



THE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE NEWSLETTER

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Childhood Development Program, as part of an 'Images of Australian Childhood' exhibition. For a week in October, hundreds of people in the Knox region were reminded of the remarkable continuity of child play life.

EDITORIAL

When, in 1979, the Australian Children's Folklore Collection was established, the co-directors (also editors of this Newsletter) hoped that it would become a valued resource not only for specialists such as researchers, but also for the general community.

We would welcome readers' suggestions for the further dissemination of information about the children's folklore archive at I.E.C.D.. We also welcome - most warmly - contributions to the Newsletter.

June Factor
Gwenda Davey

Looking at the names in the Visitors' Book for the last 12 months, we believe that our hopes have been at least partially fulfilled. A representative sampling includes Dr Sandra Dolby-Stahl, visiting Fellow at the National Library in Canberra and Associate Professor of Folklore and American Studies of Indiana University, Bloomington, U.S.A.; teachers and student teachers from a number of Melbourne schools; a landscape architect from Melbourne University; and a bunch of very enthusiastic trainee teachers from the new School of Education at Footscray Institute of Technology.

As well, two boxes of traditional play materials - part of the archive's collection of childhood memorabilia and play artefacts - were borrowed by the Knox Early



A wigwam for a goose's bridle: family traditions in verbal lore

addressed to children.

by Gwenda Davey

(Paper given to Oral History Conference, University of Melbourne, June 1985.)

A great deal of recent and current discussion on immigration policies in Australia has focussed on the differences which exist between the many ethnic groups now resident in Australia. The 1984 "Blainey debate" in particular asserted that Asians (of diverse nationalities) are so culturally different from others that Australian society as a whole may need to restrict Asian immigration.

Even those favourably disposed to an Australian multi-ethnic society frequently emphasise differences¹, and "culture conflict" is often posed as a major problem to be ameliorated in the interests of individuals and of official policies of "multiculturalism".

At the risk of heaping obscurity upon obscurity, I would like to sub-title this paper "Oh for a Babel fish!" For those who are not already devotees of the comic and perceptive "Hitchiker's Guide to the Galaxy", the Babel fish could be slipped into one's ear where it would simultaneously translate all languages. It is my contention that the very real barriers between people set up by language and the perceived barriers of physical appearance, dress, behaviour etc. all obscure the fact that many individuals and families living in Australia, whatever their ethnic origin, have many, many similarities.

The term "culture" is used a great deal nowadays, in the sense of a system or pattern of behaviour and beliefs shared by a distinct group. Such distinct groups are not necessarily ethnic groups, and may cut across ethnic divisions. Many of us working in children's folklore speak

increasingly of the culture of childhood², a culture which seems to possess many distinct features some of which may be universal³.

I believe we can also speak about the culture of the family, and once again, a surprising number of its features might be found to be universal. A culture is what a social group possesses or knows, and such a culture arises out of the challenges which the life of the group poses. Even allowing for the diverse types of family structure (e.g. nuclear or extended), family life as such poses many of the same challenges to people of different ethnic groups. For example:

1. how will this group of mixed ages and sexes living together at very close quarters get along together reasonably harmoniously and cope with the strains imposed by such a system?
2. what is to be the power structure within the group?
3. what patterns of organisation and behaviour will the family evolve for getting things done, e.g. getting babies to sleep?
4. how will the group impart its values to its children and instruct them in its behavioural expectations?

The family as the most primary of all primary social groups is also a forum for experience and discussion of life's most fundamental issues: birth, death, love, sex, anger, play, humour, beauty and the sheer perversity and contradictory nature of life itself.

My argument is that families of many different nationalities or ethnic backgrounds develop many similar responses to these questions, including similar verbal responses. Such responses may be spontaneous or in traditional fixed forms such as proverbs, and may involve humour, poetry, vulgarity and acerbity such as some of the sharp retorts used in families recorded by Nancy Keesing⁴.

"...to the mountains for some monkeys."

I will discuss some of these issues using two types of verbal folklore for illustration, namely nursery rhymes and what I have called repartee. Repartee includes reprimands and evasions as well as "witty retorts". Languages include Greek, Croatian, Serbo-Croatian, Arabic, Italian, German, Maltese, Turkish, Spanish and English. All items were collected in Melbourne, the nursery rhymes by Footscray Institute of Technology Teacher Education students and the repartee by both FIT and Prahran TAFE Child Care students.

Family organisation. Getting children to sleep is a major issue in many families, and lullabies are a time-honoured (universal?) method. The English Rockabye Baby, the Italian Quando piove and the German Kindchen soll schlafen are only a few examples.

Family roles, power structures and relationships. The Turkish Mother is loved "more than my blonde doll", and Daddy brings "cakes and honey" (Maltese) or goes hunting a rabbit skin for the English Baby Bunting.

The strains of family life are never better expressed than in the English Old Woman who lived in a shoe (who had so many children she didn't know what to do). They are also expressed in some of the repartee which adults use with importunate children who are considered to be too hungry, impatient or curious. Some of the less

vulgar (though not necessarily funnier) items are replies to questions such as

What's for dinner?

Bread and duck under the table
(English)

Cakes with honey (Croatian)

My liver and kidneys (Greek)

Things that people eat (Italian)

Cold bum with pears (German)

Where are you going?

Timbuktu (English)

To the mountains for some monkeys
(Greek)

Somewhere you're not needed
(Croatian)

To Toumtoum (Greek)

How old are you?

Twenty-five years per leg (Italian)

That's for me to know and you to find
out (English)

Thirty-four going on twelve (Arabic)



What'll I wear?

Wear your birthday suit (English)
Wear your pants inside out (Greek)
Wear your underpants back to front
(Greek)

What can I do now?

Go pick a nose (Croatian)
Stop acting like a fart in a bottle
(English)
Put your toe up your nose (German)

What are you making?

A wigwam for a goose's bridle
(English)

Life's ambiguities and ironies can range from the changing moods of family members such as the Little Girl with the Curl to mysteries such as The Cat who is turned into a potato (Greek) or to outright catastrophes such as the cradle which falls when the bough breaks (Rockabye Baby - English). They are also indicated in the many nonsense rhymes such as the Maltese Rowing Boat and Wine Barrel where the biscuits are "eaten by lizards" or the English Crooked Man, and the Greek cat who couldn't dance.

Instruction within the family is equally wide ranging. The religious heritage of a particular ethnic group is indicated in rhymes such as the Spanish Saint Severin or the English Oranges and Lemons (The Bells of St. Clemens) as well as in the prayers said in many families.

Place names such as London, Athens, Patra, Sicily and Sliema are mentioned in the few rhymes already discussed; I can remember as a child tormenting my mother for details about all the place names in Oranges and Lemons (where were St. Martins? St. Clemens? Shoreditch? Stepney?).

Parts of the body (the Beautiful Eye - Italian) and simple counting (One to three four five, catching fishes all alive) are taught in rhymes adults recite to children in numerous languages.

Aesthetic sensibilities. It is within the family that children have their first experiences of beauty whether for the eye, the ear or the imagination. Even literal translation cannot destroy the poetic impact of The Forest You Walk In (Serbo-Croatian) or of the Italian rhyme about the dog sleeping in the haystack. In English one of my own favorites is the English/-American lullaby Hushabye:

Hushabye,
Don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake
You shall have
All the pretty little horses ...

Of course, the exquisite music helps here, too.

In my opinion, the best argument for the study of history is the argument that concerns history's ability to illuminate the present. Verbal folklore is one of the oldest forms of oral history; both its tenacity through history and the spread of such similar material across cultural boundaries support my argument that in families at least, people are brothers and sisters under the skin.

1. Storer, D. 1985 Ethnic Family Values, Melbourne, Prentice-Hall.
2. Factor, J. 1985 Childhood and Children's Culture, Melbourne, Australian Council for Children's Film and Television.
3. Davey, G. 1984 'Are nonsense rhymes for young children culturally universal?' Polycom magazine, October.
4. Keesing, N. 1983 Lily on a Dustbin, Ringwood (Vic.), Penguin.
5. The F.I.T. Nursery Rhyme Book, 1985, Department of Teacher Education, Footscray Institute of Technology, Footscray, Melbourne, Victoria.

Playing 'Fly' — can anyone help?

Recently I was going through Dorothy Howard's manuscript material in the I.E.C.D. Folklore Collection and I came across a description of the game of Fly. This game must have been quite popular at the time when Dorothy Howard was collecting Australian children's folklore in 1954-55, because a number of girls had written descriptions of how to play the game.

I vaguely remember Fly from my own childhood, but haven't seen it played or read about it in recent times. As I am currently working in a primary school playground, trying to increase children's repertoire of traditional games, I thought I would try to teach the game to some children.

This is how a Brisbane girl back in 1954-55 described the game:

This game is played with about ten sticks. It is called 'Fly'.

Only three people can play. You place the sticks down like this and you jump in the spaces. The first person to go is called cobweb, second the spider, and third fly. The fly has to jump as far as he or she can and choose a stick from the ten and cobweb brings it to him and it goes on until someone gets out and cannot jump the big one in one step.

From the above description, it is unclear how someone 'gets out'. When I played the game with a group of Grade 5 girls, some of them knocked a stick or two out of place as they jumped in between the ten sticks. Does this mean that the game is over, or is the game over only when one person fails to jump the large distances once the sticks are widely spread out?

Does anyone remember playing this game? If so, I'm interested to find out if there are any more specific rules that were employed e.g. could more than three people play, and were there any special rules determining the order in which the sticks could be moved.

Please send any interesting tit-bits about Fly to A.C.F.N., M.C.A.E./I.E.C.D., 4 Madden Grove, Kew.

Heather Russell

Elastics— where from?

Research into the history of the game of Elastics continues to provide new and interesting information. Only recently, a senior Staff Secretary at I.E.C.D., whose childhood was spent in India and Burma, told one of the editors that she had played Elastics at boarding schools in both countries in the 1940's. The only elastic available to the girls was bloomer elastic. The trick was to remove the elastic from the bloomers while it still retained enough elasticity for the game, and then convince the matron of the need to replace it!



Growing up in Moldavia.

by Sylvia Brover

Since the end of World War II, Australia has received many thousands of immigrants, mostly from Europe, as new settlers. The culture and folklore of these disparate nationalities and communities have enormously enriched Australian life, including child life. The article below is written by SYLVIA BROVER, a graduate student at I.E.C.D., who recalls her childhood in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

My grandparents and parents were born and grew up in Bendery, Rumania. This small town was invaded by the Russian Red Army in 1940 and became, along with many other places, a part of the U.S.S.R.

When the Second World War broke out, my mother, my grandparents and other relatives were evacuated to Uzbekistan, which is close to Afganistan. My father was in the "Trud Front" (the Labour Front) in Siberia where he nearly died of hunger and cold. Leaving Europe saved their lives because the Jews that remained in the Nazi-occupied countries all perished in the Holocaust. Two of my great-aunts were burned alive by German soldiers in a barn near Odessa.

I was born two weeks after V.E. Day in Magnitogorsk. We moved to Kishinev, the capital of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (U.S.S.R.) when I was six months old. This is where I lived, studied and worked until 1975, the year we became voluntary refugees, and the Australian government gave my husband, my four-year-old son and myself permission to settle here.

Being a Jewish child in Kishinev after the war was not easy. You were always reminded you were a Jew, because other children teased you. I used to get into fights, because I found this kind of abuse particularly hurtful.

I guess we were not religious because, like millions of other people in the U.S.S.R., we did not practise our religion. Still, my father used to buy matzah - traditional Passover bread. This was quite a risky undertaking, as one could be punished by authorities for buying a 'religious cult' item.

Like everybody in the U.S.S.R., we celebrated the coming of the New Year. My parents used to buy a New Year tree and decorate it with shiny toys. My father would dress up as Grandfather Frost and give my sister and me bags of sweets. We were unaware it was really a Christian custom. I remember the smell of the fir tree, the snow, the clicking of champagne glasses at midnight.

We also celebrated International Labour Day on the 1st of May, and the anniversary of the Great Russian October Revolution. On the 8th of March we celebrated International Women's Day by receiving presents from fathers, brothers and boy-friends.

Almost any celebration meant singing and reciting poetry. Mother knew many Rumanian and Russian love songs, lullabies and ballads. Grandmother sang Yiddish songs. As there was no T.V., we children would listen to adults reading or telling stories. I loved grandmother's reminiscences of the 'olden days' - how good it used to be before 'sovetskie' came.

Sometimes on a summer evening a group of children from the neighbourhood would sit outside and listen to one of the older ones telling a spooky story.

Toys were scarce, but we were quite happy to play with shells, stones, bits of glass, pieces of fabric, boxes and sticks. I still remember my very first doll, that was given to me on my fifth birthday, and a red dress with white dots my grandmother made for it.



"The jokes we liked most were about Pushkin..."

The jokes we liked most were about Pushkin, the great Russian poet. I do not now why they were about Pushkin or why they were so obscene. The best joke was the one that had the Russian equivalent of the four letter word.

Most of the games we used to play were similar to the games Australian children play. One game was called 'lapta'. Two groups stood on opposite sides of the playground and tried to hit the children moving around in the middle with a ball. The one who managed to avoid being hit was the winner.

When we played hide and seek, the child to be 'he' had to close his eyes and recite the following lines:

'One, two, three, four, five,
I am coming to look for you,
If you are behind me, you'll burn in a fire.
If you have not hidden yet - it's not my fault.'

This is a rhyme we used for nominating who would be 'he':

'On a porch sat: czar, czarina, king,
prince, shoe-maker, tailor.
What are you going to be?
Tell us quickly, don't make us wait.'

We played a game called 'Feet off the ground'. If you hopped on a tree-stump, a bench or a rock, your opponent could not get you.

When I was reading the Opies' book Children's Games in Street and Playground, one game they describe reminded me of an almost identical game we played as very young children:

Opie (English)

'Sheep, sheep, come home.'
'We're afraid.'
'What of?'
'The wolf.'
'Wolf has gone to Devonshire,
Won't be here for seven years,
Sheep, sheep, come home.'

Russian

'Geese, geese.'
'Ga-ga-ga.'
'Want to eat?'
'Yes, yes, yes.'
'Then fly here.'
'We can't.
Grey wolf behind the hill
Wouldn't let us go home.'
'Fly anyway you like,
But watch your wings.'

As my grandmother was superstitious, she believed that singing before breakfast brought bad luck, and talking a lot about future happy events prevented them actually happening. Broken mirrors were sure to bring great unhappiness, even death. For many years I believed wild geese would take me far away if I did not wash my hair or cut my nails. Grandmother used to say: "If you do not do your home work, you will become a street-cleaner, and you will marry a shoe-maker".

This did not stop me from listening to songs by dissident bards. It was much more interesting to listen to Okudjava, Vissotsky and Galich, than to do home work. Most of the tapes were distributed by students illegally. We liked singing these songs at parties. One of us would play a guitar, a piano or an accordion. Folk love songs were popular; some of them had been composed by Tchaikovsky or Borodin, but had become part of the folk tradition.

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Rhyme

down	and	you	if	find	you	you	will
and	you	love	you	I	love	for	be
up	will	I	love	if	me	love	forget
read	see	that	me	and	not	my	

Rhyme collected by Sue Fenton, a Teacher Education (Primary) student at Footscray Institute of Technology.

Children's Folklore in Britain

We reprint this extract from the American CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE NEWSLETTER, Vol.VIII, No.1, 1985; for the information of Australians interested in children's folklore - in Britain!

There seems to have been a marked resurgence of interest in Children's Folklore in Britain over recent years. Several individuals have been busy with their own fieldwork projects, and it's been suggested that some kind of informal 'Childlore' group be formed to aid communication and cooperation between them. It is to be hoped that something on these lines will materialise sometime in 1985.

If any non-British researchers would like to be kept informed of developments here or would like to correspond with British enthusiasts, they are welcome to contact myself or Georgina Boyes, 78 Moorgate Road, Rotherham S60 2AY, England.

Some recent articles which may not be known outside our own shores are as follows: Jane A. Hubbard, 'Children's Traditional Games from Birdsedge' (Yorkshire); 'Clapping Songs and their Notation' Folk Music Journal 4:5 (1982) pp. 246-264; Nigel Kelsy, 'Norman Douglas Revisted', London Lore 1:10 (1983) pp. 117-125; Nigel Kelsy, 'Collecting Children's Oral Lore in London: An Interim Report', Folk Song Research 2:3 (1983) pp. 32-34; Steve Roud, 'Random Notes from an Andover (Hampshire) Playground: Part 1: Clapping Games', Downs Micellany 2:1 (1984) pp. 21-32; Georgina Boyes, 'Clapping Rhymes from Newfoundland and Sheffield,' Folk Song Research (forthcoming). A long playing record of Children's Singing Games, recorded by Damian Webb between 1960 and 1982, was issued by Saydisc Records in 1983.

Stephen Roud



Growing up in the early 1900's/ part 1

by Nancy Malseed

One of the 'stars' of the National Oral History Conference, held at Melbourne University in June this year, was NANCY MALSEED. A long-time resident of Victoria's Western District, she held her audience enthralled with her detailed, lively account of child and family life on farms and in small towns in the Western District before 1939.

In this issue of the A.C.F.N. we publish the first part of her talk. Further extracts will be published in subsequent issues.

In 1981-83, I took part in an Oral History project - "Leisure and Recreational Activities in the Western District prior to 1939", sponsored by the Glenelg Regional Library. My area was around Casterton, Portland, and places between.

My oldest interviewee was 103, born in Merino, and living her early life there and in Casterton. For those who do not know the area, Casterton is about half way between Mt. Gambier, S.A., and Hamilton, Vic. It is a very pretty little town set in the valley, green hills all around. The Glenelg river winds its way between the Big Hill and the town.

Portland is 60 miles to the south, on the coast. (I will use miles throughout, as that is what they were at the time of my interviewees' stories.)

My 103 year old interviewee (she died last year at 106 - a lovely old lady) remembered skating, dancing, New Year's Eve celebrations, football, Church, and the special train which ran from Merino to Casterton for shopping excursions.

The train ran every Thursday, market day in Casterton, picking up at the Henty siding and small township of Sandford. The arrival of the train in Casterton was an exciting time. It was met by friends and relatives, and by a horse-drawn cab, in which the children loved to ride. As it was only a couple of blocks to the shops, most people preferred to walk. But not the children, enclosed in the shadowy cab, listening to the clop clop of the horse.

The men went to the cattle or sheep markets, while the women, their children dressed in their Sunday best trailing along behind them, visited the shops. No lack of service - shopkeepers were obligingly helpful, no matter how busy.

Some of the children ran to play in the old Cobb & Co. coach at the back of Tom Cawker's, next to main street shops. (Trouble when the boys threw mud at the girls, spoiling their best dresses.)

Tom Cawker was a well known and highly respected citizen of Casterton. His name is commemorated by Cawker's Creek, (formerly known as the Nine Mile) nine miles out of Casterton on the Mt. Gambier Road) and by a plaque at the Glenelg Inn*. Born in England in 1838, he began carrying mails in Australia when only 16 - first by pack-horse, then by coach. From 1861, when he came to Casterton, until his death at 88, in 1926, he was one of the town's most colourful personalities, about whom many exciting tales were told.

His daughter taught school at Casterton, and every year, the new pupils were told of the time her father drove the young princes, allowing them to take the reins briefly - a thrilling experience.

* Glenelg Inn, the established stables for Cobb & Co.



The occasion was on June 24th, 1881, when the Royal party left Adelaide for Penola, staying the night at the beautiful old homestead, "Yallum Park". A brand new Cobb & Co. coach was sent from Hamilton, with Tom Cawker at the reins.

He drove to "Yallum Park", and with a change of horses and troopers at Lake Mundi, Tom Cawker drove proudly into Casterton, gaily bedecked with flags, and a right Royal welcome.

The young princes were the Duke of York, (afterwards King George V) and his brother the Duke of Clarence. The Princes gave Tom Cawker a sovereign for the baby girl born to Mrs Cawker that day.

In 1901, Tom Cawker, "The Prince of Whips", received a Royal Command to visit Parliament House, Melbourne, when the Duke of York presented him with a gold mounted whip. Next visit, 1921 he received another invitation. "Royalty never forgets", said Miss Cawker.

Does the term "Sunday best" mean anything to today's children? It certainly did in the early years of this century. Sunday was a special day - no sport or amusement. Children accompanied their parents to Church, elaborately dressed.

One whole seat would often be taken by an entire family - no-one else would think of sitting there. Nearly every one of my interviewees said that Church played a big part in every life. First question asked of any newcomer was, "What Church does he belong to?" The Churches were active as religious and social centres, friendly rivalry between them.

Sunday observance was strict. Church in the morning (again at night, if a service) - Sunday school in the afternoon. A large midday roast dinner, and High Tea with family and friends, followed by hymn singing around the piano or organ. This might sound dull, but most of the hymns were bright and lively, and they had their friends with them. A sumptuous supper followed.



(The tale was told of the really old days, before the churches were built, when the preacher, from the back of a buggy, was telling his congregation (seated on the ground) the story of Moses. "And Moses said" he thundered - the horse moved - "Whoa there, Charlie.")

Church organisations occupied much time through the week. Youth groups, sewing for the missions, Club swinging, Junior choir - later, senior choir, where many romances bloomed and blossomed.

Harvest Festivals - the Church decorated with greenery and an abundance of produce, afterwards given to charity. They sang the traditional Harvest hymns - "We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land" and "Bringing in the sheaves".

Highlights of the Church year were Sunday school anniversaries, and later, the annual concert. For the anniversary, (and each Church tried to outdo the others - everyone went to them all) seats were erected in tiers, in the Church or Sunday school. Practically all the children had new clothes for the occasion - white a great favourite with the little girls, frothily trimmed with lace and ribbon, hair curled with curlpapers the previous night, and everyone sang lustily from "Hymns of Praise No 20" or whichever number was being used that year. Simple melodies and even simpler harmonies, but their message stayed with the children for years.

Boys were NOT so keen on Church, but urged on by their parents. If, for any reason, such as sickness, the parents could not attend, the children were told they'd be expected to know "The Text" on which the minister preached. So "wagging it" was difficult.

Then there were the concerts! On one occasion a small girl, sick with nerves, thought she could not sing her verse about the pansy. (Each girl sang about a different flower.) This poor child appealed to an older girl in the row behind - "I can't sing - I'm sick," she whispered. Said the older girl - "It doesn't matter; you've GOT to sing, even if you're dying." So the little girl got up, began her verse, and broke down. A sympathetic woman in the audience gave her 2/ for crying - big money in those days - she was probably never paid so much for singing one line!

The Sunday school picnic was another great occasion. Boys who "wagged" Sunday school to go fishing or tadpoling made sure they were there two Sundays before the picnic - no attendance mark meant no picnic.

The children went to a paddock not too far from town, where they had three legged races (one child's right leg tied to the other's left) and egg and spoon races, etc. Then a race for the parents! All would join in a feast of scones with 100's and 1000's, jelly cakes, and bright pink, lukewarm raspberry vinegar.

One Casterton Sunday school superintendent had a brain-wave. "Why don't we run a special train to Portland, instead of the traditional picnic?" he suggested. This proved to be a most popular idea, agreed to enthusiastically by all churches. Everyone took their own food, fares were very cheap. Excitement ran high as the train approached Portland - children stretched out of every window - "Who'll be first to see the sea?"

Portland station is now at North Portland, but was then right on the foreshore. As the train spilled out its load of happy excited children, they all rushed to go swimming, or play with their buckets and spades on the white sand. At that time, there were shelters with seats facing east and west, to take advantage of the weather.

At the end of the day, the train pulled out of the station with its load of sun-burned children. (It took a few years to remember that even on a cool day, the sea breezes burn.)

But the special train had another great benefit. Fares were so cheap, for adults too, and available for a month, that many mothers took rooms in Portland, making it their annual holiday. Usually the fathers had to remain at work, so the mothers would sit on the beach with their knitting or mending, watching their children, and on Sundays, listening to the Band.

Before cars became common, trains were used for family holidays. Families would travel to visit relatives, when father had his two weeks' holiday. Trains were also used to travel to intertown football, and of course, business trips to the city. Travelling from Casterton to Melbourne, passengers had a long wait at Branhholme station for the connecting Portland train, but were very comfortable, as there was always a roaring log fire in the waiting room in winter. Some passengers would walk to Price's Tea-Rooms for a cup of tea. The Branhholme station was noted for its beautiful garden.

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Clapping Rhyme

Ronald McDonald, [clap, clap] biscuit.
 Ronald McDonald, [clap, clap] biscuit.
 Ah, shoo shoo, walla walla, biscuit.
 I've got a boyfriend, biscuit.
 He's as cute as a biscuit.
 Ice-cream soda with a cherry on top,
 Ice-cream soda with a cherry on top.
 Sweet sweet baby, I don't want to let you go,
 Down town baby, down by the roller coaster.
 Shimme shimme coco-pops,
 Shimme shimme pow.
 Shimme shimme coco-pops,
 Shimme shimme pow.

Clapping rhyme collected from girls in a primary school in Flemington.

Are there any readers intimate enough with the minutiae of fast food culture to offer us a commentary on the above? As the rhythm is syncopated and there's a reference to ice-cream soda, could the rhyme have migrated intact from the USA? Or have these kids been listening to their parents' Buddy Holly records? We welcome comment.



Some games played by Aboriginal children by Eleanor Adams

ELEANOR ADAMS studied for her Graduate Diploma in Child Development at the I.E.C.D. in 1984, and chose children's Folklore as her Elective Study. The following is an extract from a paper she wrote for the course. Aboriginal children's play is little discussed outside anthropological circles; the editors hope that this piece may encourage other folklorists to submit material to the A.C.F.N. on this neglected subject.

In her Introduction, Eleanor Adams wrote:

For the purpose of this paper I decided to generally omit any discussion of the regional or local associations of particular games, in favour of a description of the games and their place in 'Aboriginal society'.

A more detailed study of the games would have to include reference to the environment and daily experiences in which the games developed, and to the many different Aboriginal societies in which they existed.

Also, the reader should bear in mind that all the material I have chosen on Aboriginal children's games has been recorded by non-Aboriginal people.

Imitative Games

Children play at husbands and wives. They build their own small windbreaks ensuring that they are placed in the correct position relative to one another, according to the relationships of the inhabitants. They learn to build them in the correct way using the correct materials.

Children of all ages imitate the dances of adults for their own and their parent's entertainment.

Mimicking, by means of attitudes and movements, various birds and animals

Animals and birds and often mimicked. Emus can be imitated by using one arm and hand representing the bird's neck and head with the child's own head and neck being covered with bark, the extremity of which he tilts up with a bunch of feathers held in the other hand to indicate the tail.

"She pretends to find a snake..."

The Honey game

Played by two or more young children of both sexes in Northern Queensland. The game is imitative of the search for honey.

The children squat on the ground, each placing the tips of the fingers over the hand of another child below. These six hands represent the trunk of a tree.

The tree is symbolically felled by a side cut, knocked from above down.

Before knocking off the lowest hand, its owner puts her finger into each digital interspace to feel if any honey has dropped down.

She pretends to find a snake there and tells her mates.

All three children hold their hands behind their backs and the following dialogue ensues:

A "Have you a tomahawk?"

B "No."

A "Are you sure you haven't one?"

B "I have a very little one."

A "Well then, give me the little one."

B then pretends to hand over the imaginary tomahawk.

C's arm, the wrist of which is held by A, next represents the trunk or limbs in which the honeycomb is found.

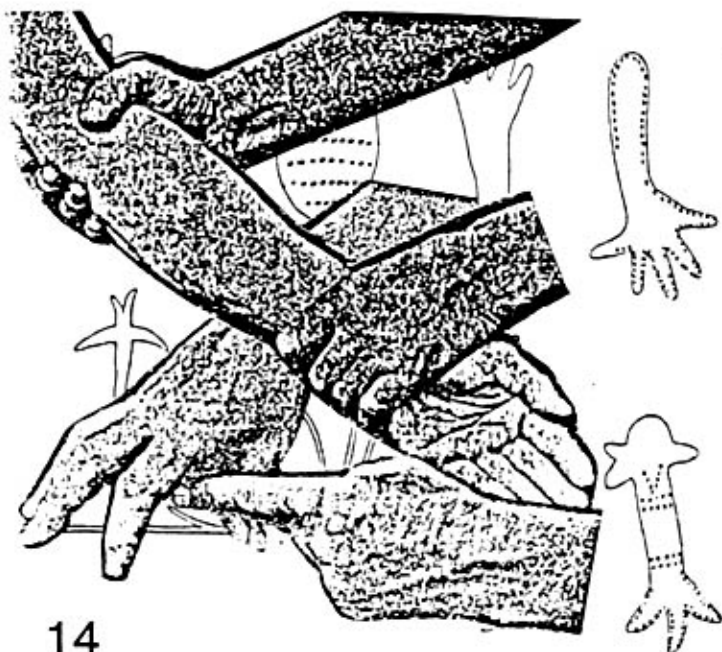
A then makes a chop at the elbow to cut off the limb encircling as far as she can the joint with her fingers and from here rubs the limb once upwards and once downwards, so as to indicate complete discontinuity. (It is interesting to note that the upper portion of the tree where the comb lies is 'taboo' to the women. But the lower portion where the dirt and drippings are is 'free' to them.)

A now does exactly the same to B's other arm then goes over the same process with C's arms and finally does the same with her own.

The honey is now supposed to have been collected from the removed limbs and mixed with water, placed in a bark trough represented by all the cupped hands resting upon one another.

Each bends down her head in turn to get a taste.

"Too sweet!" is the verdict. They pretend to add more water and when satisfied with the consistency make a show of eating it.



Ball Games

This game is from the Djinghali Tribe of Northern Territory.

The ball is similar to one used in cricket, but it is made of grass tied up tightly with string, then covered with beeswax.

Sides are taken (as in football) and the game is started by kicking the ball into the air. Once kicked off, hands must not touch the ball again, only the feet. The side which has kept it in the air and away from the other is the winner.

Memory Training Game

The Walbri Tribe of the Northern Territory play this game.

The children make a large circle on the ground and around this are placed pieces of sticks, stones and odd bits of things to represent objects in that area.

Should the children live near a highway, the sticks represent bridges, stone houses, bits of earth, motor trucks etc.

As many as fifty objects are placed around the circle at one time.

The leader of the game places the articles along the circle line and arranges them. He calls the others to examine the positions, when they are satisfied they have memorized them, they turn their backs.

The first player calls an object at a given point and continues to call each article on the line until he/she calls wrongly, then another player takes up the call.

When all fail, they go away once more while the leader arranges the pieces for the next game.

Story-telling

Coordination of action and the spoken word are recognized as the attributes of a good story-teller.

Girls sit and entertain an audience of children with a narrative, illustrated by outlines drawn on the sand.

Songs

Children sing their own songs during their play. According to Roth (1902), songs were composed spontaneously by children themselves and later these would be recognized as belonging to the children who sang them first.

Games that have their counterpart in European Games

Hide and Seek - the seekers hide their eyes by placing heads on the ground or looking into the sun.

Hide the Object - the object being the lens from the eye of a cooked fish, hidden in a patch of sand; or a goanna claw hidden in the bark of a tree.

Skipping - performed with a vine swung to and fro like a pendulum.

The Sand Game - a mound of sand is built up, upon which a child sits and defies others to topple him off.

Introduced Games

There are a few games which were introduced of late years through missionaries, settlers and others:

- marbles
- running races
- high jumping
- throwing spears through a suspended loop
- skipping rope

String Figures

Aboriginal children and adults of both sexes participate in the complicated and ingenious string games. It is played in most areas of Australia and the Torres Strait Islands.

The game represents not only a source of entertainment, but also a challenge to memory, dexterity and inventiveness.

The string is made from bark fibre or other natural fibres.

Hands, mouth or knees are often required to produce the different loops, twists and turns.

A series of figures often illustrated a story or a myth.

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