



NEW YORK
**FOLK
LORE**
NEWSLETTER



Spring 1996
Vol 17 No 1

*All About Apples
The 1996 Fall Conference
September 27-29, 1996*

All About Apples will probably not be the title of this year's conference, but I hope it caught your attention, and it does suggest something about the location and some of the pleasures that await you there.

On September 27-29, the New York Folklore Society will gather at Breezy Hill Orchard & Cider Mill in the Hudson Valley just a couple of hours north of the Big Apple for a family-friendly weekend of music, stories, dancing, superb food, apple picking (they grow 45 varieties of apples), and scholarly presentations and discussions. Cosponsored by Breezy Hill and City Lore, the conference will focus on rural heritage and agricultural traditions (including those of Latino and European ethnic communities engaged in farming in the region), foodways, agriculture and the city, and how communities document their own traditions.

Breezy Hill, owned by Elizabeth Ryan and her husband Peter Zimmermann, is a nationally known, small family farm that grows organic fruits and vegetables, makes delicious preserves and baked goods, runs its own farm market and cafe, supplies farmers markets in New York City and Dutchess County, and, on the side, produces and hosts wonderful cultural events. Elizabeth is a lay folklorist of wide experience who has spent many years documenting the traditions of Hudson Valley farming communities, both resident and migrant.

City Lore: The New York Center for Urban Folk Culture (and once the New York City chapter of NYFS), will bring to the table varied interests and cultural perspectives from that biggest of apples. It will be a fun and stimulating conference with lovely, early fall weather in a beautiful setting—a weekend satisfying to mind and body. We'll have more details in our summer newsletter, but for now, save the dates.

NYFS Receives Major Archives Grant

I am very pleased to announce that the New York Folklore Society has been awarded a \$49,000 grant by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) for a collaborative project of folklorists and archivists to develop and publish guidelines for archival description of folklore materials. Though not long on panache, this newest phase of our Folk Archives Project will create a tool that may save a great many collections of folklore documentation from physical or intellectual oblivion, not only in New York but throughout the country.

Archivists faced with cataloging folklore collections have no accepted guidelines for describing the materials so that they both maintain their identity as folklore and become accessible to scholars from other disciplines. Furthermore, archivists trained in work with historical records are generally unaware of the distinctive nature of folklore collections and are ill equipped to catalog them well. As a result, many collections that document folk traditions are either not accepted by archives at all, are described in ways that their folklore content

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The New York Folklore Society Newsletter is published quarterly and provides information and services to individuals and organizations involved with folk arts.

Please observe the following copy deadlines: October 1 for the Winter issue (Dec. 1 to Feb. 28); Jan. 15 for the Spring issue (Mar. 1 to May 31); April 1 for the Summer issue (June 1 to Aug. 30); and July 1 for the Fall issue (Sept. 1 to Nov. 30). Articles should be submitted on disk using a standard Macintosh or DOS word processor. If this is not possible, please contact the editor in advance.

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is obscured, or are held in archives effectively accessible only to other folklorists. NYFS program director Karen Taussig-Lux, archivist Albert Fowler, a Capital District editorial group and a national advisory group will address these issues in the published guidelines, due out in looseleaf format next summer.

—John Suter

MENTORING GRANTS AVAILABLE

The Mentoring Program for Folklife and the Traditional Arts completed a very successful year in 1995 funding consultancies for the following 18 organizations and individuals around the state:

Molly's African Image
Tung Ching Chinese Opera Association
Asian American Arts Centre
Soh Daiko
Sodus Youth Venture
Cooper Memorial Library
Christ's Redeeming Love Church
Department of Social Services
Port Washington Public Library
Capoeira Foundation
Czechoslovak-American Marionette Theater
Storycrafters
Perla De Leon
Chinese Theatre Workshop
Port Washington Public Library
Sullivan County Historical Society and Catskill Art Society
Hanford Mills Museum
Bank Street College of Education

Deadlines for 1996 Mentorship applications are April 15, August 1, and October 15. The program pays for up to two days of professional consulting (at \$200.00 per day), plus travel and expenses (up to \$250 per consultancy), for tech-

nical assistance with any aspect of folklore or folk arts programming from marketing to program planning to teaching folk arts skills, and more. Highest priority will be given to consultancies that directly benefit 1) folk artists, or 2) community-based organizations in African-American, Asian, Latino, Native American, rural or other underserved communities of the state. If you or someone you know could take advantage of this program, please contact us soon. We'll be happy to talk over your idea and help you find a mentor. If you want to receive a copy of the guidelines, contact us at 607-273-9137, and we'll add you to the list.

REPORT ON THE FALL 1995 FOLK ARTS FORUM:

Heritage Movements in New York State

On November 30, 1995, 15 participants attended the Folk Arts Forum, "Heritage Movements in New York State," held at the Schenectady County Public Library. Bill Johnston of the Champlain Valley Heritage Network and Karen Engelke, Director of the Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor spoke about their engagement in the cultural tourism and economic development efforts that characterize heritage movements in this state and across the country.

Bill Johnston, the Essex County Planner in Elizabethtown, along with several other colleagues in the county, established the Champlain Valley Heritage Network (CVHN), to develop a comprehensive plan for economic and community development in the region. The group seeks to develop a new kind of tourism in which the interpretation of the region is controlled locally, in which tourism-related businesses are owned locally, and which will create local specialized-skill and professional jobs for county resi-

1996 FOLK ARTS FORUMS

The New York Folklore Society announces its 1996 Folk Arts Forum season. The Forum is a series of informal but stimulating meetings held in locations throughout the state that bring people together to discuss issues related to folklore and folk arts. Under the auspices of the New York Folklore Society, an individual or organizational co-sponsor hosts and helps plan each forum. Typically, the organizers invite the participation of individuals from related fields or professions outside folk arts to encourage lively discussion and the cross-fertilization of ideas. This year we are offering the following forums:

Sacred and Secular Arts, Thursday, March 14, 3:30 to 6:30 p.m., the Cathedral House of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, 1047 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY. (Look for the report in the summer issue)

Folklore, Archives, and Copyright Issues in New York City, Tuesday, April 16, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., hosted by the New York Metropolitan Reference and Research Library Agency, 57 E. 11th Street, 4th floor, New York, NY.

Folklore and Archives in Central New York, Monday, April 22, 1:00 to 4:00, hosted by the Central New York Library Resources Council, 3049 E. Genesee Street, Syracuse, NY.

Folklore and Archives in Western New York, Tuesday, April 30, 1:00 to 4:00, hosted by the Rochester Regional Library Council Offices, 390 Packett's Landing, Fairport, NY.

These three forums are part of the New York Folklore Society's Folk Archives Project, funded by the New York State Documentary Heritage Program. We welcome folklorists, archivists, organizations that have sponsored folk arts projects, those that hold collections of folk archival materi-

Note:

Promised remembrances of Kenny Goldstein will appear in the next issue of the newsletter. If you want to contribute, please contact the editor.

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A Place In My Memory

Betty Remis

Many of our elders are isolated from the community, not by choice but by the lack of opportunity for meaningful community interaction. We as a community are poorer because of this. There is a wealth of knowledge in the stories of our elders, stories steeped in time and experience. It is by speaking the stories and by listening to the stories of others that we call our community into existence. As we refine our use of language and learn to listen to both the spoken and written work, we cultivate that community and enrich our lives as individuals and as a group. By hearing the past of others and by speaking our own past, the present is changed and the future can be newly conceived.

—Sharon Humphries-Brooks

In September of 1995, Sharon Humphries-Brooks of Storyworks received an Artists at Work: Community Projects Grant funded by the New York State Council on the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the Central New York Community Arts Council. The project was called "The Fine Art of Porch-Sitting." Once a week for 12 weeks she met with a group of elders from a retirement community in Clinton, New York to exchange and develop stories based on personal experiences. The group used a variety of artistic media including the written and spoken word.

Their work included a performance for and workshop with Miss Zumpano's fourth grade class at Clinton Elementary School, as well as a community-wide presentation at the Kirkland Art Center. The elders' stories, with photographs, were edited into a collection, *The Fine Art of Porch-Sitting*, copyright 1995 by Sharon Humphries-Brooks, published in paperback at \$16.95 by Simple Gifts Press, 8775-M Centre Park Drive, Suite 317, Columbia, MD 21045.

This story by Betty Remis is one of many to emerge from *The Fine Art of Porch-Sitting*. The story and photographs are reprinted by permission of the publisher.

This story starts in my memory many, many years ago.

As a small child I would walk to my Grandmother's rooming house. This big brick three-story house was on the main street in Hudson, NY, on the banks of the Hudson River. The building is a storehouse for many of my childhood memories.

I can remember sitting on the curb out in front, waiting for the parade headed by "Blinky" the



**Betty Remis's grandmother
Maryanne Gaffey Dowling**

clown. Parades were very important in the little city. They were great civic demonstrations. We weren't as sophisticated, I guess, as they are today. People are so blasé now—"Oh, I'll watch it on TV." But then, what a great day it was.

We would get all dressed up for the parade. I can remember wearing my little sailor dress and waving my flag. Everyone would come out waving their flags. We would wave them for quite a while, too. Then the sounds of the band would herald Blinky's coming. "Here he comes!" with shoes that looked a yard long. "Blinky! Blinky!" we cried, hoping to get his attention so he would throw us some candy kisses. The bands followed and the shiny fire trucks and the sheriff waving to all from his great chestnut horse.

I'll never forget the time the sheriff's horse fell. He had his deputies on either side, and he'd come to wave at all the store people. He thought he was of great importance. I can even remember his name. Milt Sawpall. He was like the Lone Ranger. But when his horse tripped—oh! Poor horse! He was all right, though. He jumped right back up and the sheriff jumped back, too, into his horse's saddle.

After the parade passed, we would dash through the oak doors of the boarding house and run up the twenty-eight stairs with a banister just made for sliding down. There was always a race to the top



Grandmother's rooming house.

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The 1995 New York Folklore Society Fall Conference

"Colliding Truths in the Interpretation of Culture":

Melissa Ladenheim

Cooperstown was the setting for the November 1995 annual meeting of the New York Folklore Society, a gathering which simultaneously marked the 30th anniversary of the Cooperstown Graduate Program (CGP). The conference was a collaboration between the NYFS and the Cooperstown Graduate Association. It was supported in part by a grant from the Folk and Traditional Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts.

"Colliding Truths in the Interpretation of Culture" was the theme of the conference—reflecting issues of concern to folklorists and museum professionals alike.

John Carter, Curator of Photographs at Nebraska State Historical Society and graduate of CGP, gave the keynote address. Using the condition of parallax¹ as an interpretive frame, Carter focused attention on the issues of how culture is perceived and thus, how it is ultimately presented and represented. He made a distinction between fact and truth; facts are immutable; truth, he argued, is contingent on perception. Differing perceptions create a condition of parallax in the interpretation of culture. Having said this, Carter charged his audience with the task of "being able to see with both eyes" as they engage in the study of culture, emphasizing that it is our moral imperative to do so. His polemical talk set an appropriate stage for ensuing discussions on the "colliding truths" in the presentation of culture, as exemplified by the recent controversy over the Enola Gay exhibition at the Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution.²

D.W. Meinig, Professor of Geography at Syracuse University,

Alan Jabbour, Director of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, and Langdon Wright, Associate Professor of History at CGP spoke about their specific disciplines in the Friday afternoon session. Each addressed the conditional nature of knowledge and the contingencies of the interpretive process.

Barbara Franco, standing in for the scheduled speaker Lonnie Bunch, took up the issue of the Enola Gay controversy the following day in the panel "Reconstructing the Recent Past: Commemoration or History?" Franco began by asking, "Who has the authority to interpret culture to the public?" Returning to the theme of divergence between truth and fact, she called for the production of exhibitions which incorporate multiple voices and viewpoints. Responding to Franco's remarks, Richard Case, CGP graduate and columnist for the Syracuse-Herald Journal and Herald American, noted the power of objects and the potential for conflict over the manner in which they are contextualized and interpreted.

The discussion which followed Franco's talk was emotionally and intellectually charged, and it powerfully underscored the theme of the conference. Audience members jockeyed for position in an effort to add their own perspectives on the controversy surrounding the Enola Gay exhibition. Folklorist Peter Voorheis made an impromptu presentation on his perception of the conflict, concluding "the Enola Gay was about truth and the perversion of truth."

Saturday afternoon's session titled "Colliding Truths in Public

Presentation" featured presentations by Elaine Eff, another CGP graduate who is now Director of Cultural Conservation Programs and Administrator for the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs, and Gretchen Sullivan Sorin, Professor and Director of CGP. Eff's lively talk on her work with Smith Island, Maryland residents was both entertaining and enlightening. How residents see themselves and others, how they are perceived, and how they wish to present themselves to a growing tourist population were points discussed by Eff. Sorin gave a compelling presentation on her role as curator of the exhibit "Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews." She began by asking, how does one tell a story with multiple truths? Recognizing the existence of colliding truths is one thing; finding a means to practically present those oppositions within the context of an exhibition is another matter altogether. Using installation shots, Sorin walked the audience through the solutions she and her committee of advisors devised ranging from language usage to artifact choices. It was a wonderful example of the movement from theoretical issues to practical solutions in the area of presentation.

Although there was much talk about the need to produce interpretive programs that embody and reflect multiple truths, Sorin's talk was one of the few that actually spoke about practical strategies. Responding to Franco's comments on the Enola Gay exhibition, Robert Baron, Director of the Folk Arts Program at New York State Council on the Arts, commented that "social scientists have known for a long time that exhibits are never ideologically neutral." He asked, how then might we incorporate this multiple vocality into our exhibits? The question went essentially unanswered and was really an opportunity missed to exchange practical presentational strategies that go beyond simply having a diversity of media; interactive computer monitors do not necessarily offer a different message than text labels.

NOTES

1. Parallax is the apparent change in direction of an object caused by a change in the position from which that object is observed. Thus, parallax is a condition of perception; each eye perceives the object from a different angle.

2. A new addition to the list of controversial exhibitions is the photographic display curated by John Michael Vlach based on his book, *Back of the Big House: The Cultural Landscape of the Plantation* installed at the Library of Congress. Although it had been well-received by other Black audiences, several of the Library's African-American staff members found the display offensive, and the Associate Librarian decided in response to their complaints to dismantle the exhibit.

3. This was a major theme of the conference, yet ironically, Kent Barrick, President of the New York State Historical Association/Farmer's Museum, in his opening remarks championed the Fenimore House's recently installed Indian exhibit for its approach to the displayed objects "as art not artifact," and thus a break from an ethnographic interpretive framework.

Melissa Ladenheim is Staff Folklorist at Traditional Arts of Upstate New York, in Canton.

The Community Cultural Initiative:

A Developing Model for Cultural Programs Grows at the Ethnic Folk Arts Center

Tom van Buren



Egyptian sufi dancer Husni, performing at the 1994 Maharajan al-Fan. Photo: Martin Koenig.

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of cultural programming for the Ethnic Folk Arts Center (EFAC) and its predecessor before 1982, the Balkan Arts Center. In addition to media projects and publications, the concert programs have spanned a wide range of contexts, program combinations and target audiences. Multi-cultural festivals lie at one end of the spectrum; at the other end are community-controlled, ethnically specific events in local—and for general audiences, out of the way—settings. While EFAC still produces events for general audiences, including part of its Ethnic Music Concert Series and the Folk Parks festivals, since the late 1980s the emphasis of the Center's work is in developing community collaborations to design and produce programs that feature, celebrate, and in some way nurture traditional performance arts. These projects are named Community Cultural Initiatives and have received support in the form of seed money from the now defunct Folk and Traditional Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Community Cultural Initiatives evolved quite naturally from the general approach of EFAC's staff to folk and traditional arts practitioners. The precedent for this approach was set by Balkan Arts/Ethnic Folk Arts Center founder Martin Koenig who brought to the Center a deep knowledge and keen interest in the music and dance of the Balkans Region. As a photographer and a dance instructor, Martin established a special relationship with the artists and the various communities in which he worked. He was joined by Ethel Raim in 1975, who brought extensive experience in music performance and festival

production to the Center, following six years work with the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife in Washington, D.C. Together, they approached each project or production as a collaborative development, with both artists and community groups. Some of the early projects were simple concerts, festivals, and recordings, but many involved a special planning and presentation process, involving master musicians and their students, generations of musical families, church committees, and ethnic press and other media. The implicit assumption throughout this work was that the "folk arts" or "traditions" are not merely an



Palestinian Singer, Ruba Hayek performing at the 1994 Maharajan al-Fan. Photo: Martin Koenig.

assortment of flavors in the multi-cultural mix to be put before "general" audiences, but rather that these performance arts are, or can be, an integral part of the life of the diverse communities of New York City.

Among the early projects were the klezmer presentations of the

legendary Dave Tarras and his students, musical traditions of the Greek and Italian communities, and the development of Cherish the Ladies, a group composed of the daughters of some of the most musical Irish families in the New York area. Beginning in the late 1980s, the Center began pooling together contacts with performers and resources of community organizations to develop collaborative cultural projects in the traditional arts.

The first Community Cultural Initiative was in the Albanian community. This project drew upon some ten years of EFAC contact and experience with Albanian performers and their communities throughout the New York region. The goal of the initiative was a festival of music and dance that would bring together some of the disparate factions of a community that was divided by region of origin as well as along religious lines between Catholic, Muslim, and Eastern Orthodox faiths. The 1991 Albanian Festival was fully produced by EFAC, in collaboration

with the Rozafati cultural organization of a Catholic parish in the Bronx. In subsequent years, the latter group gradually took over increasing elements of the organization. This past Fall, the Fifth Albanian Festival was produced in the theater of Fordham Preparatory High School, without any assistance from EFAC. Inevitably, there was some divergence of purpose and priorities from the earlier events, with less participation of some of the more distant fac-

tions of the community. At the same time, key members of the organizing committee remain steadfast in their desire to widen participation.

The second collaborative project was in the Portuguese community of northern New Jersey. Following a year long field work

Tom van Buren is Director of Field Research and Presentations at the Ethnic Folk Arts center.

project, EFAC produced two collaborative events largely for community audiences: the Festa Convívio at Don's 21 Restaurant in Newark in 1992 and in 1993, a concert program of Portuguese traditional music and dance. The latter was a co-production with the Comoes Center for the Portu-



Singer, Adelia Cerquiera, Newark, photographed during research phase of Portuguese CCI. Photo: Martin Koenig.

guese Speaking World at Columbia University. It presented community-based performers of instrumental music, *fado* and *desafio* song styles, and a special presentation of the Rancho Folclórico Casa do Minho, a Newark-based group that performs the rural music and dance traditions of Minho, the Northernmost region of Portugal. Currently EFAC is planning a recording project featuring some of the traditions presented at these events.

In 1992, Martin and Ethel embarked on a third project to conduct research and presentation in the Arabic-speaking communities of New York. This project centered on the older Levantine communities that are well-established here. The presentation phase of the project resulted in the 1994 Mahrajan al-Fan (literally, Festival of Art), a community-wide celebration of Arabic and Arab-American culture at the Brooklyn Museum. The impetus for the event lay in a core Arab community organizing committee that helped accomplish the work of fundraising, program design, and publicity. The festival was repeated as a two-day event in September of

1995 with a major increase in the level of support from the Arab community, mainstream business, and local politicians. In addition to creating the largest single community-based event for traditional Arab culture in New York City, the Mahrajan also helped to put the Arab community on the political map as a positive force. The Center was able to facilitate direct support for the event from Brooklyn Borough President Howard Golden and City Councilman Kenneth Fisher. As of this writing, the organizing committee is planning an event for the Fall of 1996.

These programs helped develop a model that is currently being applied to three Community Cultural Initiatives in the Asian Indian, Dominican, and West African immigrant communities. Through the preceding projects, a three-part model has evolved that will guide the current projects:

1. Initiation/Field Research: investigation and documentation of local ethnic traditions; identification of tradition-bearers, community needs, resources, and opportunities; and establishment of relationships among key contacts.

2. Community Collaboration/Presentation: program design and implementation, with technical assistance as appropriate, in collaboration with community members and/or organizations.

3. Culmination: a transition toward ongoing community-sustained cultural activity, and sometimes additional presentations by EFAC on a larger scale and for general audiences.

The communities vary tremendously and test the applicability of such a model across cultures and urban immigrant experiences. The most recent arrivals of each community face special hardships in establishing themselves and even more so in maintaining their traditional culture. The Community Cultural Initiatives create an opportunity to facilitate the development of cultural networks and can contribute to a community's effort to maintain cultural continuity, expand its sense of cultural identity, and develop the skills to take charge of its cultural resources.

The stated goals of the projects are as follows:

1. To increase interest in and support for community-based traditions from within and outside the community.

2. To assist community-based organizations and individuals in becoming activists and self-sufficient managers of their community's music and dance traditions.

3. To develop viable venues in the community for performance of root traditions.

4. To help establish contemporary means for the passing on of root traditions to younger generations.

5. To increase earned income for community-based performers.

Of the current projects, the Dominican Community Cultural Initiative is in the middle of the second phase, with one public program complete, and another in the planning stages. During the first phase, the primary research was carried out by ethnomusicologist Martha Ellen Davis with a team of Dominican students



Portuguese "concertina" player at the rehearsal hall of the Rancho Folclórico Casa do Minho in Newark. Photo: martin Koenig.

from Lehman College in the Bronx. Together, they were able to identify an impressive array of performers. Like all cultures, the Dominican culture suffers from a combination of poverty and social pressure that diminishes support for and opportunities to practice

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From the Field

1996 FOLK ARTS ROUNDTABLE

The eleventh annual Folk Arts Roundtable will take place on May 8-10 at the Hotel Syracuse. The Roundtable is an annual forum for the public folk arts field in New York State devoted to the discussion of ideas, issues, and practices of public folk arts programming. It is organized by the Folk Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts and the Cultural Resources Council of Syracuse and Onondaga County. This year's theme will be "communicating with the public about our work through writing, publicity, and media coverage." Those wishing to attend should contact Daniel Franklin Ward, CRC Folk Arts Program Director, Cultural Resources Council of Syracuse and Onondaga County, 411 Montgomery Street, Syracuse, NY 13202, tel. 315-435-8554, fax 315-435-2160.

RCHA CONFERENCE

The Regional Council of Historical Agencies will hold its annual conference on Monday, May 6, from 9:00 to 4:00 at Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute. The theme of the conference is "Changing Opportunities in a Changing World." The keynote speaker will be Fred Wilson, the curator of the 1993 Maryland Historical Society exhibition, "Mining the Museum," which took an innovative approach in using the Museum's collection to represent the history of groups that were not included in that collection. An artist himself, he regards museum exhibits as art installations and regards curatorial work as artistic expression. Panels include sessions on interpretative strategies for exhibitions, raising local corporate funding, and preserving folklore documentation. For further information contact RCHA, P.O. Box 28, Cooperstown, 13326, tel. 1-800-895-1648.

DELAWARE SEEKS FOLKLIFE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

The Delaware Division of Parks and Recreation seeks qualified applicants for the position of "cultural conservation program manager." The selected applicant will direct the Delaware Folklife

Program, now in its fifth year. Applicant should have a graduate degree in folklore/folklife or a related cultural field, plus experience in cultural resource fieldwork and management. Interested individuals should contact the Division's personnel office to receive an official announcement and state application form. Starting salary is in the mid-30s. Please contact Greg Abbott or Karen Lanter at 302-739-5286.

WORKSHOP ON COPYRIGHT ISSUES

The Western New York Association of Historical Agencies (WNYAHA) announces a one day workshop to address the current status of federal copyright legislation; examine case studies relating to major "tests" of copyright infringements; and help participants become more familiar with copyright basics that may affect the holdings of the historical and cultural institutions they represent. The workshop will take place on Wednesday, May 1 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Strong Museum in Rochester. Participants are encouraged to specify their most significant concerns about copyright before the workshop; please include a brief statement of concerns/questions when registering so that presenters can focus on issues relevant to participants' needs. The presenters will be Lucretia McClure, Librarian Emerita of the E.G. Miner Library at the University of Rochester and Brian Shaw, Esquire, Attorney with Cumpston & Shaw in Rochester. The fee is \$20.00 for WNYAHA members, \$25.00 for non-members. To register, contact: Liz Geuss at 131 West Main Street, Batavia, NY 14020, 716-345-0023.

NEW YORK STATE HISTORY ELECTRONIC DISCUSSION LIST

The New York State Archives and Records Administration announces NYHIST-L, the New York State History Electronic Discussion List, which is now on the Internet and open for subscription. NYHIST-L deals with all aspects of New York State History and is intended to be a forum for announcements, discussion, research inquiries, and referrals. To subscribe send the following e-

mail message: SUBSCRIBE NYHIST-L, <your name> to LISTPROC@UNIX10.NYSED.GOV. For more information about NYHIST-L contact William Evans at 518-474-8955 or via e-mail at bevans@mail.nysed.gov.

SPRING MEETING OF ORAL HISTORY IN THE MID-ATLANTIC REGION

On Saturday, April 20, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Port Washington Public Library will host the spring meeting of Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR). The theme of the conference is "Long Island Sounds: Oral History and Community History." The keynote speakers will be Ruth Schwartz Cowan and Neil M. Cowan, authors of *Our Parents' Lives: The Americanization of Eastern European Jews*. Public and academic historians, librarians, archivists, teachers, folklorists, independent researchers, and others sharing an interest in oral history will have the opportunity to hear about oral history projects, learn about oral history techniques, and meet key experts in the field. For further information contact Elly Shodell at the Port Washington Public Library, One Library Drive, Port Washington (Long Island), NY 11050, tel. 516-883-4400, ext. 168.

GRANTS FOR WOMEN 54 YEARS AND OLDER

The Thanks Be To Grandmother Winifred Foundation offers grants to individual women at least 54 years old for projects that enrich and empower the lives of adult women (i.e., those 21 years or older). Grant amounts vary between \$500 to \$5000 dollars. Examples of projects previously funded include: a documentary video of four women elders who have kept the rituals and ceremonies of Wampanag tribal culture alive in Massachusetts; preparation of thirty years of a woman's hand embroidery records, catalogues, and articles for archiving in the Southwest Collection at Texas Tech University; and a joint quilt-making project with ten Caucasian suburban women and ten inner-

city ethnic senior women to foster interracial and multicultural understanding and friendship. Application deadlines are March 21 and September 21. For more information contact: The Thanks Be To Grandmother Winifred Foundation, P.O. Box 1449, Wainscott, NY 11975-1449.

Grandmother Winifred was the daughter of William Upjohn, who started the Upjohn pharmaceutical company and is the paternal grandmother of the Thanks Be to Grandmother Winifred Foundation's founder and president of the board.

FORUM REPORT

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dents. Their most recent projects include a system of 27 interpretive signs in a nine-town area from Ticonderoga to Keeseville; a map guide to the region; and an interpretive insert for an Amtrak schedule through the Champlain Valley and a book on Valley farms, "Fields that Work: Working Landscapes of the Champlain Valley."

The Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor originated as an effort to address the issue of economic decline in the post-industrial cities along the Mohawk River. [See the Fall 1995 issue of New York Folklore Newsletter for more information on the Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor]. Karen Engelke emphasized the need to include contemporary traditional culture in the interpretation of the region and looks forward to the participation of folklorists. Later this year, grant money will be available for pilot projects in the corridor.

In the ensuing discussion, participants discussed ways to include field research as the basis of cultural programming; the issues of developing and maintaining partnerships among parties that may have differing agendas; how to deal with controversial issues; and how to have minority voices heard in the planning process. The possibility of future forums or workshops that would bring together folklorists and heritage groups around the state was raised. Bill Johnston invited forum participants to come to the Network region on a fieldtrip to see the work the group has achieved and to discuss ideas for collaborations. [See listing of 1996 Folk Arts Forums in this issue].

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als (slides, tapes, survey reports, etc.), and other parties interested in archives and folklore. Following brief introductory presentations about folklore and archives, we will discuss a range of issues related to the care and use of folk archival collections in New York State.

The **New York City Folklore and Archives Forum** will include a session on copyright issues led by Dan Mayer of Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts from 2:00 to 4:00. Participants are invited to attend either session or both. There will be a charge of \$7 to cover Dan's honorarium. Please preregister by sending a check made out to the New York Folklore Society to Karen Taussig-Lux, 2337 16th Street, Troy, NY 12180 by April 9.

Partnering With Communities to Design and Carry Out Cultural Projects, Tuesday, June 4, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., hosted by the Cultural Resources Council, 411 Montgomery St., Syracuse, NY

What has been your experience in developing broadbased community projects with large groups of people? Have you run into brick walls? Experienced unanticipated successes? As folklorists and traditional arts specialists reach out to create new partnerships and collaborations to survive the lean years of public arts funding we will find increasing use for the skills of effective group facilitation and goal setting. This forum, led by Community Built director Deborah Clover, will examine the role of the folklorist both as a professional bringing expertise to a community project and as a facilitator who can assist a community to mobilize its own expertise about itself. Deborah will present techniques that she and others have found to be very effective in bringing diverse groups of people to agree on and work toward a common project goal.

Other forums this year include:

Ethnographic Journalism, July 1996, Place TBA

Field Trip to the Champlain Valley Heritage Network, Essex County, September 6, 1996

Vernacular Architecture in New York State, Fall, Time and Place TBA

Please register a week in advance of the forum by contacting Karen Taussig-Lux, 2337 16th Street, Troy, NY 12180, 518-272-7899.

CULTURAL INITIATIVE

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traditional arts. At the same time, a commercial dance music industry and the media have rushed in to fill the gap. The project identified several areas of cultural practice that are largely neglected by the mainstream. They include folk *merengue* played on acoustic instruments; *palos*, the music of drums used in Afro-Dominican sacred practice and secular dance music; the *salves*, sacred songs associated with pilgrim-



Singer Besim Muriqi, performing at the 3rd annual Albanian Festival in 1993.

age and folk religion; and finally, improvisational poetry.

The first presentation featured the *palos*, *salves*, and poetry in a mixed program based on the theme of the Virgen de la Altagracia (Virgin of High Grace), the Dominican patron saint. The program was co-sponsored by the Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture. This event served as an opening presentation of sacred traditions that are seldom found on stage. Presenting these arts to a largely Dominican audience afforded the community organizing committee with an opportunity to lay the ground work of publicity, cooperation, and trust necessary to accomplish a larger project, a festival that will present a true range of the diverse traditions of Dominican culture. This festival will take place on June 23 of this year, at Highbridge Park in Washington Heights. Many hurdles remain, including fundraising, the forging of ties with a suitable venue, and a wide range of contacts with people inside and out-

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CULTURAL INITIATIVE

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side the community who would have an interest in the work of this project. Most importantly, the project needs to find that point of transition at which local, insider initiative breathes life into it so that it can truly attain the third phase: the community sustained cultural activity.

The West African and Asian Indian Community Cultural Initiatives are in early and middle research phases. But they will face many similar issues concerning cultural validity, viability, and sustainability. EFAC is committed to a community-based approach to cultural programs. The presentation of cultural exoticism is only as sustainable as the interest of general audiences. Artistic and performance practices with historical depth and social significance requires more than an audience: they need a local network of community and intercultural interests that can pool together human and financial resources to help the various cultures of our larger community to thrive.

PLACE IN MY MEMORY

From page 4

for a slide on the magic carpet in the hallway. Then on into Nanny's dining room for root-beer and homemade donuts. This room held the magic of "Let's Pretend." This is where we sat to listen to the radio.

The kitchen, not so far away, was a long narrow room that smelled of good food and homemade soap and new oil cloth. My mother would always warn me not to get under foot. My grandmother (we called her Nanny) would try to stop all my questions. The whys, the wheres, the hows of how she performed her kitchen magic amazes me still.

In the kitchen sat this great black cast iron stove with many ovens. This stove was operated by someone, usually Nanny, putting coal in the hole on the left hand side and removing the ashes underneath. I never remember anyone actually lighting the fire. It was always lit and stood ready for the pies, cakes, puddings, casseroles, and bread to be made and baked. Things were always bubbling with wonderful smells and sounds in Nanny's kitchen. Nothing was better than sitting down to a cold glass of milk and warm molasses cookies that Nanny made.

I wonder if Nanny ever sat down with her grandmother in Dublin, Ireland, where she was born? There is no one left to tell me. She must have had a wonderful teacher.

Often on Saturday evenings we would get together with cousins and have taffy pulls while the adults played cards and chatted. Nanny would mix the molasses, brown sugar, butter, vinegar and baking soda to whiten the mixture. She never seemed to use a cookbook—just a cup of this and a pinch of that. The mixture was then cooked and set to cool until ready for pulling. Hands were washed and slightly greased, a piece of the mixture was handed to those present, then we pulled and twisted the candy into various shapes. Next we cut it in two inch lengths. It made great chewy taffy.

Beyond the regular kitchen, there was also a storm kitchen in my Grandmother's rooming house. It was a room that had no heat, but Nanny would hang her clothes there on a bad day. She also put the soap there to harden. I remember the time we made soap—but that's another story.

The storm kitchen had all different kinds of smells, with all different kinds of shapes hanging everywhere. There was one light in the room that dangled from the center. In order to turn it on, you would pull the string that also dangled down. It would swing back and forth, back and forth. I remember watching all the shadows the light made on my grandfather's underwear, his long underwear hanging there. All this motion of things hanging and swinging everywhere!

In the corner, way in the very far corner, there was a little door. There were always noises that came in from there. I would ask Nanny, "What was that? What was that?" The floors were squeaking and the whole room was cold. She'd say to me, "That was the Wee People!" So I can remember thinking, "They live in there, through that little door."

One day, a man came. He was huge. He had on a pair of overalls, and he had this awful, mean-looking wire thing hanging all around him. He went into the storm kitchen. I watched him. He went right over to what I thought was the Wee People's door. He opened it, and he put this wire thing in there. I backed up and sucked in my breath. I didn't know what he was going to do to my Wee People! As it turns out, it was a plumbing closet.

That's where all those noises were coming from. Down from the upstairs.

Nanny tried to hold her superstitions down, though. Having come to America, they'd tell her, "That's Banshee talk." She still did a few funny little things, but she tried. Eventually, she became Americanized. Still, it was a mysterious old room.

Now, the parlor was another story. You were only allowed to go there with permission from Nanny. This room held her prize possessions and a Victrola to play records. I wound and wound and would listen by the hour to the music. Some were very sad ballads. Some were truly terrible. The ballads today, you think they're crazy, but when you look back, there were some pretty cuckoo things we did and went through. I can sure remember one song about Lizzie Borden. It was better than Frankenstein. It went:

Lizzie Borden had an ax
Gave her mother forty wacks.
Gave her father forty-one
Washed her hands and
she was done.

There was another song—it was a ballad, too—about the Lindbergh kidnapping. It was so sorrowful.

Sometimes my Grandpa would come into the parlor to sneak a little nap. He would remove his shoes, and I was the look-out because Grandma would scold if he was caught. One afternoon, Grandpa fell asleep. Suddenly, I saw smoke coming from his suit jacket. "Nanny, come quick!" I yelled. "Grandpa's on fire! Grandpa's on fire!" Nanny appeared with a pan of water, dumped it on her dozing husband, then left the room. Nanny was always a woman of few words. My grandfather had a few choice words, though.

I heard later from my mother that Grandpa had stopped off and had a few too many with the boys. Since he wasn't allowed to smoke in the parlor, he had put his cigar in his pocket. I guess it was not fully put out.

Oh, Nanny's rooming house was always such a place of wonder to me. Amidst all this confusion, the doorbell would ring, Nanny would remove her apron and tend to the people inquiring to rent a room on the third floor. Many people passed through, stopping for only a night's rest. They'd often be gone by morning, never to be seen again. Like our memories. At least some of them.

FALL CONFERENCE

From page 5

On a more general note, as a folklorist I was struck by some of the comments made during the conference in relation to objects, memory, and narrative. It seemed to me that some of the basic precepts of our discipline were being trotted out as new discoveries. Two examples of such points made by conference participants come to mind: 1) that objects are ethnographically charged³, and 2) that less than true accounts of events can nonetheless be meaningful statements. I raise these points not to draw battle lines, but rather to ask questions about the relationship of the field of folklore to other academic fields. Why are museum professionals consulting with psychoanalysts, as Barbara Franco did during her tenure in a Minnesota museum, on the subject of narrative and meaning? Folklorists are well versed in that relationship. We also have long known about the power of objects, the value of anecdotal knowledge, and the potential of a single, humble voice to speak for a culture. These concepts are the very foundation of our discipline, what defines and distinguishes us—why are we the only ones who know that?

I encourage folklorists to continue attending the conferences of other disciplines with which we share interests and methodologies, to read and publish our articles in their journals, and to collaborate with like-minded organizations on projects and issues for which we all care deeply. We can use these occasions to not only educate ourselves, but also to educate others about the work we do.

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The New York Folklore Society is dedicated to furthering cultural equity and crosscultural understanding through its programs serving the field of folklore and folklife in New York State. The Society seeks to nurture folklore and

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More on page 2.

Save the dates

Advocacy Reminder

*There's still no New York State budget, which means no budget for the New York State Council on the Arts. **Have your legislators heard from you yet? If not, please write them, or better yet, visit them in their home offices. It's not too late, and your contact now can help remind them of the importance of funding for the arts. Be sure to let them know what the Folk Arts Program supports in their district!***

Thanks for pitching in.



Members of Rozafati, an Albanian cultural group of the Bronx community, performing at the 3rd annual Albanian Festival in 1993. See "Community Cultural Initiatives," page 6.

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