copies of, and disseminate to the Indian communities of origin thousands of wax-cylinder recordings that had come to the Library from the National Archives and other sources. Among these recordings, which were recorded between 1890 and 1942, was an extensive collection of Omaha songs. Staff for the project thought these recordings would be ideal for a published album. Their sound quality was better than that of many other cylinders, their documentation was complete for a wide variety of songs, and they were among the earliest recordings of Plains Indian Music. While Rev. James Owen Dorsey had previously recorded Omahas, these wax cylinders represented the first Omaha Indian music to have been recorded on the reservation in the field. Also of special interest was the fact that they had resulted from the collaboration of two pioneering individuals: ethnologist Alice Cunningham Fletcher and Omaha Indian ethnologist Francis La Flesche.

About the same time, by coincidence, Omaha tribal archivist Dennis Hastings was becoming curious about references to the recordings included in notes by La Flesche and Fletcher and arranged to hear them. In an article for *Folklife Center News*, a recording technician for the Federal Cylinder Project, Erika Brady, wrote: "He listened with motionless intensity, his excitement clear. Folklife Center staff had already been thinking about producing an album of the Omaha material with accompanying notes, but it was Dennis's enthusiasm that sparked the project to life."¹ The Center received a grant from the L. J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation for production of the album, but more than financial support would be required to make the



Dance Honoring John and Susette Turner at the 1983 Omaha pow-wow, Macy, Nebraska. Second row (behind unidentified girl) from left to right: Dennis Turner, Francelia Clark, Maxine White, Elmer Blackbird, and Dale Saunsoci. Second row from left to right: Kenny Blackbird and Ruby Turner. In an interview with Alan Jabbour in February 1983, John Turner provided information about wax-cylinder recordings that were being considered for inclusion on an LP (AFC L71 Omaha Indian Music). Photo by Carl Fleischhauer (AFC 1986/038; FCP/0-CF-214061-4/27; Digital ID 0033)

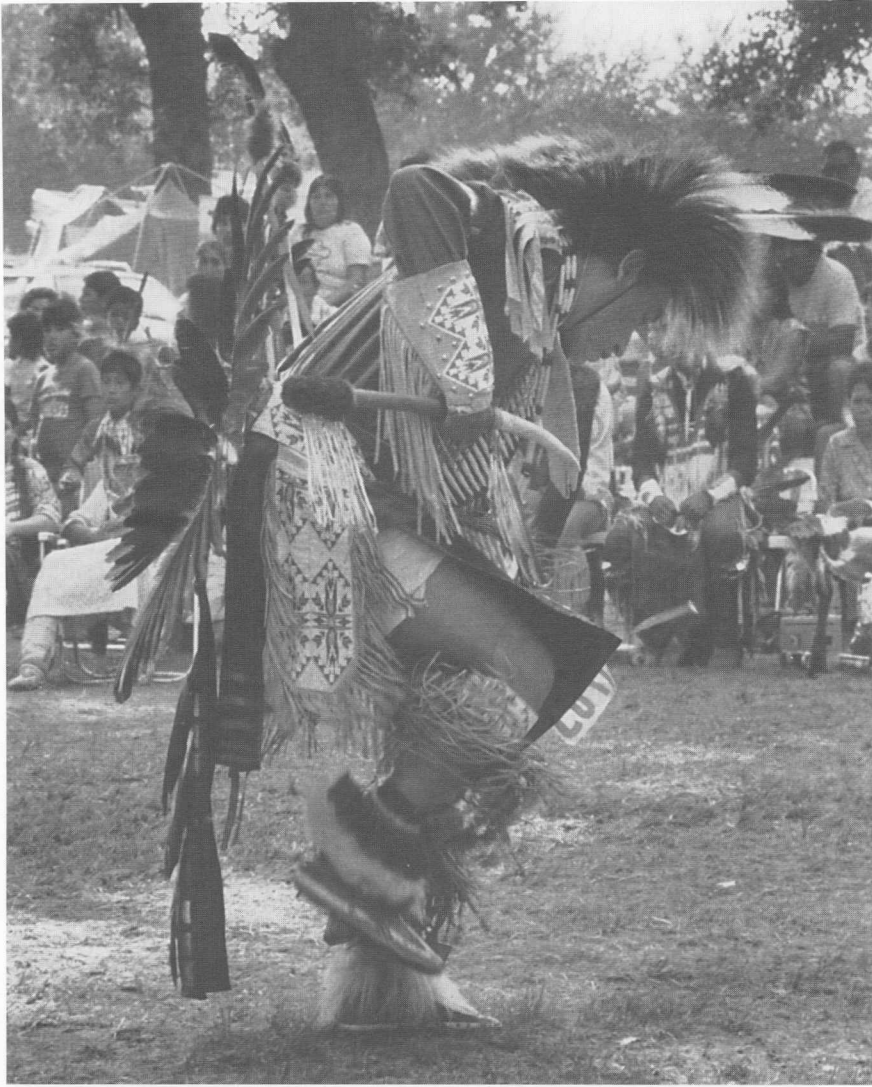
album possible—the Center would need the collaboration of the Omaha tribe.

In late February of 1983, Jabbour traveled to the Omaha reservation in Macy, Nebraska, to present the plan for the project to members of the tribal council. He took with him the recordings that project staff Erika Brady and Maria La Vigna had prepared, in the event that someone might wish to hear them. In the April–June 1983 issue of *Folklife Center News*, Jabbour described what happened:

Dennis Hastings gave an initial talk, then I made a fairly lengthy presentation describing the project, the Fletcher/La Flesche collection, and the Folklife Center's publication plans. The Council members seemed interested but were curious to hear for themselves. At that point I excused myself to run out to the car and retrieve my cassette recorder. When I came

back, I discovered that the Council had sent for two old men to join us. One of them was 80-year-old John Turner, whom I later recorded. I played examples from the cylinder recordings, concentrating on the hethu'shka (warrior songs) category. When John Turner began singing along with some of the 1896 recordings, I knew we were home free.²

As more tribal members listened, the positive response continued. Roger Welsch, noted Nebraska folklorist, humorist, and writer, was struck by the reactions of individuals at the elderly center. In an article published in the *Lincoln Journal-Star*, Welsch is quoted: "As they listened, their mouths began to move in time with the beat of the music. Their lips mouthed the words. They muttered names of friends long dead. Their eyes glazed with tears..."³ The music had not been forgotten.



Traditional dancer Joe Snowball, 1983 Omaha pow-wow, Macy, Nebraska. Photo by Carl Fleischhauer (AFC 1986/038: FCP/0-CF-214061-6/9; Digital ID 0051)

The person who was perhaps most familiar with Omaha songs at the time was John Turner, the very person who had joined the tribal council meeting the day before. During the following afternoon of Jabbour's February visit, Turner provided commentary that would prove integral to the selection of recordings for the *Omaha Indian Music* album. Jabbour played *hethu'shka* songs, funeral songs, captive songs, woman songs, victory songs, and love songs, and Mr. Turner offered rich and animated interpretations. Not only did he identify the songs as either acceptable or too sacred for public dissemination, but he also sang along with or after many of them. At the end of one *hethu'shka* song, he sang his own version

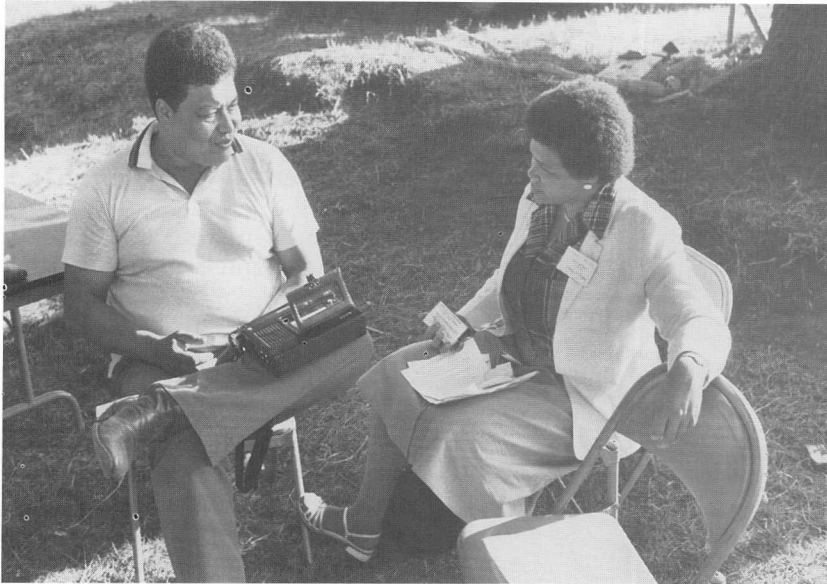
and jokingly gave the impression that his must have been more thoroughly Omaha. "The way I learned it is different. . . . That one's old, I guess. Must have been half-breeds singing it" (AFS 22,622: 0731).

In 1985, *Omaha Indian Music* (AFC L71) became available as a long-playing phonograph record and cassette. Included on this album are forty-four cylinder recordings of public and social songs that were selected from the ninety cylinders of Omaha songs collected by Alice Cunningham Fletcher and Francis La Flesche between 1895 and 1905. The selections were made in accordance with the information that John Turner had provided during the 1983 interview. Among the songs, which are

sung by men and women, are ten *hethu'shka* songs, a traditional funeral song, the Ritual of the Maize, *he'dewachi* or tribal dance songs, war and victory songs, songs celebrating personal and tribal honors, and love songs. Supplementing the recordings is a nineteen-page booklet that includes essays by Dennis Hastings and Roger Welsch, as well as biographical information about the collectors, Fletcher and La Flesche. Also included is contextual information for each of the recordings, and photographs from the early twentieth century and the 1980s.

In celebration of the LP recordings, members of the *Hethu'shka* Society and other Omahas were invited to the Library of Congress for a concert on Neptune Plaza. Participating in this event were emcee Dennis Hastings, singers James Walker and Rufus White, dancers Isaac Caramony, Charles Lonewolf, Morgan Lovejoy, Rudi Mitchell, and Hollis Stabler Sr. During the event, four *hethu'shka* songs were sung in succession, just as they are at the beginning of each pow-wow program. In addition, there was an honoring song that celebrated *Hethu'shka* Society members of the past, and Hollis Stabler Sr., then chairman of the Society, told a story about the formation of the original *Hethu'shka* Society. Other songs sung during the concert were a flag song, the song for the whipman, a buffalo dance, a sneak up, and a quitting song. During a two-step, audience members were invited to join the Omaha dancers. By the end of the concert, as Rufus White explained the history of the drum that James Walker and he had been playing, it was evident that Omaha traditions are still very much alive. And, once again, this was an event marked by the return of copies of wax-cylinder recordings. This time, the recordings, in the form of an album, were available to others as well.

When the American Folklife Center was offered the opportunity to highlight a collection of Native American materials as part of the Library of Congress's



Dennis Hastings and Federal Cylinder Project staffer Dorothy Sara Lee listen to the tape of musician Charlie Edward's Indian Chipmunks, 1983 Omaha pow-wow, Macy, Nebraska. At ninety-one, Edwards was believed to be the oldest man on the Omaha reservation at the time. Photo by Carl Fleischhauer (AFC 1986/038: FCP/0-CF-214061-1/12A; Digital ID 0003)

American Memory Historical Collections, Omaha materials immediately came to mind. The wealth of materials, in the form of older and more contemporary sound recordings, slides and black-and-white photographic images, fieldnotes, and other supporting documentation, set this collection apart. And so, by the end of 1998, plans were underway for a return trip to Macy in order to make a formal proposal to the Tribal Council.

Alan Jabbour and I traveled to Macy and met with the council in mid-April 1999, the first of three trips that we would take together. At 10 A.M. on Monday, April 12, we arrived at the tribal administration building for a meeting with Chairman Blackbird (who was also the chairman in 1983), Vice Chairman Amen Sheridan, Treasurer L. Arnie Harlan, Member Doran Morris Sr., and Dennis Hastings. In addition, Charles Trimble, an Oglala Lakota Sioux, a member of the American Folklife Center's Board of Trustees, and the person who helped to schedule the meeting, was also present. The chairman, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Harlan, and Mr. Morris Sr. were

soon convinced that the Internet would be yet another way to encourage the survival of Omaha culture, and the council

agreed that we would again work with Dennis Hastings, as well as with other members of the tribe. Hastings introduced us to Rufus White, who had been the lead singer of the Host Drum during the 1983 pow-wow. We made plans for a recording session with him and met his wife Maxine, who provided helpful identifications for the photographs to be included with the online presentation.

By late July, Alan and I were again on our way to Macy, as the heat index hovered around 110 degrees. Over the course of four days, White shared a wealth of information about the nearly two hundred songs Folklife Center staffer Carl Fleischhauer had recorded during the 1983 pow-wow. Not only did he translate Omaha words, but, in a number of cases, he shared stories that relate to the songs. For example, he translated a *hethu'shka* song about a warrior's return to his village: "The young man is coming home. Get something ready for him. God



Rufus White during a July 22, 1999, interview at the Tribal Administration Building, Macy, Nebraska. Head singer of the Host Drum in 1983, White provided a wealth of contextual information about the songs that were sung during the pow-wow. Both songs from the pow-wow and his commentary are now available online. Photo by Laurel McIntyre



Chairman Elmer Blackbird and Alan Jabbour, Tribal Administration Building, Macy, Nebraska. In April of 1999, Jabbour and Blackbird discussed plans for an American Memory presentation entitled Omaha Indian Music. Photo by Laurel McIntyre

help us. Pity us. Thank you for the beautiful things that we can share with one another." This translation was followed by a story relating to the origin of the significance of the number *four* among Omahas: An Omaha veteran had made four stops before he returned to his people. He was proud that he could bring

food back to them. He gave sick elderly people four spoonfuls of everything for four days. In doing so, he saved people's lives. Today, four *hethu'shka* songs continue to be sung at the beginning of each harvest festival pow-wow, and the pow-wow lasts for four days (AFS 1986/038: 0759). In some cases,

Maxine White and Laurel McIntyre, 1999 harvest festival pow-wow, Macy, Nebraska. White helped to identify people in photographs that were taken by Carl Fleischhauer and Dorothy Sara Lee during the 1983 Omaha pow-wow. Photo by Alan Jabbour



White could trace the origins of songs to particular individuals. He was able to comment on Omaha songs that he had heard at other pow-wows and to elaborate on the role of singers. He could comment specifically on the quality of the singing and drumming. For example, he knew when one of his fellow singers was slowing up in his drumming. Further, he provided extensive information about the songs that are sung in series at the Omaha pow-wow. Included in this sequence are the grand entry song, a flag song, four *hethu'shka* songs, a song for the whipman, and a song for the pow-wow princess.

The third visit occurred during the harvest celebration pow-wow, which was held August 12–15, 1999. On Friday evening, Jabbour made a presentation about the online project, and later we stood near the speakers' stand and distributed fliers about it. Tribal members approached us to find out how they might access the online presentation. As we consulted with Maxine and Rufus White about photograph information, people curiously peered over our shoulders to see if they too might be able to help with the identifications. And, as we visited with Isaac Caramony, Morgan Lovejoy, and Rudi Mitchell, all of whom had been participants at the 1985 concert, we sensed an enthusiasm for this new means of sharing Omaha culture.

In their seminal work entitled *The Omaha Tribe*, Alice Cunningham Fletcher and Francis La Flesche describe music as "an integral part of the life of the Omaha." "Through song, he approached the mysterious Wakon'da; through song he voiced his emotions, both individual and social; through song he embodied feelings and aspirations that eluded expression in words."⁴ It is this music of the Omahas sung more than a hundred years ago, as well as more contemporary music, that forms the basis for an online collection that joins over seventy collections now available as part of American Memory.

Omaha Indian Music New Online Presentation

Omaha Indian Music features traditional Omaha music from the 1890s and 1980s. The multiformat ethnographic field collection contains 44 wax-cylinder recordings collected by Francis La Flesche and Alice Cunningham Fletcher between 1895 and 1897, 323 songs and speeches from the 1983 Omaha harvest celebration pow-wow, and 25 songs and speeches from the 1985 *Hethu'shka* Society concert at the Library of Congress. Segments from interviews with members of the Omaha tribe conducted in 1983 and 1999 provide contextual information for the songs and speeches included in the collection. Supplementing the collection are black-and-white and color photographs taken during the 1983 pow-wow and the 1985 concert, as well as research materials that include fieldnotes and tape logs pertaining to the pow-wow.

Omaha Indian Music can be reached through the American Folklife Center's Home Page at <http://lcweb.loc.gov/folklife/>. Click on "other collections available online." This presentation has been made possible by the generous support of The Texaco Foundation.

Notes

1. Erika Brady, "Bringing the Voices Home: The Omaha Pow-Wow Revisted," *Folklife Center News* 8:4 (October-December 1985): 7-10.

2. Alan Jabbour, "Director's Column," *Folklife Center News* 6: 2 (April-June 1983): 2-3.

3. Kathleen Rutledge, "Omaha Tribal Songs Put in Record Album," *Lincoln Journal Star*, September 1, 1985.

4. Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe* (Originally published in 1911 by the Government Printing Office as a paper accompanying *The Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of*

the U.S. Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of Smithsonian Institution, 1905-06). New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970.

Laurel McIntyre is a digital conversion specialist for the National Digital Library.

William L. Kinney Honored for Service to the American Folklife Center



At the February 18, 2000, meeting of the Board of Trustees of the American Folklife Center, Center director Peggy Bulger presented William L. Kinney Jr. with an ornamental duck decoy, carved by Lennie Burcham, in appreciation for his service as chairman of the board. Kinney has been reappointed to the board for another six-year term by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Photo by David Taylor

"Instinctive Folklorist": An Interview with Jo Radner

Conducted by James Hardin,
with photographs by David A.
Taylor

Last year Jo Radner, professor of literature at American University, joined the Board of Trustees of the American Folklife Center as the first president of the American Folklore Society to serve in a newly created ex officio position for that office. Both the American Folklore Society (AFS) and the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) are now represented, signaling a closer relationship between the Center and these two national scholarly societies. I spoke with Jo Radner following the February 18 meeting of the board at the Library of Congress.

Jo Radner began her career in folklore through the "indirect route" of her Harvard University studies in Celtic languages and literature. Her plans were for an academic career as a scholar and teacher. Along the way, she discovered that what most interested her was the way language and literature, and stories in particular, functioned in a social setting. Because Celtic literature was invented in an oral culture, she found herself, of necessity, studying folklore, both at Harvard in the late sixties and on her own later on.

In 1971, Radner joined the faculty of American University in Washington, D.C., to teach in an interdisciplinary Ph.D. program. Duncan Emrich was there

at the time, long after he had served as head of the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress, and Radner eventually took over his course Introduction to Folklore. Shortly after coming to Washington, she met Alan Jabbour, then head of the Folk Archive at the

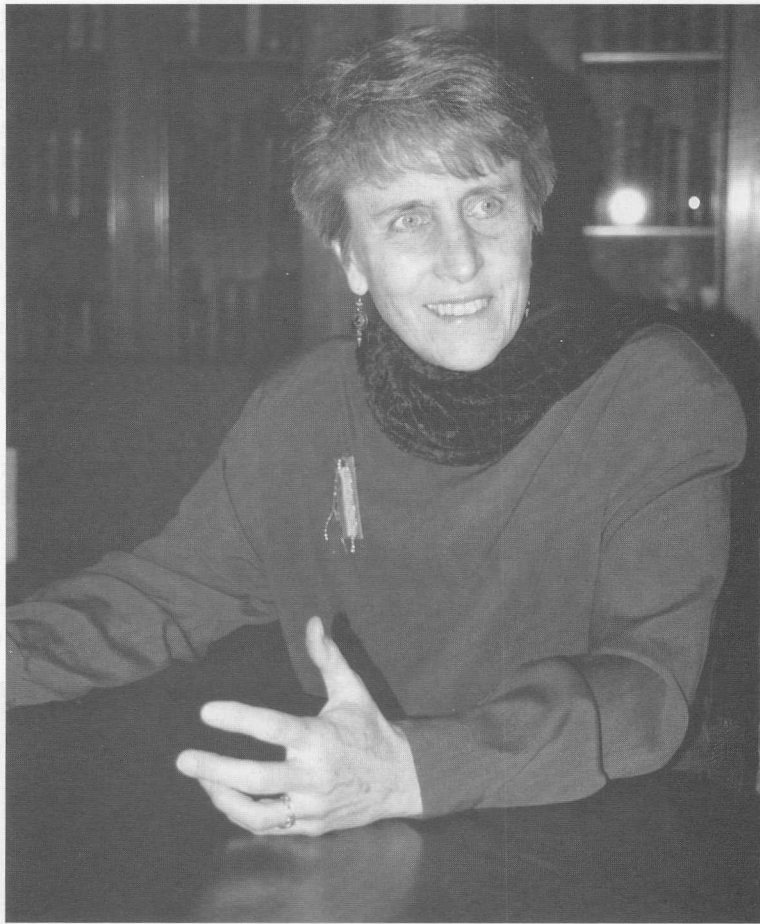
with the common thread of narrative," and her teaching is affected by that interest. She has her students tell stories in class, for she believes that with the telling, the "enactment" of the story, comes understanding. One discovers, for example, that the decorative "runs" in Irish

narratives, often regarded as stock passages (such as how a warrior arms for battle) are in fact opportunities for performance, a chance for the fun of showing off one's narrative skills, of "juggling ten balls."

At American University, she teaches a wide variety of courses, including women's folklore, a seminar on theories of oral narrative, Celtic myth and literature, storytelling in North America, Irish and Scottish folklore, and general education courses on the literary imagination. Her current research focuses on composition and performance of literary "newspapers" at village gatherings in post-bellum northern

New England—a little-known genre that offers a window into community culture and values.

Radner balances her academic work with her professional participation in the American Folklore Society. She is coordinating the creation of a long-range planning document for the society, and I asked her about the



Library of Congress, and Jabbour further encouraged her to pursue her interest in folklore.

"Never teach anything you don't want to learn," is one of Radner's mottos. She discovered herself to be an "instinctive folklorist," and she very much wanted to learn more about folklore.

Radner characterizes herself as "an eclectic person," interested in "a lot of different things,



relations between academic and public sector folklorists. The idea that there is a dichotomy between academic and public folklore is "a dangerous myth," she said. Folklore study has broad implications, and the methods and skills of folklore have broad applications. Folklore study equips students for academic work, but it also equips them for "work in the world," and the non-academic, applied practice of professional folklorists in turn enriches academic folklore study.

While some high-profile academic programs in folklore have been called into question recently by university administrators, Radner stresses that many others are thriving. And there are other signs of success for the folklore enterprise: many festivals and public programs with a folkloric content (such as those on National Public Radio) have a high intellectual integrity, and folklorists occupy positions of national leadership at NEA and NEH. Grassroots interest in folklore and cultural documentation is very high. There has been an increasing momentum in activity over the past decade, and people outside the academy are doing great work.

Radner praised the addition to the Center's board of trustees of an ex officio position for the president of the American Folklore Society. Within the Library of Congress, she said, there is a new understanding of the importance of the work of folklorists and the place of folklore documentation within this great national institution. Folklore is an essential part of the American

story. She called it an "amazing and important coincidence" that the president-elect of the AFS is also the director of the Center. Peggy Bulger's dual role should serve to increase the communication that is now going on between the two complementary organizations, she said. Both Center and Society are making long-range plans, and thinking together about how to work together. The Center has the Congress, the Library, and the Folk Archive. The Society has its membership and national and international reach.

In fact, Radner noted, "the board of the American Folklife Center has now become a node of folklore planning for the country." It is a "cross-section of folklorists practicing their art." The board brings together people from federal agencies that are becoming increasingly committed to folklore, and provides access to these people for folklorists (and their respective agencies and organizations) on the board. As a profession, "folklorists are engaged in a period of self-examination and planning as we move into the new century," Radner said. And folklorists today are confident of their abilities and of the important contributions they have to make in the world: "We have found what folklore was destined to do."



interested to know that among those being honored are Mickey Hart, Alan Lomax, Pete Seeger, and Ralph Stanley.

On-Going and Up-Coming Activities

Folklife Poster: The Center is cooperating with the Department of Education to produce a poster that will be available for display in schools across the country. A poster is produced annually as part of the department's "Read Right Now" program, and this year's edition will feature a folklife theme, with suggestions to teachers for developing reading skills using folklife activities. The department is funding the design of the poster, and the Center must raise private money for printing and distribution.

Ethnographic Thesaurus: The Center has organized a committee composed of folklorists, ethnomusicologists, archivists, and librarians to discuss the creation of an ethnographic thesaurus. Such a publication would provide consistent representation of ethnographic subject terminology, using a comprehensive, controlled vocabulary, so that material could be better cataloged and more easily accessed by researchers.

Folklife Field Schools: The winter issue of *Folklife Center News* included an article by David Taylor on the Center's field documentation training school at Kenyon College in Ohio. Plans are underway for another field school at Indiana University in June and July of this year, and Center staff have discussed the possibility of an "Appalachian" field school in the future.



American Folklife Center T-Shirts

Show your support for American folklife! Tell others about the American Folklife Center! Wear a folklife T-shirt!

American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, T-shirts are available from the Library's Retail Marketing office. Logos are green and blue, and printed on a light-green, 100 percent cotton shirt. They are available, in Large and Extra-Large, for \$15, plus \$5 for shipping and handling. Prepayment is required. Please send orders, along with checks made out to the Library of Congress (\$20 for each shirt) to: Library of Congress, Attn:

Bill Brown (Retail Marketing), 101 Independence Avenue, SE, Washington, D.C. 20540-4985.

The shirts were provided to the Center by Grateful Dead Productions (through the agency of Center board member Mickey Hart) and are also available from the Grateful Dead's On-line Store at <http://www.GratefulDead.com>. Click on On-line Store, then Shirts, and then on Library of Congress T-shirt. Grateful Dead Productions offers the shirt in beige, and in Medium, Large, Extra-Large, and Extra-Extra Large sizes.



Pictured here at the Neptune Fountain in front of the Library's Thomas Jefferson Building are Folklife Specialist Jennifer Cutting and folklife researcher Todd Harvey. Photo by James Hardin



The Robinson family gets ready for the evening dance, 1983 Omaha pow-wow, Macy, Nebraska. From left to right: Jamie, Linda, Norman Jr., Norman, and Seth Robinson. A new online presentation from the National Digital Library, Omaha Indian Music, is described on page 11. Photo by Carl Fleischhauer (AFC 1986/038: FCP/0-CF-214061-11/16; Digital ID 0087)

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