

Folk Songs Reclaims Its Place in American Heritage

By ROBERT D. CAREY
 United Press International
 MOUNTAIN VIEW, Ark. — (UPI) — The heartbeat of America has been called the pounding rhythm of the big freight trains that beat along the rails and the thump of the giant oil rigs gouging deep into the land. But here it is the songs of its people that rise above the tap roots of a nation.

The foothills of the rolling Ozarks meet the rugged edge of the Ozark National Forest in this town of 983 called, aptly enough, Mountain View. And each Friday night the people come in to sing their songs, most of which can be traced backward through the stream of history as surely as any family tree.

This weekly meeting of the Rackensack Folk Society and others like it in Arkansas are preserving a now revitalized form of American culture that only a few years ago seemed destined to pass into oblivion—the folk song.

Jimmy Driftwood, organizer of the society and a folk singer and writer of some renown, talked in the Stone County Court-house where the Friday night gatherings meet.

"This," he explained with emphasis, "is not a hootenanny." "No sir," said Driftwood, whose craggy face mirrors a lifetime in the hills. "These are

folk songs sung by folk singers, and there's a big difference."

People Stream In
 The people rolled in. They came from nearby Timbo, or over at St. James or up from Old Lexington. Others came from isolated dwellings in the mountains that have nestled there for a century or more. They came in battered jalopies overloaded with children and banjos or in sleek new station wagons and pickup trucks. They had come just to sing and listen.

A listener is likely to hear such perennial favorites as "Butcher Boy," "May I Sleep In Your Barn" or "Irene Goodnight." He would hear some of the modern ones too. "Texas Rangers," "Kickin' Mule" and "Bile Them Cabbage Down."

The revival of folk songs has been due in part to groups like Rackensack.
 Driftwood explained it: "For a while there in the late '50s the country's songs had no meaning. And when your country's songs begin to lose their meaning, then a part of what you believe in about the country may lose its meaning too."

The rebirth of folk song popularity can be traced, in part to one of Driftwood's own songs, "The Battle of New Orleans," which has sold over five million copies.

A young girl stood at the front of the room. An old man and a boy on either side of her strummed their guitars. A sad,

shy voice sang of things long past and people long dead. The faces of the mountaineers were silent and expressionless. The

women sat in neat, homemade dresses and balanced babies on their laps. A lot of the men were dressed in colorful Western shirts. A few wore overalls and some smoked pipes or hand-rolled cigarettes.

"A whole new generation of Americans are enjoying these songs," Driftwood said. "These ballads have meat on their bones. They tell stories of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers, the westward trails of the pioneers and before that of their life in Europe."

Arkansas has done much to advance the preservation of this heritage. The two major annual folk singing festivals in Arkansas, those at Eureka Springs in the autumn and the one here in the spring, will be joined by a third next year at Little Rock. They have drawn thousands of out-of-state visitors over the years.

All Ages Sing
 The music swung into a quicker mood. Four men armed with a banjo, two guitars and fiddle played the lively "Eighth of January." The people clapped and hummed. A middle-aged lady

on the aisle stood up and danced a quick jig — sort of a cross between the Charleston and the Bunny Hop. She was joined by several more including a spry fellow that looked near 70. The hardwood floor shook with rhythm.

Driftwood, a former school-teacher, likes to recount the background of the songs he sings and writes. He said the lyrics would change as the people moved westward from Europe then across the Great Plains. They would make their nightly sings around the campfires correspond to the settings — first along the Atlantic Coast, then Kentucky through Tennessee, and still different words to incorporate settlers in the Deep South and those farther West.

With each stop the flavor of the ballads changed to fit the present. And when nothing in the past fitted that which was happening, a new song was composed and sung by some unnamed poet. Many were not written down for centuries, being sung only by the old to the young, year after year.

The Family Council
 Editor's note: The Family Council consists of a judge, physician, three clergymen, three editors and a women's editor. Each article is a summary of a family disagreement presented to the council. The council deals with problems, major and minor, encountered by guidance counselors and social workers. Edited by Mrs. Alma Denny. (Copyright by General Features Corp.)

Francis F. — I love him, but some of his habits annoy me.
 Drew Y. — If she loved me nothing about me would faze her.

Francis F. — Love may be blind, but it's not deaf. Drew and I are engaged and it's a real love thing. Still, he does a couple of noisy things that drive me to distraction. Is it fair for me to expect him to use a toothpick instead of squeaking his tongue to get his teeth clean? And he cracks his knuckles, sneezes, coughs, yawns — all so loud.

Drew Y. — She does things that are goat-grabbing, too. But I can't bear to find fault with her because, in general, she's such a wonderful pal. The little nuisances don't matter when they're surrounded by so much charm and kindness. She combs her hair every five minutes, chews three sticks of gum, is scared of mice. So what? I love the girl.

The Council — We commend Frances for keeping a clear head on her shoulders throughout her "courtship daze." It's easy to overlook the persnickety disadvantages tied in with the glorious prize of a good husband. A personal note as analogy: The Council Editor moved to a charming new apartment. It was only after living there a year, when the novelty had worn off, that she noticed it was at the end of a block which ran steeply uphill. Huffing up the hill each day, she's having second thoughts on the move. The momentum of

Christmas Gifts For State Hospital To Be Delivered Dec. 14
 Christmas gifts assembled by the Jackson County Mental Health Association for patients will be taken to the state hospital at Salem on Dec. 14.

It will be necessary for all contributions to be at the point of departure, 602 Catherine St., by Friday, Dec. 13, it was announced. If assistance is needed for delivery, call the chairman of the committee, Mrs. Herbert Gifford, 772-6080 or 773-7220.

Gifts for Fairview Home will be accepted, if requested. They should be marked as to where the gifts are to be delivered.



STONE COUNTY SINGS — It's tune-up time in front of the Stone County Court House as youngsters and oldsters gather for weekly song-fest, recently held in Mountain View, Ark. (UPI)

Announcing...



I am pleased to announce that there has been a change of ownership of Southern Oregon Trailer Mart in Phoenix, Oregon. For several years, I managed the Mart and now I take pride in announcing that I have purchased the business.

Johnny Blount

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