

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE NEWSLETTER

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Editors
June Factor and Gwenda Davey

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EDITORIAL

Exactly 10 years ago, in September 1981, the first issue of this Newsletter was published from the Institute of Early Childhood Development in Melbourne. At the top of column one we printed an old counting-out rhyme which accurately reflected our state of mind at the time:

*Tic tac toe,
Here we go,
Where we land,
We do not know!*

We certainly didn't know if our venture - the production of the first children's folklore newsletter in Australia - would find an audience in this country. Nor had we any notion that people outside Australia might be interested. But it seemed worth a try - and we were determined not to join the myriad publications which begin with high hopes and never proceed beyond Vol.1, No.1.

Now we are 10 years old, with a reasonable subscription list, and readers both local and international. Operating with miniscule funding, we have been fortunate in the continuing practical support shown by the two

Directors of the Institute of Early Childhood Development (now the University of Melbourne, School of Early Childhood Studies) who have 'reigned' during this period: first Dr. Des Connelly, and more recently Dr. Gillian Parmenter. Both have ensured the continuation of the ACFN by covering most of its modest production and postage costs.

The actual labour of typing has fallen to a number of kindly and responsible people, foremost of whom are Pat Alsop and Ruth Walker. Their skills, together with the talents of our designer, Don Oliver, have made it possible for the newsletter to appear regularly twice a year in a readable format.

Now the Australian Centre at the University of Melbourne, headed by Professor Chris Wallace-Crabbe, has agreed to share some of the costs of producing the ACFN with the School of Early Childhood Studies. On this tenth anniversary of the first issue we warmly thank both institutions, and all the individuals who have contributed to the newsletter's survival - including, of course, its many contributors and its loyal readers.

To celebrate the ACFN's 10th birthday, we have made this a bumper double issue: Nos.20 and 21 together. And as a bonus, we hope to send subscribers, before the end of the year, an index of all 21 issues. That will be our birthday present to all those whose support has enabled the ACFN to grow and prosper.

June Factor
Gwenda Davey
Joint Editors



LETTERS FROM READERS

Cereal Cards

One topic which I don't think has been touched on is the collection of cereal cards. I collected Weet-bix cards when I was little, once even getting a whole set and sticking them onto one of those special posters - which I now unfortunately don't have. My huge pile of cards I bequeathed to my younger cousins when in my mid-teens.

The funny thing about these sorts of cards, as opposed to the cards obtained in packets of bubble-gum, was that there was not the same interest in them on a social level. No one ever brought them to school, no one ever swapped them or played games with them. You just seemed to have them at home. Come to think of it, they were usually of low interest as regards content - pictures

of grubby old oil rigs or refineries, flax looms, an elephant in a zoo, some obscure butterfly - I think in an effort to be 'educational'. Maybe this accounts for the seeming lack of interest as compared to footy-cards, Abba cards, Kung-fu cards, and the more recent Neighbours and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles cards - the sorts of things you don't study at school.

Anyhow the other day I picked up these old Vita-Brits card albums which I figure you may want. I am not sure how old they are, perhaps you date them from the prices of the food. Note that in the one on pets it is advised to 'dust the kennel with DDT every 3 to 6 months to kill flea larvae!'

James Lambert
Pennant Hills, NSW

[Our grateful thanks for the albums, which have been deposited in the Australian Children's Folklore Collection. Eds.]

Elastics

The rhyme 'Two Four' (page 3, December 1990, ACFN) is similar to one I heard being used at Langwarrin Primary School, 1983 with 'Elastics'. I am currently a teacher at Seaford Primary School. Collected children's skipping rhymes 1987 and put them in a booklet for children. During 1990 I collected clapping, action, skipping, counting-out and elastics rhymes from same school. It is interesting to study how they gradually may change, disappear or be retained. I'll send ACFN all my

data in a couple of years if you would like it.

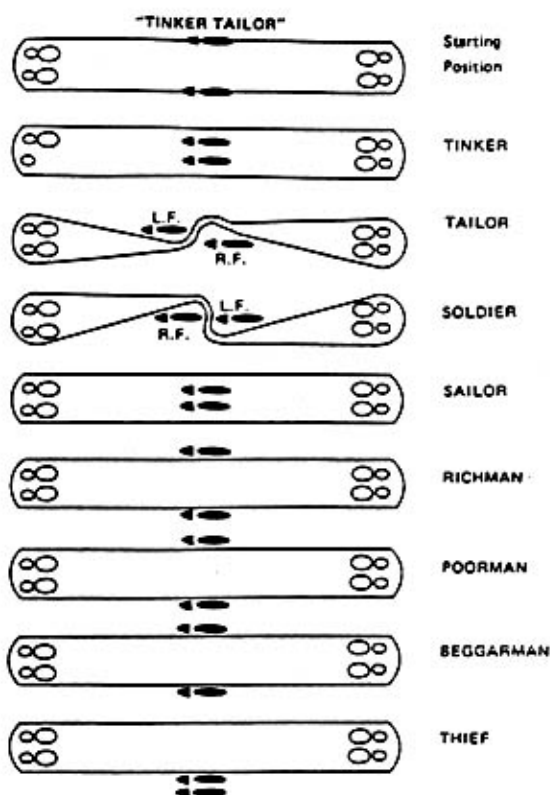
I have lots of black and white photos of many versions and steps etc for elastics from 1983 on if you would like extra material for Newsletter.

Best wishes for 1991,

Cathy Hope
Melbourne

(We'd certainly like to see this material, Cathy)

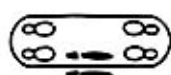
Tinker tailor,
Soldier sailor,
Richman Poorman.
Beggarmen thief.



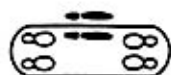
STARTING POSITION



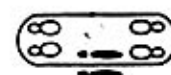
Begin with "ankles", continue with "knees", "under bottoms" and "waists". You do "cartwheels" for "underarms".



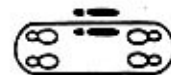
England



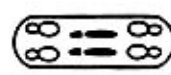
Ireland



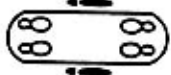
Scotland



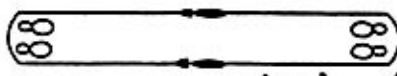
Wales



Inside



Outside



Monkeys' Tales



3 Seaford Primary
School late 1989.
Girls aged 9+10





The Collections of Sydney School Girls.

By DR. PERCIVAL R. COLE, Vice-President of the Sydney Teachers' College.

(First published in the Sydney Mail, 19 October, 1910.)

The Collections of Sydney Schoolboys was published in the ACFN, No. 18, July, 1990

The results of a questionnaire answered by 165 Sydney school girls on the subject of their collections include a number of features of interest to those who delight in the study of children's minds. As in the case of the boys, whose collections were analysed in the "Sydney Mail" of July 20, the questions asked were as follow:-

1. What is your full name?
2. What is your age (last birthday)?
3. What things have you ever collected?
4. What things do you still collect?
5. What other things would you like to collect if you could?

6. Which of your collections do you like the most?
7. Why do you collect?
8. How do you collect?
9. Which is your largest collection?
10. How many articles have you in your largest collection?

The replies are fairly representative, for the papers of questions, distributed at random, were brought back the next morning answered by 80 per cent. of the girls to whom they had been given; and although, no doubt, the collections of the remaining 20 per cent. may have stood at the minimum, this fact is offset to a certain extent by the inevitable forgetfulness of the girls about some of their collections. The term "collection" is not always understood in the same sense, since some include in their answers such things as books, marbles, and even money for benevolent purposes; while others take the term in a restricted sense. In most cases the ambiguities arising from the indefinite use of the term are easily removed; indeed, one is surprised to find them in general so few and unimportant.

21 GIRLS 9 YEARS OLD

Even at 9 years, the collections of girls differ widely from those of boys. The principal collection made at some time or another by the 21 girls under observation are:- Postcards, collected by no fewer than 17; shells and bone jacks, each collected by 11; scraps and coin, each 6; beads and stamps, each 5; texts and cigarette cards, each 4; books, mentioned by 3, but doubtless not considered as a collection by the majority; and fairy tales, toys, and albums, each indicated by 2. The "albums" probably indicate collections of "scraps" rather than books. Others claim to have collected buds, boxes, birds, Christmas cards, cigar bands, eggs, marbles, photos., patches, scent bottles, tickets, tiles, wood, and even sovereigns. Among other things they would wish to collect if they could, 5 of the 21 mention coins, 4 shells, 3 flowers, and 2 each dolls, stamps, and scraps. Other articles indicated by the 9-year-old girls as desirable are:- Books, beads, coral, cigarette cards, copper, fairy tales, texts, toy machines, foreign chains, gold, jacks, minerals, postage stamps, picture frames, pins, patches, photos. of school mates, silkworms, silver, silver fish, safety pins, sovereigns, toys, and tea-sets. One mentioned butterflies and bees, adding, "But I think it would be cruel." No such comment on their natural history collections was made by the boys of this or any other age.

In answering the question, "Which collection do you like the best?" a number of the 9-year-olds mention more collections than one. The general verdict is strongly in favour of postcards, preferred by no fewer

than 15 of the 21. Books, shells, and jacks are each preferred by 3, scraps and texts each by 2 and birds, coins, cigarette cards, flowers, fairy tales, marbles, and patches each by 1.

None of the 9-year-olds, having once begun, has ceased to collect postcards, though 3 have dropped jacks, and 5 shells. One has found the collection of texts too much for her, but cigarette cards are mentioned by 5 as at present being collected, though only by 4 among things collected at some time or other. Apparently it is not always through indifference that collections are abandoned, but often for lack of opportunity to pursue them further. For instance, jacks are abandoned for the first reason, since only 1 of the 9-year-olds mentions them among additional articles she would collect if she could; but shells for the second, since no fewer than 4 of the 21 girls seem to consciously regard them as desirable treasures if they only could be got, and 2 prefer them to all other collections.

Of the 9-year-old girls, 81 per cent collect only for pleasure or interest, but some of the individual replies throw a good deal of light on the mind of the 9-year-old girl. One collects "to study and make things;" one, who gathers to her hospitable bosom postcards, scraps, coins, texts, story-books, jacks, and shells; "because I like collecting, and you can use them things;" one "to learn about other countries;" one "for illustration;" one "to show my friends when they come and stay;" one "because it's my hobby;" one "because it is my mania;" one "because it is very nice when we grow up and have little children of our own to show them what we have

done in our younger days!"



The numbers of articles in the largest collections of the 9-year-old girls are given in a rather more exact and conscientious way than is evident in the replies of boys of the same age - a fact which is shown by the comparative infrequency of round numbers, like 100 and 1000. The largest collections are:- Postcards, to the respective numbers of 10, "about" 95, 100, 70, 43, 115, 92, 56, 20, 100, 250, 129, 42, 54, 250, 41; texts, 35, 24; cigarette cards, 130, 280, 1000; coins, 12; jacks, 16; shells, 60; patches, 30; scraps 158; stamps "about" 3000. Probably the figures 1000 and 3000 should be taken to mean little more than a very large number.

25 GIRLS 10 YEARS OLD.

The collections of girls of 10 are not only more varied and more numerous, but also more interesting and characteristic, than those of boys of the same age. The girls at times mention money as collected for philanthropic purposes, one of the 25 mentioning "money for the Benevolent Society," and one "pennies for the blacks." The typical collection with girls of all ages is the postcard, which is better endowed with possibilities of an educative nature than teachers and parents have generally recognised. 80 per cent. of the 25 girls have collected postcards, 72 per cent. still do so. Cigarette cards have been collected by 11, or 44 per cent; but only 32 per cent. of the girls continue to care for them, and only 1 mentions them among the additional collections she would wish to make if she could. Another characteristic collection of the girls is the purely feminine one of beads, collected at some time by 28 per cent. of the 10-year-olds, still collected by 16 per cent., and mentioned by 1 as a collection to be desired. Stamps have been collected by 40 per cent., but, as in the case of boys, stamps are not persisted in, and 20 per cent. have abandoned them; 2, however, mention they would like to collect them. One of the chief collections of schoolgirls of all ages is, however, shells, collected at some time by 48 per cent. of the 10-year-olds, and still collected by 28 per cent. Other outstanding collections of the 25 10-year-old girls are:- Marbles, 5; scraps, 4; texts, 3; patches, 3; coins, 3; cigar bands, 3; books, 2; fairy tale books, 2; ferns, 2; and coupons, 2. The remaining collections mentioned by

one or another of the 25 are:- Autographs, butterflies, balls, birthday presents, boxes, buttons, bookmarks, cards, chalks, coloured leaves, Christmas cards, flowers, picture scraps, photos., pins, plants, pictures, skins, tobacco tins, and seeds. With a not uncommon inconsistency, 2 girls mention Siren Soap bands and 2 tickets, among things at present being collected, but not in the general list of things they have "ever" collected.

Eighty-four per cent. of the 10-year-old girls collect merely for pleasure. They give such reasons as, "because I am fond of pictures and colours," "because I find them very interesting in my spare time to look at," "because they are nice to look at," "to pass time away," "because I have a fancy for it," "because I like them," "when anyone comes you can show them what you have collected," "I like to see the pretty things," "just for company," "when I get a lot I put them away, and when I am let out to play I can play with them." None of the reasons is as touching as the idea of the girl who collected "just for company."

There is nothing in the replies of the 10-year-olds more characteristic and impressive than their statements of what they would like to collect if they could. No fewer than 5, that is, 20 per cent. of them, think of shells, and the same mention coins. 3 would like to collect scraps, 3 birds, 2 art treasures, 2 antiques, 2 flowers, 2 postcards, and 2 stamps. Does not that list suggest a remarkably high and cultured level of taste on the part of the average young Sydney girl? The list of remaining objects indicated as desirable, each mentioned by one

of the girls, distinctly confirms such a verdict. It includes autographs, bric-a-brac, books, beads, curios, coupons, dolls' dresses, dolls, flags of all nations, gold ore, glassware, jacks, leaves, music pieces, "to collect for little orphans," pressed flowers, silkworms, "skins and lions' skins," and silk from silkworms.

The absence of anything like a scientific method may be illustrated by the 3 replies following, reproduced exactly from the questionnaire:- "Every one I get I keep them and save them up one by one. I have a lot of friends that gives me them." "How I collect the shells, I get them off my cousin, how I collect the cigarette cards, I get them off my father because he has a tobacconist shop." "Postcards I get from the Post Man, shells I get from the Beach, flowers I get from the Trees." Of their actual collections, 12 mention postcards as a chief favourite, 11 beads, 2 shells, 2 scraps, 2 text cards, and 1 each butterflies, birds, Christmas cards, cigar bands, flowers, jacks, stamps, and Siren Soap wrappers. Clearly, great pleasure is taken in postcards and beads by our 10-year-old schoolgirls. Many of the girls decline to prefer one of their best-loved collections to another.

Among the largest collections of the 10-year-old girls, one is struck by the mention of 188 butterflies. The numbers are much more exactly indicated, with a general avoidance of rough estimates in round numbers, than in the case of 10-year-old boys. Others of the largest collections are:- Postcards, 150, 76, 21, 56, 40, 68, 33, 40, 45, 203, 911, 405; stamps, 600, 1000; bone jacks, 30; shells, 271, 44; texts, 100, 46; cigarette cards, "about"

350, 117, 34; coupons, 100; marbles, 90; cigar bands, 50.

27 GIRLS 11 YEARS OLD.

Among the collections of the 27 girls of 11, picture postcards come first without a rival. Actually, 25 have collected them at some time, and 23 do so still. If one were to analyse the reasons that make postcards so attractive, not only to girls, but even to boys of all ages, these four would stand out - their beauty, their usefulness as a means of knowledge, their sentimental associations, and the possibility of acquiring an unlimited number of different articles at a moderate expense and by a system of reciprocity. Among the present collections of the 11-year-olds, few hobbies are richer in benefits to children, none is freer from danger of abuse. Next to the postcards, but less generally collected, come the equally desirable "scraps," collected by 8 of the 27 girls. Then follow shells, collected by 7, cigarette cards by 6, jacks by 5, marbles by 4, beads, books, and photos each mentioned by 3, and flowers, music, stamps, and tickets each by 2. Is there not something very lovable in the aesthetic quality of the collections of these girls? Their treasures are chiefly an attempt to realise their spontaneously developing love of the beautiful.



Other articles being actively collected each by 1 of the 27 girls of 11 are:- Autographs, boxes, balls, crabs, cards, coins, Christmas and birthday presents, coupons, Christmas cards, things for playing shop or house, dolls' clothes, ferns, lead pencils, nibs, pictures, patches, tins, tops, texts, and pins; 8 of these kinds of articles belong to a list peculiarly girlish, and never mentioned by 11-year-old boys. Four of the 10 who at some time collected cigarette cards have given them up, and only 3 of the 7 who have collected beads continue to do so. Four of the 9 who mention jacks have now put them aside. Apparently at 11 years old a number of schoolgirls begin already to think of putting away childish things. The one piece of evidence to the contrary is in connection with marbles which are actively collected by 4 of the 27, though only 2 mention them among their old collections. Marbles, however, seemed to be more favoured by older than younger children. Moreover, one hesitates to give the figures about marbles, which many children do not rank as "collections" at all.

The girls of 11 show sentiment for what is beautiful and strange. These two interests are sufficient to motivate almost the whole range of collections which the girls of 11 say

they would wish to make if they could, and a wide range it is. Only the mention of tram tickets, jacks, and matchbox tops, each by 1 of the girls, seems to form any sort of exception to the rule. The generally romanticist attitude of the 27 11-year-old girls may be estimated from the articles which they declare they would gather if they could:- Books 2, rubies 2, diamonds 2, pearls 2, curios 2; and 1 each the following objects:- Money (probably signifying coins), autographs, butterflies, beche de mer, birds, coloured glass, coloured paper, clam shells, emeralds, flowers, ferns (Australian), ferns (pressed), flowers (wild), fungus, fans, fancy-work, farthings, feathers, gold, island curios, ivory-nut, Japan novelties, leaves, music, opals, pearl shell, rubber, relics from other lands, rare old oil paintings, patches, postcards, pictures, sapphires, silver, spears, skins, and whales' teeth. Several inferences should perhaps be made from the data of the foregoing list. Thus, it seems to be only at 11 that girls develop a deep admiration for jewellery and forms of art. Even so, the list of desired articles is a jumble of ambitious and impossible objects with perfectly inexpensive and accessible things.

Of the actual collections of the 11-year-olds, 18 like their postcards best, 5 scraps, 5 shells, 3 beads, 2 each cigarette cards, cards (perhaps cigarette), money (coins?), and stamps, and 1 each autographs, birds, books, coupons, dolls' dresses, flowers, ferns, jacks, money for poor children, nibs, patches, texts, and tins. The girls care less for cigarette cards, and, perhaps, birds and animals, than the boys, and more for postcards, scraps, autographs, and

characteristically feminine collections, such as beads.

There is some advance in the methods of collecting adopted by the 11-year-olds by comparison with the younger girls. The 11-years-old prefer to exchange a great deal more and to getting things given a great deal less, than their juniors. There is also a more frequent mention of going out of doors and gathering or finding things - in fact, the 11-year-old girl shows the first symptom of the unmistakable and genuine collector's fever.

42 GIRLS 12 YEARS OLD.

The girls of 12 years offer a greater variety of reasons for making collections than the younger girls or the boys of any age up to 13. In general one finds that 25 per cent. of them claim to collect for other purposes than mere pleasure, but the principal interest of the replies consists in their marked individuality. Quite a number are distinctly altruistic in the reasons which they offer. One approves of collections, "to think of your friends;" another declares, "why I collect is to comfort other people, not only myself, when I go to the hospital I take the children what I have in the box for them;" a third collects, "because it is interesting for visitors." One says she collects, "for novelty;" another remarks that she likes collecting any kind of things, thus giving evidence that the love of collecting is itself a pure instinct, and not a mere result of imitation and emulation.



"I collect because it is very nice when we grow up and have little children of our own to show them what we have done in our younger days."

The methods employed by the 12-year-olds indicate a greater amount of spontaneous activity than those employed by their juniors. A considerable proportion emphasise going out and gathering things, or exchanging with other children. They do not rely entirely upon the gifts of their elders. On looking over the list of the things which the 12-year-old girls have at some time collected one is impressed by the fact that a larger number of girls than boys have collected postcards, shells, scraps, coins, books, autographs, texts, and, of course, bone-jacks, and beads; while a smaller proportion collect cigarette-cards and marbles. The stamps are collected by about the same proportion of boys and girls. No fewer than 38 of the 42 girls of 12 have collected postcards; while 22 have collected shells, 16 stamps, 13 jacks, 12 cigarette cards, 12 beads, 11 coins, 10 books, 10 scraps, 9 texts, 5 cards, 4 patches, 4 coupons, 3 tickets, and 2 each albums, dolls, dolls' clothes, ferns, picture-scrap, photos., and toys. It will be noticed that only 2 have mentioned dolls, but the

reason is the same that hinders many boys and girls from mentioning marbles and books in their answers, that is, they have not been accustomed to think of these things as collections.

One of the most marked features is the fondness of school-girls for collections of shells, to which more than 50 per cent. have at some time or other devoted themselves.

Twenty-nine of the 42 girls prefer their postcards to any other of their actual collections; 8 shells, 5 stamps, 4 coins, 3 beads, 3 books, 3 texts, and 1 each autographs, book-marks, Bonanza fronts, cigarette cards, coupons, cards, curios, fancywork, bone-jacks, jewels, Matador cigar bands, Napoleonic engravings, patches, and scrap pictures. One respects the more ambitious nature of these collections by comparison with those of boys of the same age. Among other things they would like to collect, if they could, no fewer than 13 of the 42 girls think of coins, no fewer than 11 shells, and 9 stamps. The other objects of their ambition are more specialised; but 3 mention birds, and 2 butterflies, beads, curios, jewellery, jewels, and money. Others mention autograph books, autographs, art treasures, antique. Australian relics, almanacs, birds' nests, collection for black children and orphans, cotton reels, coral, coloured feathers, eggs, pressed flowers and ferns, flags of different countries, flower seeds, gold, collection for hospitals, leaves, monuments, minerals, metals, postcards, pictures of different places, pebbles, picture scraps, photos., seaweed, statues, sovereigns, texts, stones, precious stones, Vivienne cot

fund, water melon seeds.

The current collections of the 12-year-old girls include postcards 34, shells 12, prizes 11, cigarette cards 10, stamps 7, texts 6, coins 6, books 6, beads 5, jacks 4, autographs 3, coupons 3, scraps 2, Empire badges 1, Bonanza cigarette fronts 1, curios 1, cards 1, fancy-work 1, fairy tales 1, wild flowers 1, leaves 1, Matador cigar bands 1, pictures 1, and steel engravings 1.



Shells figure prominently in Sydney girls' collections. As a rule they come second in popularity to postcards.

It will be noticed that prizes only begin to be fully appreciated at about 12 years, at which age the instinct of competition seems to be fully developed.

29 GIRLS 13 YEARS OLD.

By the time they have reached the age of 13 years, Sydney schoolgirls would appear to have collected, on the average, 5 different kinds of things apiece. On the question of postcards the girls are all but unanimous; for not only have 26 of the 29 collected them at some time or other, but not a single girl has abandoned the pursuit. Actually 90 per cent. of Sydney schoolgirls of 13 collected postcards! The figures might be lower, perhaps, if taken with reference to a larger number of girls, but there is nothing in the conditions to indicate that this would be the case. Clearly the girls collect postcards more generally even than the boys, and retain their interest in this collection longer. To a certain extent the postcard is artificially encouraged by teachers in the interests of the geography lesson, and more could be done along these lines.

Shells and stamps have each been collected by rather more than 50 per cent. of the 15-year-old girls; that is to say, shells by 16 of the 29, and stamps by 15, but only 5 continue to collect shells and only 6 stamps.

These collections, as in the case of boys, are rather spasmodically made. Beads begin to go out of fashion; 8 have collected them, but only 2 continue to do so. Jacks also have been dropped by 4 of the 6 who mention having collected them. Autographs, on the contrary, gain rapidly in popularity with the older girls; 7 of the 29 have collected them and 6 are actively so doing. Cigarette cards are collected, not by a very large proportion as with boys of this

age, but by a fairly steady fraction of nearly 20 per cent.

Of the 6 who collected them, 5 do so still. Sunday school texts are now very prominent; 7 of the 29 are actively collecting them, and 10 have done so at some time or other. Coins are still collected by 2 of the 4 who mention them among things at some time accumulated. The complete list of present collections claimed by the 13-year-olds is as follows:- Postcards collected by 26; texts by 7; autographs and stamps each 6; shells and cigarette cards each 5; books (not reckoned among collections, by most of the girls), beads, coins, Christmas cards, coupons, fancy marbles, insects, and jacks, each 2; and brooches, birthday cards, comic papers, coral, flowers, ferns, letters, money, picture cuts, pebbles, scenes, sketches, stones, sea-eggs, scraps, and Sunday school prizes, each 1. This is a list even more creditable, perhaps, to the aesthetic and moral instincts than a corresponding list obtained from 13-year-old boys. The boys show no such love of texts and autographs; nor do they mention sketches or scenes. 20 per cent. of the girls of 13 claim to collect for useful or educational purposes, the remainder for pleasure or interest merely. It is at about 13 that the feminine instinct to take care of something or somebody, and perhaps the religious intuition, begin to ripen into something like an adult form. The answers do not suggest any of the priggishness that is popularly associated with the minds of school girls of this age; and it is not improbable that the popular opinion in this matter has been misled into a false accusation by an inability to account for the great aesthetic and

sentimental superiorities of girls of 12 and 13 over boys of same age.



A fair proportion of the older girls include autographs among their collections.

21 GIRLS 14 YEARS OLD.

On turning to the 14-year-old girls, one is not surprised to find a growing proportion affirming useful or educational purposes for their collections. Exactly one-third of the 21 girls whose collections are under consideration claim to collect for useful purposes; while two-thirds collect only for pleasure or interest. The detailed statements are of such interest that several must be quoted. One girl expresses a purely hedonistic motive in the phrase, "to gratify my inclinations." Another, thinking of the completed collection as a desirable end, collects, "to save things when you get them and say this is what I got when I was a little girl." Another has social advantages in view, collecting, "because I think it is nice to have something to show my friends." Another remarks, "I collect money for the poor, because it is for a good purpose." A typical reason alleged for collecting postcards and cigarette cards is the following,

chosen from several of the same kind. I collect, "in order to learn about different countries, their ensigns, buildings, and positions of buildings, industries, areas, population, national dress, British nobility." One of the 14-year-olds, who collects postcards expresses a sentiment sweeter than any of the younger school girls in the words, "because it is nicer to collect them, than destroy them." The aims of the girls of 14, however, are far in advance of their methods, which seldom rise above the humble level of gift and exchange.

The average number of kinds of articles collected at some time by the 14-year-old girls is 5, the average at 13 years being 5. The full list of articles mentioned as collected at some time by the 21 girls is as follows:- Postcards 19, shells 12, stamps 11, cigarette cards 11, autographs 7, scraps 7, books 4, beads 4, coins 4, jacks 4, cigar bands 3, ferns 3, text cards 3, coupons 2, flowers 2, photos. 2, and balls, caterpillars, cards, curios, dolls, wild flowers, fossils, flags, hair-ribbons, letters, moths, money for the Benevolent Asylum, money, marbles, Siren soap wrappers, tram tickets, and silk worms each 1. The standard collections agree very well with those of the 13-year-old girls; thus 90 per cent. have collected postcards, 57 per cent. shells, and 52 per cent. stamps. It is note-worthy that 33 1-3 per cent. of the 14-year-old girls have collected autographs and scraps.

The numbers of articles in the largest collections of the girls of 14 are given as postcards, 162, 192, 166, 20, 24, 105, 300, 72, about 500, 250, 200, 300, about 100, 200; shells about 300 (small but choice), 100, about 500; cigarette

cards 150, 600; fossils, 108; stamps, 109 (different), 50, 600, 370; books, 20, 24; coins, 20, 10; flowers, 20 (different); tickets, 60.

OUTSTANDING RESULTS

Of the general results of the investigation the following stand out more prominently than others:-

1. The collections of the girls are more numerous and better cherished than those of the boys.
2. The articles collected by the girls differ widely from those accumulated by their brothers.
3. Up to the age of 14 years the girls show a greater maturity of thought and feeling than the boys, and more frequently represent social, aesthetic, and benevolent aims to themselves.
4. The younger girls have a wider and better vocabulary than boys of the same age.
5. An enormous majority of Sydney school girls, ranging from 80 per cent. of girls of ten to more than 90 per cent. of girls of fourteen, claim to collect postcards.
6. The girls not only show a superior taste in the articles collected, autographs, coins, etc., to the boys, but also a more cultivated imagination in the enumeration of articles which they would like to collect if they could.
7. The girls do not show any priggishness in the reasons offered for making their collections.
8. The maximum proportion claiming to collect for useful or educational ends is 33 1-3 per cent., found among girls of fourteen.
9. The nature study at school has influenced girls in making collections of plants, especially flowers and ferns; but the girls do not collect insects as freely as boys, thinking it cruel.
10. Neither girls nor boys appear to collect by scientific methods or in a scientific spirit. They have the collecting instinct, but no very high ideas of the collector's art.



SCHOOLYARD ALPHABETS

Late last year, the editors of the ACFN received a letter from MRS. ESTELLE MOSES, Manager of Children's Youth and Special Services at the Woollahra Municipal Library in New South Wales. Mrs. Moses was seeking a complete version of the 'Schoolyard Alphabet', an old, comic alphabet once thought to be well-known in Australia.

With the help of residents at the Templestowe Orchards Retirement Village in East Doncaster, Melbourne and ALISON CHAMPION and her daughter in Willoughby, two slightly different versions of the alphabet were finally pieced together.

We print both versions in this issue of the ACFN, and ask our readers to send us any information they have about the origin of these alphabets, their period of popularity, etc.

ALPHABET - A VARIATION FOR FUN

- A - for 'orses
- B - for mutton
- C - for ships
- D - for ential
- E - for Adam
- F - for vescence
- G - for police
- H - for beauty
- I - for novello
- J - for oranges
- K - for rancis
- L - for leather
- M - for sis
- N - for a dig
- O - for the garden wall
- P - for relief
- Q - for tickets
- R - for mo

- S - for Williams
- T - for two
- U - for mism
- V - for la France
- W - for a bob
- X - for breakfast
- Y - for gawd sake
- Z - for breezes

- A - for horses (hay)
- B - for beef or mutton
- C - for yourself
- D - for differential
- E - for brick (heave a brick)
- F - for effervescent
- G - for Chief of Police
- H - for before beauty (age)
- I - for I forgot
- J - for Jaffa oranges
- K - for Kay Francis
- L - for leather (hell for leather)
- M - for an' eggs (ham and eggs)
- N - for fra dig (infra dig)
- O - for de garden wall
- P - for relief
- Q - for a bus
- R - for mo' (half a mo')
- S - for Esther Williams
- T - for two
- U - for me
- V - for Vive la France
- W - for a bob
- X - for breakfast (eggs)
- Y - for husband
- Z - for zephyr breezes



STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH 1922-1988

It has been widely recognised that Australian culture, and Australian intellectual life, both owe a great debt to the energy, intelligence and imagination of the late Stephen Murray-Smith - writer, reformer, and long-time editor of Overland. Fewer people are aware of his interest in folklore. From the bawdy to the lore of lighthouse keepers, Stephen's folkloric interests were extensive. Here we publish an extract from a paper he gave to a conference on 'The Colonial Child' in 1979. The paper, titled Messages from Far Away, was based on information provided by 61 readers of the Women's Weekly, 11 of them men, ranging in age from 71 to 93. The complete paper is published in The Colonial Child, ed. Guy Featherstone, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 1981.

Once fed and watered, there was much to get on with. For a start, there were the home-bound hobbies: making ornamental plaques with a picture laid down flat in a saucer, plaster of paris poured carefully over it, and a wire to hang it by inserted. Then there were transfers and cut-outs and the whole varied world of the 'scrap book'. Cigarette cards were a great article of trade, and the American Great White Fleet was featured on them. Dolls had china or wax faces and arms and sawdust inside, so that if you had had enough to eat you were 'full up to Dolly's wax'. And the making of dolls and their clothes was a great juvenile cottage industry. There was rug-making, and reading in the long quiet evenings, cards and ping-pong,

pigeon-keeping and pets generally, the much-loved 'drawing slate', where you put pictures under a ground glass plate and draw them on the surface. For the sophisticated, the first hobby camera appeared about 1910. Perhaps the best relaxation of all was discussing the daily doings with an interested family.

If the weather was good and the chores were done there was a multitude of popular games. Common to both boys and girls (my correspondents differ quite sharply as to whether or not there was much intermixture) were knucklejacks, five to a set, colored blue, red, green and black by dipping in ink, tiggy, prisoner's base, hide and seek, hopscotch (which meant kicking a square of wood to base, unpopular with parents because hard on the toes of boots). There was the making of little stilts from jam-tins and string, diabolos (see if you can reach the telegraph wires), Tip Cat, 'Statues', 'Steps', 'Charley over the Water', 'Jumbo', Kit Cat, Postman's Knock. Girls played with cubby houses, wooden hoops (boys had iron ones), skipping ropes, delectable miniature shops, usually homemade from match-boxes filled with groceries begged from the kitchen, though the coconut and oatmeal didn't last long; girls also played rounders, had peep shows in shoe boxes ('a pin a look'), whipped their tops (fatter than the boys' tops) along the street, loved their father to put them up a swing, and were happy to sit down from time to time and listen to a story. The naughtier ones ripped their crochet-edged panties on the mullock heaps, made common cause with the boys in nick-knocking and in the evil practice of placing inviting parcels on

roads and footpaths, attached to a long black thread on which they could be rapidly lifted out of sight. A variant of this was to pull a dead snake across a path to watch the passer-by jump. There was no sporting equipment, even at school, for either boys or girls. The boys improvised footballs and cricket equipment, got father to help make a billy-cart, or 'go-cart', perhaps even with a brass horn, flew kites, played shinty (a form of hockey played with a knobby gum-tree branch and an old jam tin), stag knife - throwing up your pocket knife so the blade sticks in the ground - and 'Daddy', a game which consisted of chasing other boys with a stick. Particularly popular was Kick the Tin - tins were placed in rows and each boy tried to kick his tin as far as possible along a line. As we all know, games ebbed and flowed with the seasons. At Melbourne Cup time there was Toodlumbucks, a kind of top with horses' names inscribed, on which you bet with cherry-bobs. Then there was the paper-chase and the chalk-chase leap-frog, Hoppo Bumpo, Pitch and Toss, Fox and Hounds, and making of bows and arrows for stalking inoffensive small animals in the bush, and of course marbles. A large taw, guaranteed to knock all marbles out of the ring, cost the princely sum of 6d.



THE INTERNATIONAL DIFFUSION OF THE JUMP-ROPE GAME 'ELASTICS'

By Andy Arleo

This is the second of a two-part article on Elastics, written for the ACFN by the noted French children's folklorist, ANDY ARLEO. Part one was published in ACFN, No.19.

Question 8:

How are the patterns and rules of elastics learned?

It is generally agreed that elastics is a game passed on directly from child to child by way of observation and participation. Several correspondents added that older children often teach younger children (WALES, JP). P.Pulh (SWIT) points out that the participants frequently invent new patterns or improvise.

Question 9:

Can you describe the jumping patterns used in elastics, or provide diagrams?

As it is impossible in this article to give a detailed description of all the different jumping patterns, many of which are quite complex, I will attempt to sum up the general principles. (3)

The elastic is usually wrapped around the feet or legs of two players who stand opposite each other at a distance of about two meters, forming a rectangle. When human 'elastic-holders' are not available, children

sometimes use chairs (ENG, FR, SWIT). I have observed this when a child practises alone at home. While the rectangular form prevails, triangular forms have also been observed (ENG, JP).

Most versions respect a cyclical principle: each player must carry out a sequence of steps, each of which may be subdivided into several movements. If the sequence is completed successfully, the holders vary the width or the height of the elastic and the jumper must start over. Thus it becomes progressively more difficult to execute the sequence correctly. When the jumper commits an error (by stepping on the elastic at the wrong time, for example), it is the next player's turn. A variant called 'la partie chinoise' which I collected in Saint-Nazaire in 1982, illustrates the cyclical principle. Initially, the elastic is held around the ankles with the feet of the holders spread apart. The jumper must carry out a sequence of eleven steps called 'partie zéro, partie un, ...partie dix'. Then the sequence must be repeated in different positions as shown in the chart below:

Width → Feet spread apart Held together One foot/leg ↓ Height			
Ankles : 11-step sequence :	:	:	:
Knees :	:	:	:

Fig. 4: Cycle of six sequences

In this example there are only two heights, but there are often more, as shown by this list given to me by a girl in Saint-Nazaire: ankles, knees, sous-fesses ('below the bum'), waist,

underarms, ciel ('sky', i.e. overhead).

These observations may be compared with some of the descriptions given by my correspondents. An eleven-step sequence, called 'jeu de 10' (going from zero to ten) is found in Switzerland (Grand et al. 1983:78-85). As in Saint-Nazaire, the two parameters of width and height are varied to create positions of increasing difficulty. The elastic can also be joined together to form a 'string' (ficelle) or crossed in the middle (papillon, 'butterfly'). The terms noted by Roud (1985) resemble quite closely those used in Saint-Nazaire to describe the position of the elastic: ankles open (elastic around ankles spread about 6-9 inches apart), ankles together, ankles onesies (only one foot in the loop), kneesies open, kneesies together, kneesies onesies, bumsies, occasionally shinsies and 'theoretically' waistsies, necksies and headsies. E.K.Nielsen (DK) reports four widths (feet spread apart, feet close together, feet turned sideways, one foot) and varying heights (just below the ankles, middle lower leg, knees, thighs). J.Fribourg (SP) collected the following heights from a 10-year old boy in Madrid: feet, knees, 'under-bums', waist, neck, 'sky' (nearly identical to the French pattern mentioned above). Likewise, M. Zapletal (CZ) observed these heights: ankles, below the knees, knees, between the knees and the waist, waist, and sometimes for older girls, shoulders. Finally, a report on 'High Jump', published in the Australian Children's Folklore Newsletter, Vol.8 (pp. 4-5) mentions knees, 'underbums', waists, underarms, straight arm (the elastic is held at an arm's length above the

head).

The number of steps within each sequence varies: Jones (1966) described a five-step pattern used in Kansas while Nielsen (DK) collected a thirteen-step pattern. The steps usually involve jumping within the loop, straddling the loop, stepping on the elastic, displacing the elastic and so on. Below is a description of a six-step pattern noted by M. Zapletal in Prague, May, 1964.

In conclusion to this section of the questionnaire, it should be noted that elastics is not only a game requiring physical ability, but is also a highly structured and ordered activity demanding mental agility. Perhaps the cyclical principle used by elastics-players could be used by teachers in explaining certain areas of mathematics or even computer programming. Although the rules of elastics often appear very complex to the outside observer, the game is actually based on a small number of cleverly combined and embedded parameters. The number of theoretical combinations in a complete elastics performance is quite

high: for example, three players using eleven-step sequences in ten different positions (produced by varying widths and heights) must carry out a minimum of $3 \times 11 \times 10 = 330$ steps! This no doubt explains why the game is often interrupted before the end.

Question 10:

Are there any rhymes or other forms of speech that accompany elastics? If so, can you give examples?

Several correspondents gave examples of rhymes used when playing elastics:

England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales.
Inside Outside On. (ENG, WALES)

Hau-ruck, Donald Duck, Micky Mouse, Rein-Raus Schmetter-ling, etc. (WG).

Coca cola c'est fait pour ça
Mais c'est mauvais pour la santé.

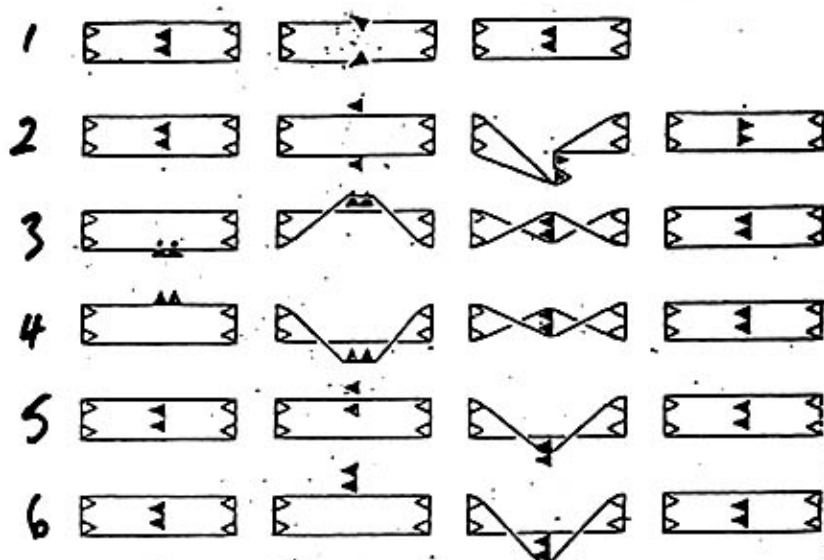


Fig.5: Czech Jumping Pattern

Coca cola 'really does it'
But it's bad for your health.

(SWIT, see Grand *et al*: 84)

Popeye es marinerito pi pi
No sabe tocar el pito pi pi
Por eso lo toca asi pi.

Popeye is a little sailor pi pi
He doesn't know how to play a
whistle pi pi
That's why he plays it like this pi.
(SP)

Other correspondents (DK, CZ) have never noticed any speech forms accompanying elastics. In Saint-Nazaire I have heard short rhymes used with simple versions of the game (as in Fig. 2), while the more elaborate variants are performed without specific words.

Question 11:

In your opinion, what skills (physical, social, cognitive, etc.) are developed through this game?

As most correspondents pointed out, elastics obviously contributes to the physical development of the child by honing motor skills. The game also seems to play a beneficial role in social and psychological behavior, by teaching patience, for example. Finally, the structure of the game, based on a set of ordered rules, may very well enhance cognitive skills.

3. CONCLUSION

Unlike certain games which have in the past been marketed on a large-scale by adults (cf. the yoyo and the

hula hoop), elastics has remained for the most part a child-based activity. How can one account for its spread over at least four continents in the last three decades?

As in the case of other forms of childlore, we may look to the movements of the child population for a potential explanation: the development of international tourism, the existence of summer camps near borders and patterns of immigration are several factors that come to mind.

The popularity and durability of the game, which has been played for over twenty years in some countries, can be explained by its many assets. It requires virtually no preparation and can be performed almost anywhere with a small number of players, using easily available and cheap material that can be stored in one's pocket or satchel. 'Basic elastics' is simple to learn (the shortened versions are even accessible to five or six year olds), but its more elaborate and challenging variants become progressively difficult, allowing each player to advance at his or her own pace. The length of the game may vary from several minutes to an hour or more.

While elastics is above all a game of physical dexterity, it has an aesthetic dimension as well: through their well-timed rhythmic movements, the most skilful players provide an intriguing spectacle. Finally, since it is not rigidly codified, elastics can always be 'reinvented' through new variants and rules.

Adults may regret that in some cultures elastics has tended to replace traditional jump-roping, which has been associated with a large body of

children's rhymes (from our survey it does not appear that elastics has generated such a rich repertoire of verbal material). Nevertheless, the study of childlore shows us that games and traditions evolve constantly, and occasionally die out, only to revisit us in cyclical fashion, somewhat like a revolving rope. Compared to the large amount of published material on traditional forms of jump-rope, elastics still has not received all the attention it deserves, despite the efforts of a small number of researchers scattered around the world. Hopefully, the above survey will make some of their findings more accessible to other folklorists, thus contributing to a better understanding of this contemporary international children's game.

Notes

1. The abbreviations within parentheses will be used to refer to these different countries. I should like to thank all my correspondents for sending such complete information on the playing of elastics.
2. Australian Children's Folklore Newsletter, No.9:5
3. Detailed descriptions and diagrams of steps used in elastics can be found in Jones (1966), Gallagher (1976), Venuze (1980), Dyer (The Australian Children's Folklore Newsletter, Vol.1, No.2:7-8), Grand et al (1983) and Roud (1985).

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(The) Study of the Elastic Game. (Sent by H. Ikema, text and references in Japanese.)

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Zapletal, M. (1973, 1975) Encyklopedie Her. Prague. See pp. 138-139.

Correction

Andy Arleo, writing from Saint-Nazaire in France, sends us the following small correction:

I recently realised that the first part of my article on 'Elastics' (in ACFN, No.19) contains a minor error: on page 6, 'Chapeau d'melon et bottes de cuir' should read:

'Chapeau melon et bottes de cuir' (the preposition d should be deleted).

Furthermore, I should have added that the popular television serial which I mention in the second column of page 6 is the French translation of the well-known British serial 'The Avengers'. This fact may interest English readers.



WARS

JAMES LAMBERT writes about a game he and his friends played in West Ryde, Sydney, in the late 1970s.

One of the most popular games the kids in our neighbourhood played was what we called 'Wars'. Wars was basically a role-play game like cowboys and indians, or cops and robbers. We chose two teams, usually of about five or more kids, depending on how many showed up to play. One team would go around into the front yard and wait a specified time - say one minute, or a count of 50. Meanwhile the other team took up defence position in the backyard, behind the hibiscus, the incinerator, in amongst the prunus, up the jacaranda or umbrella tree, under a plastic tarp, behind the wooden barricades we had put up for the game, etc.

The team in the front yard would then proceed to attack, after first yelling out something signalling their imminent advance; this warning was so that slow-coaches who hadn't yet found a place to hide could quickly scamper to some usually totally obvious and unsatisfactory place.

The attackers would then proceed up one side of the house, the other being out of bounds, and the battle began.

Basically to kill another you had to

- (a) get a clear line of sight on them - trees, bushes, etc were as solid brick walls even if you could see through them;
- (b) point your gun at them - guns were usually such things as

hockey sticks, clapped-out tennis and squash racquets, plastic toy pistols, and home-made guns of various styles. We had one once that was fashioned out of a spear gun handle and trigger and two pieces of black-painted wood, one forming the barrel, the other joined at right angles on the leftside forming the magazine - it looked like a mock Sten gun; and finally

- (c) make one of those raucous machine-gun sound effects that defy spelling. (Comic strips often transcribe as 'brat-a-tat-tat' etc. - which is nothing like what we used to say.)

When two players faced one another, the first to shoot (i.e. vocally) killed the other, even if the other made the gun noise. The philosophy behind this was that the one firing second was already dead so it didn't matter what he did. Who killed who in these situations often depended on where the guns were point exactly, and what obstructions were in the way. If both shot at precisely the same time then both died. Usually, however, the decision depended merely on who was the most ardent and confident in his shooting.

This was a very effective use of para-linguistic communication. The loud machine-gun noise says, "I saw you first, before you saw me, and my gun was pointing at you split-seconds before yours was at me, and don't you even think of claiming that this was your kill!" The other noise, even though perhaps as loud, did not carry the ring of conviction and verity. It says, "Hey, I almost got you, so I'll

pretend to be pretty cocky and shoot you and hope that you'll think that at least we killed each other." This communication usually decided whose kill it was without any further discussions such as "I got you!" "Bull you did!" etc.

This sort of concise communication was essential because the living person needed to move on to kill others, and either of you could be killed by another player while standing around arguing.

Occasionally, arguments would take place after the game was over but they were never too serious. Basically it was not too important because we all quickly started the next game.

The teams swapped positions, the attackers being the defenders and vice versa.

The team in which all the players were killed first was the loser, irrespective of how many were left on the other team. No score was kept.

The battles were quickly over, kids running every which way, screaming, yelling, machine-gunning, ducking, diving for cover, scrambling, etc. Anyone could play the game though only boys played it in our neighbourhood since there was only one girl amongst the ten or so boys.

The game was probably invented by my older brother who was a real war-nut. He watched every war movie, read war magazines, wore army surplus clothing. I myself followed in his footsteps until I was about sixteen or so. What is probably a sad thing to note is that of the

seventeen or so kids who used to come and play, about eight of them have joined the armed forces, mostly the army.



AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S RHYMES: STILL IN TRANSMISSION?

by Hazel S. Hall

In answer to a query by Gwenda Davey, ACFN, December 1990

I thank the editors for this opportunity to comment on Gwenda Davey's selection of skipping rhymes collected by the late Ian Turner in Melbourne between 1956 and 1957. I documented fragments of them in my 1978-1984 collection, *"A Study of the Relationship Between Speech and Song in the Playground Rhymes of Primary School Children"*, and would be surprised if some did not appear in smaller collections in the Australian Children's Folklore Archive.

Cabbages

I collected the first couplet of this rhyme in 1978 in Glen Waverley. At the word "higher", the rope is raised until the skipper goes out. It's interesting to hear the vocal pitch of the children being raised simultaneously, along with increased dynamics.

Christmas Crackers

I skipped to this as a child, but have not heard it since.

Two, Four

I suspect that this one is a variant of another rhyme, *All in together*. I find it interesting because of the diversity of meters which result from the counting - one rope beat at line five ("two"), two rope beats on line eight,

three rope beats on line eleven, and so on. It's what I call an "interrupted series" - the counting sequence is sandwiched between the main text:

All in together,
Never mind the weather,
When I say two,
Touch your shoe,
Two,
When I say four,
Touch the floor,
Two, four,
When I say six,
Pick up sticks,
Two, four, six,
When I say eight,
Lay them straight,
Two, four, six, eight,
When I say ten,
Do it all again,
Two, four, six, eight, ten.

It's also a variant of a rhyme used for counting cherries and cherry stones, which I remember from childhood. This one was counted in twos because the cherries were most often paired - we used to hang them over our ears to make earrings! To make sure that our portions were fair, our mother would use this rhyme. The rhythms are simple, so assist the counting:

Two, four, six, eight,
Mary at the cottage gate,
Eating cherries from a plate,
Two, four, six, eight.

House to Let

I used this rhyme in my childhood, but haven't documented it since.

Dancing Dolly

This is a delightful rhyme composed of a number of fragments from other texts. It's a good illustration of the way texts vary according to how they are remembered. The very predicability of children's folklore makes it easy for the person/s recollecting one rhyme to wander off into another rhyme, often without knowing it. As one of my young informants said, "There are so many of them ... they're all mixed up". This is illustrated in the second version of *Dancing Dolly*, which is of course a variant of the old nursery rhyme, *Tom the Piper's Son*.

I haven't collected the main rhyme (wish I had!) but I have collected some of the concatenations. Concatenations are not always the result of "memory wanderings", they serve an important purpose in skipping rhymes by adding further challenges for the skipper. Many, like the series, are skipped double time ("pepper"); others prepare the skipper for the pepper sequence. A series skipped double time is usually, but not always, jumped on each syllable.

"A B C D" is a common series in my collection. In this rhyme it presents the first challenge, so would probably be skipped double time. The "floating text":

David, David, will you come to tea,
(David, David will you come to tea)
David will you marry me?

also present in my collection, prepares the skipper for the final series, which would be also skipped double time:

Yes, no, yes, no

The floating text "David, David" is probably skipped in trochaic tetrameter (each line having four groups of two syllables, each group having one syllable stressed and the other unstressed). This creates four rope beats per line. If so, then the words "will you come to" are slightly clumsy and don't assist the skipper. Could it be that Ian Turner's informant recited the words without skipping to them? My informant skipped the rhyme, and the rhythm reflects this.

The alternative would be one line of trochaic pentameter (five groups of two syllables, each group having one stressed and one unstressed syllable). This would create five rope beats in the first line, which is very unusual in skipping rhymes:

David, David, will you come to tea,
David will you marry me?

Here is the variant from my study. It was performed by a younger child, and the recording is absolutely charming. Like Turner's text, it's used for divination, so presents a number of challenges to the skipper. Many readers will be familiar with the rhyme or its concatenations. There are four series in this text, which I've placed in italics. The rhyme is in trochaic tetrameter, but note the line "Where d'ja get married?" - there are only two rope beats here:

Bread, butter, marmalade jam,
Tell me the name of your favourite man.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q
R ...

Robert, Robert come to tea,
Robert, Robert marry me.

Yes, no, yes, no, yes ... (etc.)

Where d'ja get married?
Toilet, church, toilet, church ...

How many babies did I give you?
1 2 3 4 5 6 ... (etc.)

Kitchen

I skipped to this text as a child, and found children still using the rhyme in 1978. Girls still seem to like texts which reflect the traditional woman's role! It's an interesting piece musically because it has the capacity to become a chant when recited by a group of children. This is due to presence of the rhyming words "kitchen" and "stitchin", each of two-syllables. The first rhyming word sets up the basic tone on which the rhyme is to be intoned. In the second line, the voices tend to rise on the first syllable of the rhyming word and fall on the second. It's the beginnings of what I call the "Australian children's chant":



You will have noticed the interesting way in which Australian children divide words into syllables. Each syllable tends to begin with a consonant, for example, together, David, Mother rather than the

traditional syllabification of together, David, Mother.

Thanks for revisiting *Cinderella Dressed in Yella*. I hope that this information will be useful to readers.



RADIO PROGRAM STIRS MEMORIES

Back in June 1989, one of the editors of the ACFN, Gwenda Davey, was interviewed on the ABC's 'Talking History' program about family and playground folklore. We reproduce here some of the responses of listeners to that program.

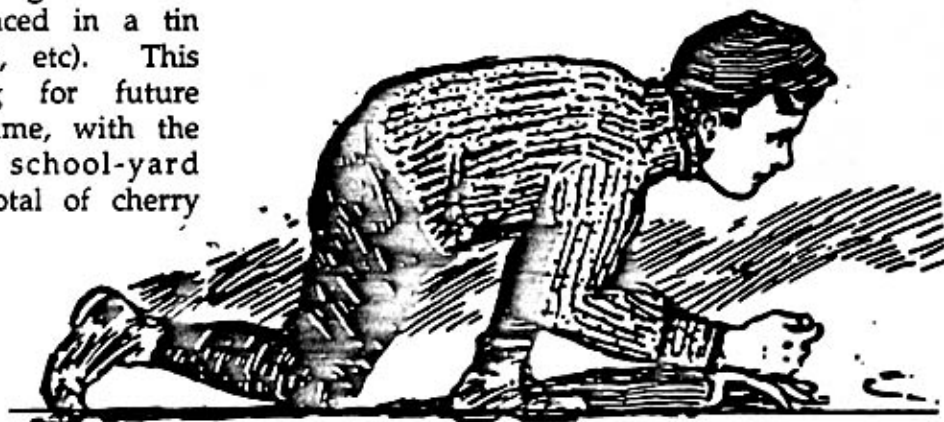
Cherry Bobs

In the 1930s in the days when cherries were a cheap fruit, seemingly available to all, come November in Shepparton, Victoria, a school game began with the cherry pips or 'bobs' used as a form of currency. The cherry bobs remaining from a family dessert of stewed cherries, after being counted out on individual plates with the prophetic saying, "Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief", were collected, distributed to the two girls in the family, dried and placed in a tin (from tobacco, sweets, etc). This became the nest-egg for future transactions in the game, with the aim of creating school-yard dominance in one's total of cherry bobs.

Hence one attempted to extract another child's cherry bobs by a range of inducements requiring the forfeit of one cherry bob for each payment. These ranged from 'Cherry Bob a Look' at a dressed-up doll in a box, for a special personal treasure such as pictures of a favourite film star, a multi-coloured collection of pluckings of wool from jumpers, a collection of carefully smoothed-out coloured 'silver paper' (early foil) from chocolates, etc., or possibly the cocoons spun by pet silkworms. There was 'Cherry Bob a Try', using a needle to insert into the pages of a proffered book, in the hope that the page selected would contain an inserted colour cut-out picture which became the property of the trier. There were also various games of skill such as attempting to throw a certain number of cherry bobs into a hole from a measured distance with a wager of success at stake.

The whole affair faded as the season passed and the budding entrepreneurs turned to other pursuits. It was infra dig to save cherry bobs from one year to the other. Mothers probably made certain that this was the case! I am unable to recollect if boys as well as girls joined in this pastime. My husband from Kerang doesn't recall it.

Dulcie Brooke
Wendouree, Vic.



To a child who says, "I don't care" -

Don't care was made to care,
Don't care was hung,
Don't care was put in the pot
And boiled till half-past one.

Girls in the 1920's ritually counted cherry or prune stones or the like - "This year, next year, sometimes, never" - to see when they would be married, and to whom: "Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief", and in what clothes, "Silk, satin, cotton, rags", and in what vehicle they would go to church, "Coach, carriage, wheelbarrow, cart", and where they would live, "Castle, mansion, cottage, hut."

Margaret Holmes
Mosman, N.S.W.

Counting-out Rhyme

(From the 1920s)

Eena, meena, ming-mong,
Ching, chong, chow;
Oosa, voosa, buckatoosa,
Vee, vak, vow,
O-u-t spells 'out',
And out you must go.

Mrs. R. M. Osborne,
Balwyn, Vic.

Rhymes for Fun

Mr. Mankey
Is so cranky,
He goes to church on Sunday,
To pray to God,
To give him strength,
To whack the kids on Monday.

Recited to me by my aunt who died in 1988, aged 89. Mr. Mankey was a 'long-winded' lay preacher at the Methodist Church, Tyler Street, Preston and also Headmaster of the Tyler Street State School No. 1494, c1900 and on.

Aunty Mary, Aunty Mary,
Lost the leg of her drawers,
Uncle Willy, Uncle Willy,
Will you lend me yours.

c1910 - 1920

Told to me by a cousin whose aunt and uncle were my grandparents.

Miss Lexie Luly,
Preston. Vic.



Q. How do you stop
a charging bull?

A. Take away the batteries.

Q. What dog says "meow"?

A. A police dog working under cover.

AH MELLA, MORTADELLA: PLAY TRADITIONS IN A MULTI-CULTURAL PLAYGROUND

by Heather Russell

[This paper was delivered at the 'Insuring Our Future: The Fabric of Childhood in Australian Society' Conference in Adelaide, May 1991.]

Ah mella
Mortadella
Aa oh
Mortadella ess se sa
Mortadella ess se sa
Aa oh

The rhyme 'Ah Mella, Mortadella' was collected from two girls at Brunswick North primary School in Melbourne, two years ago. The two girls were from non-English speaking backgrounds. The rhyme doesn't really mean anything and it seems to be a mixture of Italian and Spanish. I first heard this rhyme in 1984 in another inner suburban playground in Melbourne. The first line was 'Ah Mella, nackachella' - a bit more nonsense. In the tradition of all orally transmitted folklore, the words had changed slightly but the rhythm and genre had remained the same.

Over the last eight years, I have been steadily uncovering more and more details of the universality and richness of children's games. I am one of a small band of enthusiasts in Melbourne who believe that, despite what many text books on child development leave out entirely, or devote one or two paragraphs to, play in middle childhood is an extremely important aspect of

children's lives. But not only play. In middle childhood, or the primary school years, it's the culture of play, the social context, belonging to a peer group, learning the rules, the rhymes and the rites of play which are so vital to children's lives. Iona and Peter Opie, two well known scholars of children's folklore in England put it this way, 'The scraps of lore which children learn from each other are at once more real, more immediately serviceable, and more vastly entertaining to them than anything which they learn from grown-ups'.

The years of middle childhood are distinguished by children's intense desire to play in an environment which is minimally supervised by adults. At this age children are testing their independence. They are intent on belonging to their own peer culture and the place where this regularly happens, is in the primary school playground at lunchtime and recess time. Into this hour-and-a-half each day, children pack an enormous amount of activity. Whilst it may look chaotic to the outsider, the activity takes place according to a well defined set of rules and expectations, and within a social context that is extraordinarily complex. Children learn organisational skills, they learn to adjudicate and co-operate as well as compete, they test their physical skills and they master language skills through their rhymes, taunts and joking. What happens at lunchtime and recess time is a terrific example of children instinctively knowing what's good for them. Without any assistance from adults (in fact often hindered by well-meaning adults) children organise themselves into games such as Hopscotch, Skippy,

Marbles, Chasey - games which require a high degree of skill and co-ordination. Such activities are remarkably good for children's social and physical development.

Much of the play traditions in Australian primary school playgrounds comes from a British based tradition. In the last ten years or so, the influence of television has allowed American playground culture to infiltrate children's play traditions. 'Ronald McDonald' is one such example of a clapping rhyme that is well known by girls in Melbourne.

In 1984 I undertook a research project, funded by the Human Rights Commission and the IECD as it was called then, now known as the School of Early Childhood Studies. The project aimed to document the play practices of immigrant children, and find out what impact the presence of non-English speaking children had on playground life. I interviewed, observed and recorded the games and friendship networks of children in one inner suburban playground over a period of six months. The school - Debney Meadows Primary School in Flemington - had 82% of children from non-English speaking backgrounds. The largest single group were from Turkish families, and over half these children were Australian born. Indo-Chinese children (mostly Vietnamese and Chinese) made up the next major grouping. My research report entitled Play and Friendships in a Multi-cultural Playground has since been published.

The results of my observations in the Debney Meadows playground were fascinating. Essentially the children

at this school played the same games that children have been playing in Australia for generations. However on closer examination, the games were played with interesting multi-cultural variations. Some playground rituals had been replaced by Asian play rituals. For instance, deciding who would go 'it' in a game of chasey was no longer a matter for a 'dip' and a counting out rhyme like 'Eeny meeny miney mo'. At Debney Meadows the children employed a non-verbal ritual (a non-cheating one as well, as one child described it). The ritual, known as 'Awsum', was in two parts, the second part being the well known 'Paper, Scissors, Stone' routine. Each child chooses either paper, scissors or stone, and the winner is determined by a standard hierarchy: scissors beats paper, paper beats stone, stone beats scissors.

I was amazed to find that this ritual was used by all children without question. Using a non-verbal ritual in a playground where the participants do not share a common language meant that everyone had a fair go. For me this was yet another example of the co-operative nature of children's spontaneous games.

Another example of Asian play influences was the methods used to flick a marble. At Debney Meadows there were two acceptable flicking styles - the Chinese flick, and the Australian flick. The Chinese method was considered the more powerful and the more skilful method.

Interestingly, both the 'Awsum' counting out method and the Chinese flicking style flourished and were popular with all children regardless

of ethnic background, and they all accepted them as part of the local playground culture. No child expressed a dislike for these traditions because they were new or different or Asian. New variants of old games seemed to attract children's interest. Diversity was welcomed and respected. Thus the Vietnamese girls who played a variant of Elastics, called High Jump, that is very difficult to master and quite spectacular to watch, were highly respected in the playground.

Game traditions seemed to travel better than verbal traditions. Even though some non-English speaking rhymes were known at Debney Meadows, the dominant language of play was English. Gossiping, arguing, and general chit chat went on in a number of different languages, but the clapping rhymes, taunting, joking, skipping rhymes and other verbal play was predominantly in English, and based on the traditional Australian repertoire.

My observations at Debney Meadows indicate that play is a powerful common denominator for children regardless of their cultural background. At this age children are certainly aware of racial difference. Some are just coming to grips with cultural difference, but the common bond of childhood as expressed in the desire to belong to and to participate in a coherent playground culture is a strong motivating force. It motivates children to play and make friends with children from different ethnic backgrounds, and it motivates them to adopt and try out new ways of playing.

But please don't get the wrong

picture of the Debney Meadows playground. While the desire to play united children on one level, it was not strong enough to create a harmonious multi-cultural society. Interviewing children about their friendship networks revealed that girls mostly chose their friends from the same ethnic background as themselves. Boys were more flexible: a friend was someone who played games fairly and whom they could trust. The friend didn't have to come from the same ethnic background. As the children progressed through the school, they became more ethnically exclusive.

This extract from an interview with three Turkish girls indicates how some children's attitudes reflected the prejudices of their parents:

*We just play with Turkish girls ...
Why don't you play with other girls?
Cause we don't like them - they have nits. My Mum says, "Don't play with them 'cause they have nits." My little brother plays with Chinese and my Dad says, "Don't play with them." Then my Mother said, "Play with your sister and your friend, 'cause they're your friends." My cousin said, "If you play with Chinese girls or boys you'll get nits."
What about Australian girls?
"Yeah - we don't play with them because they smell. We don't have Australian girls in our grade."*

Turkish girls at Debney Meadows were often low achievers in the classroom. Add this to their exclusive choice of friends, a poor skill base and poor repertoire of games, and you get a group of girls who often had boring playtime experiences which did little to boost their self-esteem. As a result they

suffered more racism, were more racist in their attitudes and caused more disruption in the playground than their Vietnamese counterparts, who were highly skilled performers and were consequently very busy in the playground.

The playground is the place where a child's self esteem can be boosted or it can be shattered. Those children who are competent and knowledgeable about local playground culture are highly likely to go back into the classroom after lunchtime or recess with their self esteem intact, quite apart from the benefits of physical exercise, laughter and just having fun.

If you want to boost the self esteem of particular groups of children and promote a healthier atmosphere in your playground, the Debney Meadows experience convinced me that increasing children's repertoire of playground games, and helping them acquire appropriate playground skills will achieve this objective. Don't introduce Newcombe, Volleyball or other such adult sports to occupy the trouble makers. Let children play their own games their own way, but help them to build an environment that allows marginalised groups (like the Turkish girls at Debney Meadows) to develop skills which will help them gain entry into the playground culture, at a level where they could potentially be valued and admired rather than excluded.

Since 1984, I've spent time in other inner suburban playgrounds and observed similar multi-cultural play traditions being adopted by children from diverse backgrounds. The point I want to stress here is that children

in these playgrounds are exploring their common ground, teaching each other their play practices and traditions, and coming up with a local playground culture which had some relevance to all participants. Whilst I'm in no way suggesting that these playgrounds are paradises of tolerance and broader cultural acceptance, they do make a statement about children's willingness to embrace cultural difference. As educators, play leaders and child care workers, we should observe and learn from what children themselves are doing, and make use of that information when we teach and care for children in multi-cultural settings.

Here's an example of what I mean:

Alphabet ushka
Alphabet
Ushka A
Ushka B
Alphabet

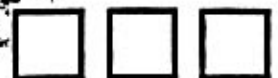
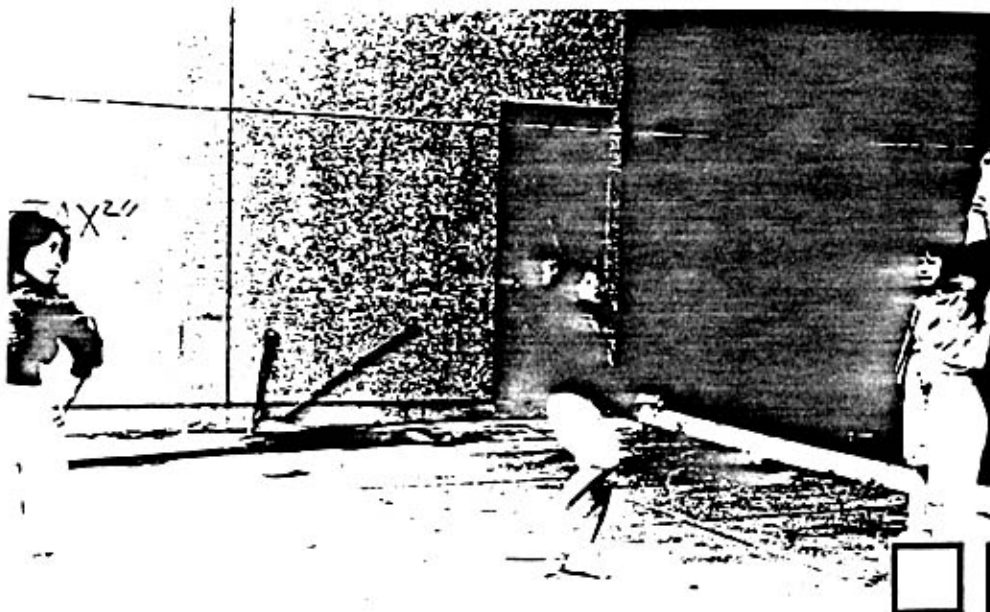
This rhyme was collected from a Turkish boy in a Richmond primary school in Melbourne. This boy knew quite a few clapping rhymes, which surprised me because in Australia clapping rhymes are usually girls' domain. Likewise when talking to a Vietnamese boy about the games he played in Vietnam, he mentioned Elastics and High Jump. In Australia, Elastics is primarily a girls' game and the boy admitted that he never played it here in Australia because it was a girls' game. These are just two examples of how the rigid division between girls' and boys' games that we have here in Australia is not the same in other countries. This kind of knowledge could be very useful in helping children cross the gender barrier and allow themselves broader

play and learning experiences.

Finally, as we look into the twenty-first century, one thing is undoubtedly clear. Children will spend more and more time in adult supervised care than they ever have before. After school hours care and vacation care are already a fact of life for thousands of children throughout Australia. As we adults intrude on the play time of children I believe we must do so with a thorough knowledge of children's play needs, and the play traditions of the children who attend these programs. We must respect the culture of childhood and allow it to remain intact, in the same way as we aim to respect the value and traditions of any other cultural group in society.

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WATCH OUT FOR -

AUSTRALIAN CHILDHOOD: AN ANTHOLOGY

Edited by Gwyn Dow and June Factor

This is the first wide-ranging anthology of writing about childhood in Australia, from the early days of European settlement to post-war immigration. The book includes extracts from unpublished memoirs, oral histories and autobiographies; the writers range from the unknown to the famous. The editors comment in their Introduction:

'The book is roughly chronological in structure, but within each section we have chosen large thematic subjects to link otherwise disparate lives. A reader interested in schooling can find variants on that theme throughout the book, while another might wish to focus on home life, or friendships, or the loss of sexual innocence. There are reflections in traditions of child-rearing, and evidence of how powerful are ideologies about childhood in affecting the behaviour of adults towards children. We are also reminded of the resilience and resourcefulness of the young, as well as their vulnerability.'

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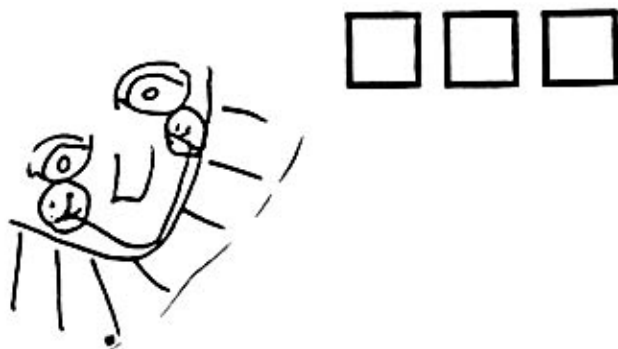
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BUSHRANGERS

Some years ago, the folklorist KEL WATKINS collected children's games from residents of the Coomandook-Coonalpyn area of South Australia. One game, noted as having been played between 1916 and 1923, was called *BUSHRANGERS*. We reprint the account of that game given to Watkins, and invite readers to record for the ACFN games of their childhood, particularly those with a clearly Australian 'flavour'.

"One of the games we played was 'Bushrangers' - we'd pick sides and get out in the scrub and make a bit of a bush shelter and keep out of the way of the other kids - they had to catch you before you got back to the base where the flagpole was - that was the base - as long as you got back there before they caught you, you were safe - no guns - we only had sticks and if you were close enough to get a whack with a stick - well it was your bad luck - whichever side had the most caught, they'd have to go 'he' for the next time - the two skippers would

pick the sides and of course they'd always go for the top runners so they wouldn't have to go 'he' so often ..."

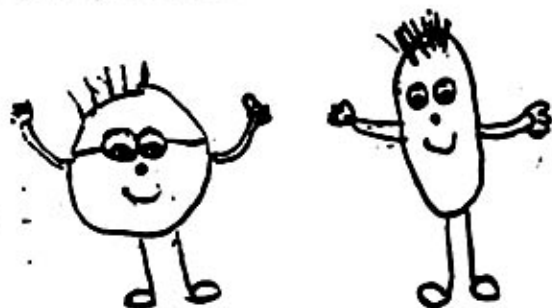
Children's folklore provides evidence, if evidence is needed, of the young's sharp-eyed observation of the ways of their elders. The following examples come from a recent New England (American) collection of children's rhymes: *Miss Mary Mac All Dressed in Black*, compiled by Scott E. Hastings, Jr. and published by August House (Little Rock, 1990).

*Mother is a young thing,
Daddy is old.
When mother goes downtown
Daddy is sure to scold.*

*Ashes to ashes,
Dust to dust,
If it weren't for kisses
Our lips would rust.*

*The higher the mountain,
The cooler the breeze,
The younger the couple,
The tighter they squeeze.*

Readers are invited to send in their favourite 'sharp-eyed' rhymes to the ACFN for publication in later issues.



THE CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE REVIEW

The Children's Folklore Review has become a review in fact as well as in name. CFR is the journal of the Children's Folklore Section of the American Folklore Society; it is published twice a year and carries articles, book reviews, notes and announcements, and Section business. The Fall 1990 number included the two 1989 Newell Prize winning papers and a report from Brian Sutton-Smith on the future agenda for child study, the Spring 1991 number includes selected papers from the Children's Folklore Section panel at the 1989 AFS meeting in Philadelphia, and the Fall 1991 number will include articles from folklorists in Canada, France and Sweden. CFR is sent to Section members throughout the United States and Canada and to

members in Europe and Australia. To become a Section member and receive CFR send \$US10.00 annual dues to -

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To inquire about submitting an article or to receive a sample issue of CFR contact -

C.W. Sullivan III,
Editor,
Children's Folklore Review,
English Department,
East Carolina University,
Greenville, NC. 27858-4353.



Here are some jokes:

Q. What happened to the cat who swallowed a torch

A. He hiccapped with delight.

Q. Where do Otters come from?

A. Otter-Space.

Q. Why does a Monkey scratch himself?

A. Because he's the only one who knows where it itches.

Q. What do you get when you cross peanut butter, bread and a werewolf?

A. A peanut butter sandwich that howls and get hairy when the full moon rises.



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