

## **AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE NEWSLETTER**

June, 1992  
No. 22

ISSN 07285531

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Published from: The School of Early Childhood Studies,  
University of Melbourne  
\$6.00 in Australia, \$8.00 including postage outside Australia



### **EDITORIAL**

This issue has only one editor; June Factor is attending the 1992 meeting of the Association for the Study of Play in Paris. The meeting is being held jointly with the International Council for Children's Play at the Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques de Sèvres. June is presenting a paper in Sèvres on her current major research project, the study of Australian children's vernacular speech. She is also visiting Vienna, Amsterdam and Warsaw; and Lodz in Poland; we eagerly await her report when she returns.

We are advertising in this issue three Australian gatherings. Two will take place this year, the Museum of Australian Childhood's seminar in Sydney in September (pardon the alliteration) and the Fifth National Folklife Conference in Melbourne in November. The World Play Summit is being held in February 1993; all should hold considerable interest for our readers.

The Newsletter is pleased to welcome to this issue some old friends such as

Bill Scott, Heather Russell, Graham Seal and our correspondent from Denmark, Erik Kaas Neilsen. We also welcome some new contributors, Mr. S. McKerchar from Pinjarra in Western Australian and Dr. Margaret Peters from Adelaide.

Do children or families still say 'rabbits' on the first day of the month? (It's almost the first of July.) This editor's mind has been much upon rabbits recently, following a recent stint at the National Museum in Canberra, where a major rabbit project is underway. We were pleased to contribute a couple of songs and one rhyme. Rabbits have sustained several generations of European Australians, particularly in times of economic hardship. Today's creeping suburbia has, alas, probably put this hardy staple out of reach of today's depression-era families, in Melbourne at least:

Rabbit hot,  
Rabbit cold,  
Rabbit young,  
Rabbit old;  
Rabbit tender,  
Rabbit tough,  
Thanks be to God  
I've had enough.

**Gwenda Beed Davey**

## A QUERY FROM DENMARK

Perhaps you would be able to clear up a folkloristic problem. In 1989 in the early summer a kind of new rhyme of rather cynical and 'sick' content came into existence in this country. Perhaps it came from abroad, but is maintained by some Jutlanders (inhabitants of Jutland), that this new genre hails from Århus or its neighbourhood. It is as far as I am informed also known in France and in the German-speaking countries, like Germany, Austria, Switzerland. But it is certain that they were known in Sweden and Norway from 1990. Almost all of the rhymes start with: All the children/boys (or)/girls, and the next line contains a name, and the last line tells what they/he or she are/is doing contrary to the rest of the children.

I should like to know if this kind of rhyme is known among children and youngsters in Australia. If it is - do you know where and when it started? Is there any printed material or article about it? The genre has been extremely popular in Denmark last year and the beginning of this, and five small books with hundreds of examples have sold very well and actually been on the 'best seller list'. But the books and the phenomenon have also roused discussion and scandal. My own experience is, that the rhymes are above all made by male youngsters and boys, though they are also used by girls. Today they are on the decline, though still popular among the younger children.

The enclosed list will give you some idea how the often rather provoking formula is built up:

1. All children loved to play football,  
except Ted,  
the ball was his head.
2. All the children ran out of the burning house,  
except Meg,  
she had only one leg.
3. All children loved eating horse meat,  
except Toni,  
it was her pony.
4. All children got Christmas gifts from Santa Claus,  
except Dick,  
who sat on his prick.
5. All children loved to work,  
except Bibi,  
she was a hippie.
6. All children loved to fuck,  
except Bob,  
he could not get it up.
7. All children were asleep,  
except Eddy,  
he raped his teddy (bear).
8. All children ran when the axe-murderer came,  
except Finn,  
he lost his chin.
9. All children run to the school,  
except Ada/Oda,  
his father had a Lada/Skoda.
10. All children looked down the well,  
except Bob,  
he looked up.
11. All the boys loved sex,  
except Rod,  
he thought it was odd.

12. All children stopped at the slope,  
except Adair,  
he sat in a wheelchair.
13. All the boys loved girls  
except Flemming,  
he loved Henning.
14. All the children hated drugs,  
except Nanna,  
she smoked marijuana.
15. All the children went to the  
hairdresser,  
except Nemo,  
he went to chemo (therapy, i.e.  
for cancer).
16. All children loved to play piano,  
except for Inger,  
she had no finger(s).

From Germany:

17. Alle Kinder gingen zu Hitler  
Jugend,  
nur nicht Trude,  
sie war aber Jude.

Trans:

All the children go to the Hitler  
Youth,  
except Trude,  
who's Jewish.

18. Alle Kinder jagen den weissen  
Hai,  
nur nicht Schröder  
er ist Köder.

Trans:

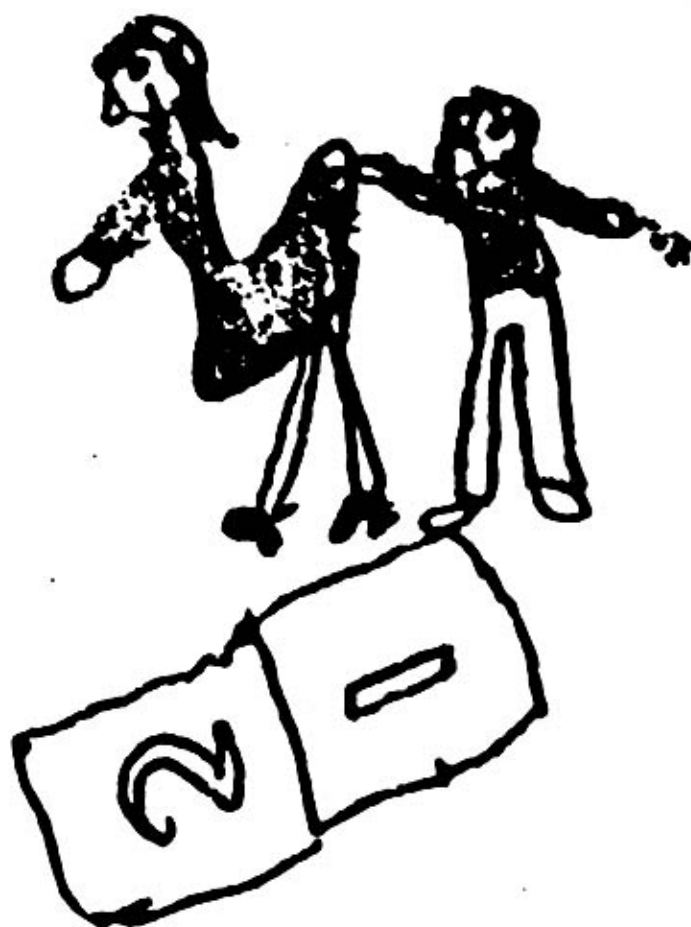
All the children hunt the white  
shark,  
Except Schroder,  
He's the bait.

As you may see from the above mentioned examples, it is a kind of wit based on conflict with the usual reality or normal moral and ethical norms. Many rhymes are about accidents or atrocities, malice, human weaknesses and handicaps, sometime about ethical or social subjects, etc.

Though that kind of humour is not unknown in older Danish traditions - for instance the older proverbs and sayings can be rather harsh - it is at least a rather unusual and peculiar innovation.

Who knows where it first started?

Erik Kaas Nielsen.



## A FIRST RESPONSE TO ERIK KAAS NEILSEN:

This particular formula is quite unknown to me. Although a few types of 'sick' jokes have circulated in Australia in recent years, I am unaware of any which have been solely initiated by or even largely confined to children, as Erik Kaas Neilsen seems to indicate about the cycle he discusses. 'Dead baby' jokes were common more than ten years ago, but were widespread among adults as well as children (What's green and sits in the corner? a baby in a plastic bag.). Similarly a number of joke cycles related to disasters have a decidedly sick quality and are told by both adults and children. One Australian example concerns two events, the drowning of an Australian Prime Minister (Harold Holt) and the disappearance/killing by a dingo of the infant Azaria Chamberlain (What really got Harold Holt? A dingo with a snorkel). These jokes are more properly classified as disaster jokes rather than sick jokes per se, as are the space shuttle disaster jokes (Where do the astronauts go for their holidays? All over Florida), despite their undoubtedly 'sick' qualities. Other readers of this Newsletter are invited to further assist Erik Kaas Neilsen with Australian opinions - and evidence! Ed.

## STOP PRESS

Three distinguished Australian folklorists, including our correspondent in this issue, Bill Scott, have been honoured by the Australian Government in the Queen's Birthday Honours announced on 8th June,

1992. Bill Scott and Ron Edwards have been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia, General Division, for services to Australian folklore, and in Ron Edwards' case, also for services to Australian publishing through Rams Skull Press. John Meredith OAM was made a Member of the Order of Australia, General Division, for service to the arts, particularly in the collection and preservation of Australian folklore. The Australian Children's Folklore Newsletter offers warmest congratulations to all three.



CONDOM LORE: Items current among 7 - 9 year old Perth schoolgirls.

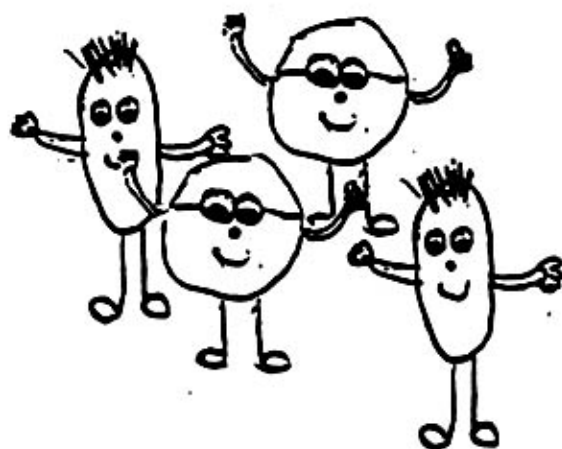
(Tune: We're Happy Little Vegemites')

We're happy little condoms,  
We come in packs of six,  
You buy us from the shop,  
And you stick us on your dicks.

\*\*\*\*\*

Why did the condom go whizzing  
round the room?  
Because it was pissed off.

From Graham Seal.



## "YOU'LL NEVER GUESS WHAT I SAW....

By way of an introduction, I have just completed a doctoral thesis, entitled 'Children's Culture and the State : South Australia, 1890s to 1930s', which seeks to argue that a major transformation of children's play, and children's culture and experience more broadly conceived, took place within these decades. Through oral history, as well as other published and unpublished source material from the period, I attempted to show that such interventions, under the varying guises of reforming children's physical deportment, emotional development, social learning and cognitive growth, were never clear cut or straight forward in their implementation. Children, too, from whichever historical epoch, actively shape and re-construct their own subjectivities, frequently in conflict with hegemonic prescriptions.

The thesis interweaves the salience of children's play in human development against a backdrop of increasing state intervention in everyday life and, in various chapters, analyses the construction of shifting familial identities and practices; the unstructured street life and its increasing regulation; and the impact of schooling, with its accompanying surveillance and formalisation of play.

In part, this thesis belongs to the thirty South Australian men and women, aged between sixty and ninety-four, at the time of the interviews, who shared their memories with me. The profound effect mythology has on lived experience is traced through their re-memorisations. As well, other unpublished South Australian oral histories are put forward in an effort to

rupture the notion of a 'rational unified being'.

The following text is taken from a larger chapter - 'The Community and Beyond' and will not evoke any surprises amongst regular readers - for you are already aware of the rich dimensions of children's culture.

### Family Fun

The dominant narratives of community life revolve around family weekend activities, visits to the beach, holidays, sporting fixtures, going to the races, and special festivities such as Guy Fawkes' celebrations. In the midst of the Depression years, supporting one's football team increased, if not in attendance, in cultural significance. Even going to the (Central) Market on Friday night was for some a form of family fun.

James Porter: *we used to go across to the Central Market in them days. Well, there used to be a vacant area there (where Coles' are now) and there used to be the Adelaide Fish Market and Ice Works there then, and on either side of that vacant place there was two, what they call Cheap Jacks .....*

*Well, there used to be these two vans full of all sorts of prizes and watches and clocks and all that, and a little platform used to come out from this - this platform - and the chaps used to come out with a big bundle of little tickets and you used to pay a shilling for a pick. Of course where weren't too many good ones amongst them. And when we were kids we used to go over and say. 'Any good to you mister?' and if they were not good they used to give them to us and we used to go up and collect them after.*



*You know, we'd get a pencil or a comb or a packet of pins or something. we used to take them home to Mum ... They were no good to us. Mum used the pins and the safety pins and pencils and things like that. Lots of little things went on then .... and the gardeners would often give us a bunch of carrots or throw us a cabbage or something. It all helped.<sup>1</sup>*

The technological effects of the 'modern' society were to be a long time in re-forming many of these leisure activities. The Glenelg beach, in particular, was a place of nineteenth century and twentieth century leisure. The following description, by Kathleen McLean, of Glenelg, prior to the First World War, 'matched' many of the descriptions given of Glenelg between the Wars.

*Kathleen: Going down to the Bay on the 28th (Proclamation Day, the 28th December) the train used to go about every quarter of an hour and it would be packed. They would be hanging off the bottom steps. The train used to run down Jetty Road.*

*There was sideshows all along the esplanade. Punch and Judy and different things like that. Merry-go-rounds, the big wheel, throwing balls at different things. At one stage, they had a cone like that (gestures) and it came up a slope like that, rounded, and it came up to the middle. You sat on this and it started going round and round. You had to sit right up on the cone. If you stayed on it, people threw pennies in. It would s'tart going round and round and it was all padded around the side. In the end there was nothing to hold on to, you would slide off the end. I can remember one time I got right up on*

*the cone and I could sit on that cone and go round and round like that. I got quite a lot of pennies thrown in to me.<sup>2</sup>*

The excitement of 'the baths' was a regular occurrence on Saturdays for Kathleen and her friends.

*The ladies baths were further away from the jetty, you had to pay so much and you had a cubicle to get undressed in..... I was fourteen when I was allowed to go down there on Saturday afternoon. Mum would come down about five o'clock and bring the tea down. As Kathleen recalled, the men bathed on the other side. And of course they didn't have bathing costumes - they bathed raw. It was all partitioned off. I believe there was one or two peepholes. It was from such a vantage point that Kathleen's little sister, Laurel, came racing back to inform her mother, 'Mum, mum. You'll never guess what I saw. A boy's got a tongue sticking out from his belly!<sup>3</sup>*



Leisurely promenades on the jetty were part of the ritual and it had a 'restaurant on the end of the jetty where you could go down and have a cup of tea and buy some ice-cream.'<sup>4</sup> Glenelg was also a place where the women's police eventually came to 'keep an eye on'. Many of the interviewees recalled stories of Kate Cocks, the first woman police officer, 'intervening between courting couples.'<sup>5</sup> Many of the interviewees would take rooms in boarding houses at Glenelg, particularly over the summer holidays. For many country families, like the O'Loughlin, Noonan and Slattery families, it was an annual tradition. More affluent families would take rooms at Glenelg, Port Elliott or Victor Harbour, making sure, like Bill Burns, at the age of seven years, to 'enquire from the proprietress - "Have you got a chimney for Father Christmas to come down?"'<sup>6</sup>

With the coming of the motor vehicle, more families travelled to popular events like the Easter horse racing at Oakbank. Although gambling was still frowned on by many church-going adults, Catholic families appeared to worry about this aspect the least. Agnes Clarke recalls accompanying her grandfather to the Victoria Park race course regularly where he would always place a bet.<sup>7</sup> Country race meetings at places like, Clare, Jamestown and Oodnadatta were also popular community events.



Perhaps one of the most remembered festivities was that of the fifth of November, Guy Fawkes' day. Whole families would gather in empty paddocks and 'have a bit of fun'.

James Porter: *We used to make an old Guy up and put it in a cart and get up early and catch people going to work, and we used to sing .... You know the old guy song - 'Guy, Guy, Guy - a penny for a Guy, if you haven't got a penny a ha'penny will do, and if you haven't got a ha'penny, God bless you.'* And we used to have to sing this all the time, and you know, we'd get money, then we'd go up to the Hackney Hotel on the corner and wait there, because we used to get a lot more customers around there, then we did others. Then we'd buy the fireworks with what we collected. On the same evening all the adults used to go to the Torrens Bank, between the bank and the river, and make a big bonfire. Then we used to have all this cracker night up 'till about eleven o'clock at night. Of course the adults, they had the sky rockets and all - we only had the little cheap fireworks like the jumping jacks and the crackers and the small cannons. Of course the adults had big cannons. And flower pots, and wheels and sparkers.<sup>8</sup>

Despite James Porter's somewhat aggrieved tone, his narrative reflects the sense of shared ritual and shared fun. Even though the chant would change in the singing, burning the Guy was a spectator/participant role for most children of these decades. It was always, during these years, held in a public space. Kathleen McLean recalls: *There would be a crowd of about fifty. The children would dress up as Guys<sup>9</sup>. Even in the far-north of South Australia and the fledgling*

west-coast and Eyre Peninsula settlements, a guy would be burnt. Some of the more unsupervised efforts would necessitate the calling of the fire brigade.<sup>10</sup>

New Year's pranks often saw the constabulary being called out. Paddy Baker remembers: *The radicals. They were out New Years' Eve looking for trouble. I will never forget it. There was a Mr Pope lived over the way and he had a horse and gig. A few of the young fellows went over there and he had a freshly organised haystack and they put the gig right on top of this haystack. Mr Pope was at church. And in the morning when he woke up, there was his gig right up on top of the haystack. He couldn't get it down on his own. Somebody told the police about it (laughter) so the policemen organised to have it taken down. And he picked up these two lads and said he wanted them to give him a hand for a while, and they were the two lads who put it there. Margaret: How did he know? Paddy: (Laughs) I don't know. But he knew it was them.*<sup>11</sup>

Most of the interviewees could recall community pranks on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day. As the motor car gained in popularity, it, too, suffered similar indignities to the old horse and gig.

Anne Tonkin recalls: *'New Year's Eve was the worst. You'd find people's cars would be painted white, if they were black, or a cow might be tied up at the hotel door. All sorts of silly things like that. Painting the animals was the worst thing they used to do. The first thing we'd do New Year's morning would be to come very gingerly out to have a look what happened along the street.*

*I remember one New Year's Eve we hadn't gone to bed and we were in the room and we heard this noise out front, and my cousin from Queensland was with us. We had this shop in the front where we used to do dressmaking, and I went up and just pushed it back (the door) and these fellows were on the other side., They got such a shock to think people were in there. They were going to fool (around) on the window, and off they went for their lives. There was plenty of that sort of thing on New Year's Eve.*<sup>12</sup>

Others, like Agnes Clarke (nee Burns) would follow their Scottish custom of first footing - we'd always let a dark haired man cross the threshold first.<sup>13</sup>, and some like Adelene Venables would have no celebration at all. Most country areas would organise some form of community get-together which would be an opportunity for many families to meet. Mrs Elsa Hay-Taylor recalls New Year's Day picnics in the south-east of South Australia: *Well, we used to go out into the scrub and have wonderful picnics. Every New Year's Day was the Bool Lagoon picnic race meeting and it was organised by all the people that lived in Bool Lagoon. They took their horses they used on the farm and raced them. The ponies for the children who were old enough to ride ponies, and they had all sorts of funny races like egg and spoon races. But they trotted.... The people who had trotters. The Pattersons, for instance, they had beautiful horses. They showed their horses every year - four in hand - and all had games for the children, too. Three legged race. You know, you tie one leg to the other - two children by that leg, and then they run that kind of race... It was a lovely day. We used*



*to look forward to it all year.*<sup>14</sup>

(to be continued)

1. S.A. Speaks. James Porter.
2. Oral History Interview, Kathleen McLean.
3. Ibid.
4. OHI, Anne Tonkin.
5. 'Boys to the right, girls to the left' was an often repeated anecdote which was supported by an 'eye witness' account from one of the couples interviewed who 'declined', laughingly, to be named.
6. OHI, Bill Burns.
7. OHI, Agnes Clarke.
8. S.A. Speaks. James Porter.
9. OHI, Kathleen McLean.
10. OHI, Patricia Fitzpatrick 'We accidentally set the paddocks on fire one year, playing with crackers when we shouldn't have been!'
11. OHI, Paddy Baker.
12. OHI, Anne Tonkin.
13. OHI, Agnes Clarke.
14. S.A. Speaks. Mrs Elsa Birch Hay-Taylor. Formerly Butler, nee Gibson.

from Margaret Peters.



## HAS IT CHANGED?

### Growing Up In South-East Queensland.

Thinking back to childhood in the little country town of the 30s where I spent my boyhood, and the playground at the old Caboolture State School where our teachers strove to impart a truly pragmatic education upon our reluctance, some aspects now seem clearer than at any time during or since those years. I must confess to being a little surprised at some of the conclusions reached.

First of all there was the very rigid segregation of the sexes at that time. During my time as a primary schoolboy we talked and played only with other boys, and girls inhabited a mysterious world of their own, not only in the playground but right throughout our whole society. I must emphasize that this was not imposed upon us from above by parents, teachers or even the mores of our society; it was something entirely male and instinctive. To be seen even talking to a girl brought instant jeering from one's contemporaries. It was understood that circumstances at times made it necessary to talk to a sister, if you had one, but other females were severely banned by the existing and very strictly adhered-to convention. I think I can honestly say that the only time during my boyhood when I played a game which involved participation by both sexes was at Sunday School picnics where games were authoritatively organised by severe ladies who would not be denied and who supervised compulsory games of Drop The Hanky or Tunnelball. Even then it was de rigeur to take part wearing a

rueful expression of disgust shared by all other males press-ganged into taking part! Might I add that to the best of my memory, this attitude was shared by our female contemporaries, though perhaps they weren't so blatant about expressing their opinions.

Looking back it surprises me how many boys games and beliefs were concurrent with those held by tribal Aborigines. Those of our contemporaries who were most admired were the boys who could imitate bird-calls so well as to bring birds close to hand, who were brave and strong and good at athletic games. Our admiration was reserved for fellows who caught fish and yabbies, (hunters, in other words), who suffered pain or discomfort uncomplainingly, who could successfully navigate the featureless wallum country surrounding the town, and who had success in the sporting field.

When I consider the current hero-worship of sportsmen and women in Australia, the abhorrence among most men of homosexuality which in turn can lead to physical violence for that sole reason, and our reverence for the memories of certain bushrangers who 'died game', perhaps these traits I mention from the male side of the culture of the playground have not faded from the national scene as much as perhaps they ought to have done. Though certainly some of these factors helped among the young men who were compelled to defend this country from invasion during the 40s!

Games among boys - all the varieties of 'chasing' games, of course. Red Rover, (a highly organised team game

with recognised leaders), cowboys and Indians, (moving pictures had changed the title of a game better known to our fathers as 'Bushies and Bobbies'). Marbles in season, which came with mysterious regularity and then died away - three games only at Caboolture - 'Ring', 'Holes' and 'Eyedrop'. Kites too, with seasons came and went. Tops, of course, though at that time of soft earth playgrounds and no concrete or bitumen surfaces it was difficult, and mothers unreasonably wouldn't let us spin them indoors. 'It will dig holes in the lino!' For about a year after the beginning of a serial on the new wireless sets, Robin Hood And His Merry Men, (sponsored by super Plume Ethyl), outlaws of Sherwood Forest met and hit each other with quarterstaves and skirmished through the wattles and paper-barks near Lagoon Creek. Especially on a log that crossed one such bog-hole. The quarterstaves were made from the inch-square spreaders used at the local saw-mill to separate sawn timber while it seasoned in great square heaps. These same poles were used to make spears by splitting one end, inserting a small strip of heavy hoopiron, and binding it firm with copper wire. These spears stuck very successfully into the soft bark of grey gums if you scratched a target thereon. They were filed to a point, very sharp, quite dangerous and absolutely forbidden, which meant that they could never be taken home but had to be secreted elsewhere. Wooden sledges hammered from case timber slithered down the steep slope by the bridge over the Caboolture River near the bridge that had seen Cobb and Co. coaches enroute for the Gympie Diggings. We thought of this as the distant past but it really was only about 60 years

previously. All these things and many more filled our days when we were not at school - hanging horsehair snares on grasstree flowers to try to catch parrots in the flowering season, dangling bits of meat on cotton in waterholes to catch the little freshwater lobsters, then boil them in a two pound jam tin .....

Just what girls did still remains a bit of a mystery to me. We saw them skipping and heard their mysterious chants as they did so, but it would have been an affront to our maleness to have paid much attention to such things! And they played hopscotch, of course, and had tea-parties. But mostly they seemed to gather in threes and fours and whisper together and go off into fits of laughter from time to time. I do remember once wondering what it was they talked about and why it took so long to explain, and what was so funny about it all, but of course my male superiority made it impossible to find out by asking.

I'm wrong, there was one game that was legal to let a few girls in to make up the numbers, though it was never played in the schoolground. This was hide-and-go-seek, better known as 'hidey', (by the very Australian practice of using the diminutive and adding a suffix - footie, Bertie, Annie, arvie or arvo, and even on one occasion when I heard a fellow-worker refer to his overalls as his 'overies'....). Counting-out rhymes for hidey to see who would 'go he' - 'Eenie Menie Minie Mo' of course, and 'Onc Potato, Two Potato' and the favourite among the boys:

'Ink, pink paper stink,  
I smell a great big stink  
And it seems to come from  
Y - O - U spells you!"

Girls were permitted to join this game after school, just as sometimes they were permitted to field during cricket matches though rarely to bat or bowl unless they possessed forceful nature. Which a lot of them did, now I come to remember ....

Do the schoolground values of my childhood still obtain now? I would be very surprised if they did remain unchanged. We were a generation of children caught between the pioneering values of our parents; frugality, the work ethic, independence, physical strength and courage, puritanical moral values and a distrust of boasters; all this reinforced by the terrible economic situation in which we lived. We grew up to live with a war, then the enormous changes in attitude brought about by the influx of migrants post-war and the revolution in technology. And it is all so recent - I recall all the children in the school being allowed to leave their classes one day to watch an aeroplane fly over. No one had heard of such a thing before. So primitive, we were .... Yet it seems to me that I still catch glimpses of that schoolground in national attitudes to many things. I hope I'm wrong about some of it.

But tell me, please, have these attitudes in the playground changed all that much since the 30s? I am sure that many of your readers are in a better position to judge, and I'd like to know.

W.N. Scott.





## REMINISCENCES OF FREMANTLE, WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1933 - 1938.

I started my school years at Richmond School, East Fremantle with the half yearly intake in July, 1933. I was only five and a half years old and do not know why I was allowed to start then as the minimum age at that time was 6 years, but the outcome of this was that I was the youngest pupil in my class up until 7th Standard at Fremantle Boys' Secondary School when I became the second youngest. Another problem was that I was irrevocably attached to using my left hand, and teachers of that era were of the opinion that only right handed writing was permissible, and this caused frustration to both participants in the many altercations that arose. Eventually I won out as it became obvious, even to the stick-in-the-mud authorities that my right hand was totally uncontrollable when a pencil was forcibly jammed between finger and thumb.

Pen and ink writing in a Copy Book was anathema, as often after doing some really classy copying my wrist smudged the work causing the teacher to make caustic remarks such as 'it looks like a spider crawled out of the inkwell'. This is why many left-handers of my generation turn the paper sideways and write with an exaggerated curve of the wrist. Since the advent of ball point pens this is no longer necessary and left-handers write more normally.

It is not original, but still valid to state that schoolyard games appear spontaneously overnight for no apparent reason, and it is a fact that at our school all the girls would be happily playing hopscotch (hoppy) and

the next day they would all appear in the school yard carrying skipping ropes and hoppy was thrown to one side as though it never existed. You often read stories about the telepathic abilities of our Aboriginal people, but in our day the school kids would come a close second. I remember one morning when I was in Second Standard coming to school to resume the game of 'Flickers' we had been playing the day before, and was stunned when I entered the yard and found that everyone was assiduously involved in playing alleys (marbles). Eventually four or five of us who hadn't got the message drifted together and played our last game for the season in isolation, scorned by the others as being 'Old Hat'.

Cigarette Card games were of two types; 'Flickers' and 'Flutters'. FLICKERS involved taking a corner of a cigarette card between the second and third fingers and with a flicking motion spinning the card against a fence or wall about three metres away. The following players then attempted to flick their card to cover part of the card on the ground. If they did this, they claimed the card as theirs. If the card did not hit the fence before 'covering', only the card on the ground was claimed, but if the covering card bounced off the fence and 'covered', the owner of the underlying card had to give the winner another card making 'Twos'. The number of players was not limited, but more than eight was not usually practicable and less than four was not much fun.

Taking it in turns each player had a go, and the number of cards on the ground quickly built up, and the more on the ground the easier to fluke a win. Despite the proliferation of cards

on the ground each player knew his card and only rarely was there a dispute over ownership, and if there was it was usually sorted out by the other players immediately so they could get on with the game. Often players ran out of resources and would have to try and scrounge a few cards from a mate, or hang around till the game finished to see if any of their cards remained uncovered on the ground. Some of the kids really had a flair for this game and an elite group of consistent winners had their hangers onners that followed them from game to game to watch their heroes win.

FLUTTERS was an entirely different kettle of fish, being purely a game of chance, no skill required and played by duffers like me. The greater the number the better. One person, usually the tallest, collected one or two cards from each player and threw them into the air from where they would flutter to the ground, and if any card covered another when they came to rest, the owner of the top card would claim the card or cards under his. As in two-up if the players did not like the fall they could bar the drop and call for another.

The cards we played with were in three distinct categories:

1. The true cigarette card from W.D. & H.O. Wills Players Cigarettes Packets with pictures of cricketers or footballers on them, or the Country Life Cards, Wildflower Series or similar. The cards were hard to get as this was still depression days and not many smokers used tailor-made cigarettes, and uncles, aunts and family friends were all put upon to help enlarge one's collection.

2. Film Star cards were obtained from Licorice Cigarettes, Bubble Gum and some other sweets. These were inferior to cigarette cards and could not be used in the same game and a swap rate of about four or five to one was the norm.

3. Milk Bottle Tops were played with by those who could not afford, or could not get the cards, also used by those 'idiots' who left their cards on the kitchen table or in the bathroom. At this time free milk was distributed in W.A. schools and each child received a half pint bottle daily. These bottles were sealed with discs of cardboard which made good flickers, and as they were marked Monday to Friday it was not difficult to sort out the players' discs. There was no value in the discs, but the games were just as fiercely competitive as the others and the winner's satisfaction just as great.

Any kid caught pinching alleys or cards or anything else was not reported to the teachers except in serious matters. 'Behind the shed after school' was the order of the day, or if a more protracted fight was foreseen, a convenient vacant block off the school premises was the site, and a one on one fist fight controlled by the participants' peers settled differences. Dirty tactics or weapons of any sort were OUT and no one was ever seriously hurt. We had never heard of emotional stress, peer pressures or psychological trauma, and all we knew about drugs was, that somewhere Fu Manchu and his countrymen had an opium den where they smoked pipes and had weird dreams. Our teachers caned us if we deserved it (sometimes we didn't) but we respected them and we respected their authority, and our teachers did

not come to school wearing shorts and thongs. Our local policeman was also respected, and if we did something wrong or stupid, he was just as likely to kick our bums and send us home to face our parents when he told them of our escapade. Today the parents would probably have him charged with assault.

Now on to another topic. You asked about secret codes etc. One common speech code in this era was the use of 'Pig Latin'. My sister and I became quite proficient at speaking this and our parents were mystified until Mum worked it out. It simply consists of putting the first letter of a word last and adding 'ay' on the end, thus Pig Latin became "Igpay Atinlay". If the word started with a vowel just the ay was added, although there were one or two exceptions such as early became earlylay. 'Where are you going?' translates phonetically as 'Airwhay array ooyay oingay'. Once the speech is mastered and normal speaking speed is achieved, it is completely unintelligible to the uninitiated.

Another peculiarity of speech among the boys (I don't remember any girls trying it) was learnt from the James Cagney, George Raft and W.G. Robinson films of this time about gangsters and prisons, etc. The idea was to talk out of the side of the mouth without moving your lips, as seen in the SING SING Prison scenes from films like 'White Heat' and 'The Big House'. The better you were at it, the more manly and daring you were. I thought this had died a natural death and was amazed when 'Strop' resurrected the idea on the Paul Hogan Show and made a real fool of himself.

S. McKerchar





## **PLAY OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN: Research in Progress**

Play is pleasurable, fun, self-initiated, imaginative, energetic, spontaneous, serious. Play is learning.

For children, play is an end in itself. For parents and educators, play is also a medium through which children learn and experience the world. However, the importance of play for primary school age children is often overlooked and underestimated, (Roberts, 1980). Understanding the nature and diversity of children's play interests is crucial if we are to provide appropriate and rewarding play environments for them. (Frost, and Klein, 1979).

Research into children's play in primary school playgrounds has to date focussed mostly on the playground as 'a scene for physical apparatuses'..... and has been relatively neglected as child cultural event' (Sutton Smith, 1990). According to Sutton-Smith (1990), in the United States, the primary school playground in its traditional form is being abandoned in favour of, in some cases, a physical education class, and in other cases, a severely modified playtime, where only children of the same age are allowed in the playground at one time. In Australia, we are not seeing such major changes to the traditional recess and lunchtimes, as in the United States. However, some changes are creeping in. In order to protect the safety of the younger children, some primary schools choose to segregate their playground into junior playground for the Preps to Year 2 children, and

senior playgrounds for the Years 3 - 6 children. Any change such as this potentially detracts from recess as a 'festival event', with its 'festival-like multiplicity of elements, ages, sexes and forms of play. (Sutton-Smith, 1990).

Whilst Sutton Smith suggests there are many different forms of play that co-exist in the primary school playground, there is very little research that attempts to describe what these different forms of play actually are, (Pellegrini, 1990). In Australia, the work of June Factor (1978, 1988) and Lindsay and Palmer (1981) has achieved an enormous amount in documenting the culture of children in Australian primary school playgrounds. Their focus has been on traditional forms of play such as playground rhymes, rituals and games with rules such as hopscotch, skippy and marbles. What other forms of play co-exist with these traditional games, and how significant are they in children's play lives?

Recently I spent three months at Pembroke Primary School in Moroolbark, a school on the north-eastern outskirts of Melbourne. I observed, interviewed and photographed children in the playground in an attempt to document the playground behaviour of the three hundred children who attend this school. My aim was to try and get a broad picture of the different types of play that children engage in at recess and lunchtime. For twelve days I observed the children, and wrote down what they were doing, where they were playing, with whom, and the age group and gender of the players. I then used that raw data to classify their play into the following categories. Later on, I interviewed children from



every level, and asked them to take me on tours of their favourite places in the playground. The data is still in the process of being analysed, but the following categories seem to account for all the play observations during that time period.

### **1. Play on fixed equipment.**

Fixed equipment provides physical challenges such as stretching, hanging, swinging, jumping, balancing and climbing. Monkey bars and fixed pine equipment provide this kind of play experience. Games of tiggi often take place on fixed equipment as does dramatic play such as shop, which takes place underneath the platforms of pine equipment.

### **2. Formal sports related games**

Mostly games such as football, cricket, basketball, soccer and bat tennis come into this category.

### **3. Traditional games**

Four square, chasey, octopus, hide and seek and a few singing and clapping games were 'in season' during the observation period. Four square was by far the most popular traditional game.

### **4. Sociodramatic play**

This category includes play based on make-believe or fantasy elements such as playing mothers and fathers, shop, mermaids, monsters, cops and robbers, ninja turtles, trolls, lost babies, flying unicorns and golden princesses, spaceships, hotels, horsies...

### **5. Constructive/interactive play**

This play involves actually making or constructing something with loose, manipulable elements in the playground, such as sand, clay, tanbark, pine needles, sawdust, leaves, sticks, etc. Children dig in the sand or clay to make roads and tunnels for toy cars, bases for 'G.I. Joes', make sand castles, cakes, pizzas, etc.

### **6. Mucking around**

Teasing, rough and tumble or play fighting, joking.

### **7. Pastimes**

Reading, playing instruments, playing video games, string games, swapping cars.

### **8. Negotiation and disputation**

This involves counting out to see who's 'it', selection of teams for games, arguing over rules, fights.

### **9. Walking, running (not as part of any game)**

### **10. Eating, standing, sitting, watching**

### **11. School work and detention work**

These different categories of play activities are not exclusive. Sociodramatic play often incorporates constructive play e.g. children play a make believe game where a family with a mother, father and children are having a birthday party, so the children make a cake in the sand pit and decorate it with flowers from nearby trees. Play on fixed equipment often takes the form of a traditional game such as tiggi or

chasey. A game on a fort, or fixed structure may be a fantasy game where the fort is a boat and the tankard underneath is the water, full of fishes.

The task of taking a broad view of one playground was particularly productive in documenting the imaginative and fantasy elements in children's play. These play elements are harder to 'see' than traditional games with rules or formal sports, because whilst the physical activity is obvious you have to get very close to the children to hear what they are saying, or ask them directly during the observation period to find out the imaginative element in their play. For this reason, follow up interviews and playground tours were extremely important in gaining a deeper understanding of this kind of play behaviour.

Once all the data from this research has been analysed, I will be able to comment on the numbers or percentages of children engaged in the different types of play, gender differences, preferences for use of the physical space in the playground and age related trends in children's play behaviour, as well as some detail of particular aspects of children's play such as the dramatic play - themes, roles, use of spaces and fixed equipment.

Heather Russell

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## MARBLES TERMINOLOGY 1954 - 1955

The Dorothy Howard Collection is one of the Australian Children's Folklore Collection's most cherished possessions. In 1954 and 1955 the American Fulbright scholar Dr. Dorothy Howard came to Australia to research traditional play customs of Australian children. Her work was the first scholarly study of Australian children's folklore, and she was the first person to systematically collect and publish a representative sample of Australian children's games. Although the bulk of her Australian research has never been published, she wrote a number of articles on her work here which were published in the United States. In 1982, Dr Howard presented all her Australian collection and some other material to June Factor, and it is now housed in the University of Melbourne Archives. The Australian National Dictionary Centre has funded the transcription on to computer of some of Dorothy Howard's Australian research, and this work is currently being carried out by Sarah Mathers at the Australian Centre at Melbourne University. The following are a few marbles terms collected by Dr. Howard in the 1950s. Dorothy Howard defined 'play terminology' thus: 'Play language is the lingo of a particular peer group in a specific community. A child, to fit in, be one of the group successfully, must speak the language.'

WORD/PHRASE	KEEPS
PART OF SPEECH	
USAGE	Means marbles are kept by the winner of the game.
OCCURRENCE	
NAME	
PLACE	Carlisle Government Primary School, W.A.
DATE	1954 - 1955
AGE	
SEX	
SOURCE	
NAME	
PLACE	Perth, W.A.
DATE	1955
AGE	
SEX	
OTHER INFORMATION	Reported by Mrs Jennings, Mistress.

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WORD/PHRASE	KISSES-ALL-BACK
PART OF SPEECH	
USAGE	Means if a drizzler (one who throws in) hits a marble on the throw-in, then all must re-drizzy.
OCCURRENCE	
NAME	
PLACE	Carlisle Government Primary School
DATE	1954 - 1955
AGE	
SEX	
SOURCE	
NAME	
PLACE	Perth, W.A.
DATE	1954 - 1955
AGE	
SEX	
OTHER INFORMATION	Reported by a school mistress.



WORD/PHRASE            **KNUCKLE-UP-SKY-HIGH**

PART OF SPEECH

USAGE                    Marbles term that meant shooting the marble from waist-high while standing.

OCCURRENCE  
NAME  
PLACE                   Sydney, N.S.W.  
DATE                    1925 - 1935  
AGE  
SEX

SOURCE  
NAME  
PLACE                   Sydney, N.S.W.  
DATE                    1954 - 1955  
AGE                    About 40 years old  
SEX

OTHER INFORMATION

WORD/PHRASE            **DUB-UP**

PART OF SPEECH            Verb

USAGE                    To dub-up means to place a marble from each player in the ring before firing began.

OCCURRENCE  
NAME  
PLACE                   Brisbane, QLD  
DATE  
AGE  
SEX

SOURCE  
NAME  
PLACE                   Brisbane, QLD  
DATE                    1954 - 1955  
AGE

OTHER INFORMATION

WORD/PHRASE            **KNUCKLE-DOWN-AND-SCREW-TIGHT**

PART OF SPEECH

USAGE                    A term in marbles that meant hand close to the ground and fist closed tight.

OCCURRENCE  
NAME  
PLACE                   Lindsay Bottomley  
DATE                    Sydney, N.S.W.  
                             1925 - 1935  
AGE  
SEX

SOURCE  
NAME  
PLACE                   Lindsay Bottomley  
DATE                    Sydney  
                             1954 - 1955  
AGE                    About 40 years old  
SEX                    Male

OTHER INFORMATION

WORD/PHRASE            **DUTCHY**

PART OF SPEECH            Substantive

USAGE                    The name of a type of marble.

OCCURRENCE  
NAME  
PLACE                   Perth, W.A.  
DATE                    1955  
AGE  
SEX

SOURCE  
NAME  
PLACE                   Perth, W.A.  
DATE                    1955  
AGE

OTHER INFORMATION            Reported by a school mistress.





WORD/PHRASE                      DUBBER

PART OF SPEECH                  Substantive

USAGE                              The name of a type of marble

OCCURRENCE  
     NAME  
     PLACE                          Perth, W.A.  
     DATE                           1955  
     AGE  
     SEX

SOURCE  
     NAME  
     PLACE                          Perth, W.A.  
     DATE                           1955  
     AGE

OTHER INFORMATION              Reported by a school mistress.

WORD/PHRASE                      EYE DROP

PART OF SPEECH                  Verb

USAGE                              Draw a ring with marbles in it; drop one marble from eye-height to hit one marble out of the ring.

OCCURRENCE  
     NAME  
     PLACE                          Harold Brown and friends  
     DATE                           Brisbane, QLD  
     AGE                              1954  
     SEX                              9 years  
                                         Male

SOURCE  
     NAME  
     PLACE                          Mrs Christine Brown  
     DATE                           Brisbane, QLD  
     AGE                              1954  
     SEX                              Female

OTHER INFORMATION

WORD/PHRASE                      DUCK'S EGG

PART OF SPEECH                  Substantive

USAGE                              The name of a type of marble.

OCCURRENCE  
     NAME  
     PLACE                          Perth, W.A.  
     DATE                           1955  
     AGE  
     SEX

SOURCE  
     NAME  
     PLACE                          Perth, W.A.  
     DATE  
     AGE

OTHER INFORMATION

WORD/PHRASE                      FAINT SHOT, TAW DEAD AND DOUBLE

PART OF SPEECH

USAGE                              Said by your mate if you knock out your mate and another marble; then your mate puts the other marble back in the ring and you have your shot.

OCCURRENCE  
     NAME  
     PLACE                          St Helen's, Tasmania  
     DATE                           1955  
     AGE                              12 years  
     SEX                              Male

SOURCE  
     NAME  
     PLACE                          St Helen's, Tasmania  
     DATE                           1955  
     AGE                              12 years  
     SEX                              Male

OTHER INFORMATION



WORD/PHRASE                      FUNNICK

PART OF SPEECH                  Verb

USAGE                                Means you throw your marble along the ground. When you start funnicking, your mate may say 'Faint funnicks'. If you knock out your mate and another marble, your mate says 'Faint shot, taw dead and double'; so then your mate puts your marble back in the ring and you have your shot.

OCCURRENCE

NAME

PLACE                                St Helen's Tasmania

DATE                                  1955

AGE                                    12 years

SEX                                    Male

SOURCE

NAME

PLACE                                St Helen's, Tasmania

DATE                                  1955

AGE                                    12 years

SEX                                    Male

OTHER INFORMATION

WORD/PHRASE                      FAINT FUNNICKS

PART OF SPEECH

USAGE                                Means no funnicks allowed.

OCCURRENCE

NAME                                  St Helen's Tasmania

PLACE                                1955

DATE                                  12 years

AGE                                    Male

SEX

SOURCE

NAME

PLACE                                St Helen's, Tasmania

DATE                                  1955

AGE                                    12 years

SEX                                    Male

OTHER INFORMATION

WORD/PHRASE                      FIRE

PART OF SPEECH                  Verb

USAGE                                Marbles term; means to short or bowl a marble.

OCCURRENCE

NAME

PLACE                                Brisbane, QLD

DATE

AGE

SEX

SOURCE

NAME

PLACE                                Brisbane, QLD

DATE                                  1955

AGE

SEX

OTHER INFORMATION

WORD/PHRASE                      GRAB DOOGS AND RUN

PART OF SPEECH

USAGE                                Marbles term. Is an agreement that when the school bell rings at the end of recess or play period, you may pick up as many marbles as you can, whether they are yours or not.

OCCURRENCE

NAME

PLACE                                Carlisle Government School, Perth, W.A.

DATE                                  1955

AGE

SEX

SOURCE

NAME

PLACE                                Carlisle Government School, Perth, W.A.

DATE                                  1955

AGE

OTHER INFORMATION              Reported by Mrs Jennings (School Mistress).

WORD/PHRASE                      HOLESY

PART OF SPEECH

USAGE                                Marbles term. Dig a little hole and dribble marbles into it.

OCCURRENCE

NAME                                Harold Brown and friends

PLACE                               Brisbane, QLD

DATE                                1954

AGE                                 9 years

SEX                                 Male

SOURCE

NAME                                Mrs Christine Brown

PLACE                               Brisbane, QLD

DATE                                1954

AGE                                 11 years

SEX                                 Female

OTHER INFORMATION

WORD/PHRASE                      CAT'S EYE

PART OF SPEECH                    Substantive; marbles term.

USAGE                                The name of a marble with glass on the outside and a cat's eye in the middle. You can get all kinds of colours such as red, white, blue, green, orange or yellow. Cat's eyes are not good for "Eye drop" because when they hit the marble in the ring, the cat's eye is very likely to chip. When a marble is chipped, it is not very good to use.

OCCURRENCE

NAME                                Robert Henzell

PLACE                               Collier Primary School, Perth, W.A.

DATE                                1955

AGE                                 11 years

SEX                                 Male

SOURCE

NAME                                Robert Henzell

PLACE                               Perth, W.A.

DATE                                1955

AGE                                 11 years

SEX                                 Male

OTHER INFORMATION



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PRESENT

AN AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE SEMINAR

Metcalfe Auditorium, State Library NSW  
Macquarie Street, Sydney,

SATURDAY 12 SEPTEMBER, 1992

The aim of this first national Seminar in Australian Children's Folklore is to bring together recognized and authoritative figures who lecture, research and write in this area. It will be an opportunity for anyone to participate in an interchange of scholarly opinion and stimulating research. It will also provide an entertaining look at some of the traditions which have helped shape Australia's children and childhood and reaffirm the on-going role of folklore in our national life.

SATURDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 1992

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 8.30-9.00   | Registration  |
| 9.00-9.15   | Opening Welcome   |
| 9.15-10.15  | STATE LIBRARY OF NEW SOUTH WALES CURATOR<br>"Children's Folklore Resources in the State Library NSW."             |
| 10.15-10.45 | Morning Tea   |
| 10.45-11.45 | GWENDA DAVEY<br>"A Wigwag for a goose's bridle: Family traditions in verbal<br>lore addressed to children."       |
| 11.45-12.45 | Prof. MARLENE NORST<br>"Joseph Jacobs: Australia's first internationally renowned<br>folklore expert, 1854-1916." |
| 12.45-1.45  | Lunch   |
| 1.45-2.45   | ROBERT HOLDEN,<br>"Australian Nursery Rhymes, 1860-1990: Can Children's Folklore<br>be written to order?"         |
| 2.45-3.45   | JUNE FACTOR<br>"Kids' Talk: Australian Children's Vernacular and Colloquial Language."                            |
| 3.45-4.15   | Afternoon Tea   |
| 4.15-5.00   | PANEL DISCUSSION: "Research Needs and Directions in Australian<br>Children's Folklore."                           |
| 5.00-5.15   | Closing Address   |

Note: All sessions include time for questions and contributions from the audience.



# Australian Folk

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## 5th NATIONAL FOLKLIFE CONFERENCE

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This conference will focus on folkloric practice, performance and research in Australia and on the preservation and change of folklore and traditional cultures. There will be a major plenary session on ideas and directions for the future.

A key document for discussion at the conference will be the 1989 UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore to which the Australian government is a signatory.

The keynote speaker at the conference will be Dr Richard Kurin, Director of the Office of Folklife Programs at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC. Dr Kurin will attend the conference by courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

The conference is being presented by the Australian Folk Trust and the Victorian Folklife Association. At this stage the following organizations are associated with conference development:

Australian Bicentennial Multicultural Foundation  
Australian Centre, University of Melbourne  
Australian Folklife Centre  
Office of Multicultural Affairs  
Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission  
Victorian Ministry for the Arts  
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### 5th National Folklife Conference - Melbourne November 6-8 1992

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