

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Nov 17 - Steve Gillette & Cindy Mangsen at the Club
Acoustic - With Lea Coryell - 8PM

Nov 20 - Hazlewood at the Reston Folk Club - 7:30PM

Dec 29 - Rod MacDonald, Jane Gillman at the Club
Acoustic - 8PM - Industrial Strength Theater

Follow the Wash Post Weekend, WAMU Bulletin Board,
WLTT 'Music Americana' and your local papers for news of
folk activities in the DC area.

How to become a member? Send or hand \$12.00, checks to **The Reston Folk Club**, to a board member or Dave Hurd at the address below. Membership is for one year and entitles one to a mailed newsletter and discounts to events. Also, to perform in a **Folk Club** sponsored community event, one must be a member (the "open mike" is open to ALL, member or not).

The Reston Folk Club

at The Tortilla Factory
648 Elden Street
Herndon, VA 22070
c/o David Hurd
1405 Cottage Street SW
Vienna, Virginia 22180



The Reston Folk Club

... Preserving Folk Traditions



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ON BEING FOLK PROCESSED

by - Bill Davis
or how I was Trad upon
other subtitles were considered
but rejected

"You know that song you sang here last year?", a friend of mine asked innocently.

"Sure," I said ... I had sung several songs around the campfire with some friends the year before, but I knew the song he was referring to. He had asked me to give him a copy of the words and I, full of the pride of authorship, had given him a copy.

"Well, I couldn't remember your tune but we were trying to sing it and, you know, the words fit real good to 'Charlie on the MTA'."

My mind reeled, my blood boiled; "Oh, really?", I said in as civilized a tone as I could manage while searching around for a rock to hit him with. — I was thinking; "MINE, MINE, MINE, MY SONG, MY TUNE, MY WORDS, YOU CRETINOUS WORM HOW DARE YOU SULLY A SINGLE SYLLABLE

OR DIDDLE WITH A DEMIQUAVER!" (I thought some other things too, but I must defer to propriety).

"You catching a cold?", he asked (I was beating my chest, turning red and grunting.)

"No.", I answered, covering my outrage with a gentle cough. "Charlie on the MTA? Really, who woulda thunk it." I tentatively tried the combination in my head and found that the words fit about as well as the words to 'The Star Spangled Banner' fit 'Moon River.'

"You would get a lot more people singing it if you used that tune.", my friend suggested, still unaware of the personal peril such remarks placed him in.

"Well, thanks, but I think I'll keep >>> MY <<<!!! tune for now." Delicately pointing out that MY authorship, MY ownership and MY ego were not things to be trifled with.

"Just a suggestion.", he said and wandered off to find some other creature to torment.

I suppose that I should have been honored that he thought enough

of my words to want to sing them to any tune at all. Besides, isn't that the 'folk process?'

Well, yes it is except that if one of my songs is eventually going to be published and credited to Trad., I'd still want it to be my tune. Then, of course, I could point with pride and say "I wrote that folk song" which is from some points of view the rough equivalent of saying "My brother is the unknown soldier."

Somebody once said (I forget who) that 90% of all creativity is simply bad memory, (or something like that). I think that that is probably the case with most traditional songs.

I am sure that most folk songs were written, or at least sung and consciously made up, by some living and breathing author, and it isn't necessarily the author's fault that nobody seems to know who they were any more than it is the fault of the Unknown Soldier that he is unknown.

'Charlie on the MTA', for instance is really a parody of an earlier tune, 'The Wreck of the Old Ninety-Seven' which tells the story of a 1903 train wreck of the Atlanta bound mail train trying to make up time going into Danville, VA - and that song is sung to the tune of 'The Ship that Never Returned' by Henry Clay Work. At least Henry wrote the words to that song - the tune likely preceded him. Et Tu Henry?

Songs don't just spring into being

from some collective consciousness that somehow spontaneously starts singing. A song starts as a rough chunky idea in the mind and ear of some real person, it gets tested and revised, modified and practiced, and eventually it gets written down or memorized or recorded and only then sung for whatever audience is willing and available to hear it. If it is good enough it'll get passed down and become part of the folk tradition, but the original creation still requires work and conscious thought - Authorship.

Sure, I have sung thousands of songs that just sprang into being for one time use - testing out a chord progression or mumbling a phrase or two that might someday make it into a real song. That sort of activity is part of the songwriting process, but I couldn't duplicate any of those original ideas now that didn't eventually get changed, written, chewed, revised and practiced then. Those spontaneously generated songs can't really count as folk songs.

There are those folks who are able to just sing - make up stuff as they go along singing about what they feel like singing about as they go and who are able to do this well enough to make us want to listen. This ad lib talent is truly a folk art, but one which, by its very nature, is more associated with the performer and the specific performance than with the material performed. The performance doesn't really become a folk song until it is passed on or duplicated or written down. And when that happens, guess what, the

performer becomes a songwriter.

We may not know the name of the person who first conceived the new traditional folksong we are singing, but if we think about it a bit we might be able to imagine what they were like or where they were when they were inspired and what inspired them to create it. With a little more research we might be able to find out their names.

Folk Club at Cox's Farm

Throughout October, members of the Reston Folk Club have been providing weekend entertainment at the 'Cox Farm Festival' in Centerville, VA. Every Saturday and Sunday from 11 to 5 the voices and instrumentation of Folk Club members filled the air while hayrides, cider sips, pumpkin searches and whatever was going on.

This was no small undertaking by the Folk Club because it meant transporting sound equipment, coordinating schedules and ensuring that all came off without a hitch. Lynn Jordan volunteered to organize the event and did a marvelous job coordinating all

of the activities.

At press time the entire performers list was unavailable, but among those who performed or were scheduled to participate were: Bill Davis, Ray Kaminsky, Ellen Kaminsky, Joe Navarrete, Tress Nunn, Dave Ross, Joe Kolankiewicz, Paul Hartke, Renee Menanteau, Mike Wilson, Brian Gilmartin, Lea Coryell, Ruth Goldberg, Ira Gitlin, Silken Steel (Cathy & Jeb), Eileen Joyner, Larry Mediate, Joan Kennedy, Gary Hutzell, Joe Broderick and Gail Thompson.

Thanks to all who helped through their participation. The proprietors of the farm were very pleased with the performances and those who visited the festival shared a wonderful experience.

In Memorium

Cora Jackson

The members and friends of the Reston Folk Club express heartfelt condolences to Blues Artist John Jackson on the loss of his lovely wife and companion. Our thoughts and prayers go with you.