

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE NEWSLETTER

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NOTES AND NEWS

COLLECTOR OF CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE ON HUNGER STRIKE

Readers of *ACFN* will be appalled to learn that Phil Burrows, the Western Australian teacher cleared of 'indecent dealing' for taking photographs of children's playground games (see *ACFN* Nos. 25 & 26) has been on a hunger strike for more than a month.

Phil Burrows has taken this extraordinary action because he is still under investigation by the W.A. Ministry of Education for 'alleged misconduct in the classroom', despite the magistrate's harsh criticism of the original prosecution.

Readers who wish to protest should write to the W.A. Education Minister, Norman Moore, and the W.A. Premier, Richard Court, at Parliament House, Perth W.A. Letters of support can be sent to Phil Burrows, 10/650 Stirling Highway, Mosman Park, Perth W.A. 6012. Telephone (09) 385 - 1326.

FOLKLORE ODDITY

In the USA, an old children's game has become the subject of corporate warfare.

In the 1930s, American children played a game called Milk Caps - so called because they used the cardboard disks that sealed glass milk bottles. Rules: stack the disks, then throw a thick disk at the stack. The thrower

wins a point for every disk that is knocked over. [To our Australian readers old enough to remember milk bottles with cardboard tops: did we play a similar game here? Eds]

Recently the game was revived in Hawaii and then California. The Hawaii children used the cardboard disks from a popular fruit drink, called POG because of its contents: passion fruit, orange and guava.

According to *The New York Times* (Sept. 9, 1994), the children soon began collecting disks with different designs, which in turn attracted advertisers who made their own disks that were embossed with their logos, and gave them away as promotions.

Result: a fiery and expensive battle between a corporation calling itself the World Pog Federation and another named Universal Pogs Association. Both claim rights to the label Pog, and hence to the lucrative child market. In Hawaii alone, sales are estimated at between \$US350 to \$US500 million a year.

Meanwhile, children continue to collect and play with pogs, including one which determines whether O.J. Simpson is innocent or guilty: it all depends on which side the disk with his face on it lands.



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TIP CAT

Ever heard of *Ti moggie* (there's a good Aussie word). It's a game kids used to play in the streets, with two pieces of wood. The smaller piece had pointed ends, and the trick was to hit it as far as you could with the bigger stick.

We know that the game was popular in parts of the British Isles back into the 19th century, and it was played here at least until World War II. But how did it get its name? And what exactly were the rules of the game? If you were a *Tip Cat* expert please write and tell us about it.

MOE FOLKLIFE PROJECT

Children's folklore is a major component in a research study to be carried out in the town of Moe in Victoria's Latrobe Valley during 1995.

The National Library of Australia and the Australian Cultural Development Office have funded the Moe Folklife Project, which is to be a continuation of the pilot project in cultural mapping funded by the ACDO during 1994.

The project is to be directed by *ACFN* co-editor Gwenda Davey, with locally-based research assistants. Six sub-projects are planned, to document the following aspects of folklife in Moe:

- handcrafts
- music and dance
- customs, celebrations and special events
- children's folklore
- foodways
- storytelling (including occupational folklore).

The City of Moe is a most suitable location for a demonstration project in documenting regional folklife. It is part of the history in Victorian agriculture and gold discovery, and a more recent industrial history in Victoria's huge brown coal and electricity projects.

Moe has a culturally diverse population, with substantial immigrant groups who came originally from Britain, Holland, Germany, Malta, Italy, Greece, the Ukraine, Serbia and elsewhere. It is significant that this project should be undertaken largely in 1995, the International Year of Tolerance, since Moe is a splendid example of multicultural harmony in Australia.

Moe also already has some connections with this Newsletter! In *ACFN* No.23 (December 1992) we reprinted with her permission an article 'Queen of the Jacks' by Elaine Killen. Elaine's article was originally published in the *Australian Women's Weekly*, and described her eighty-four year old grandmother Isa Stewart, who won the 1985 Australian Jack-be-Nimble Championships, as Elaine wrote, after 'practising for the last 71 years!' Elaine is a resident of Moe's neighbour, Yallourn Heights.

We have also learned that the Moe Apex Club organises an annual Fifth of November Bonfire in the Moe Botanical Gardens - so our complaint in *ACFN* no.19 (Dec 1990) that Guy Fawkes Day on the fifth of November has been 'forgot' in Australia (to borrow from the traditional rhyme), is inaccurate. Good! Let's hope Moe turns up many more surviving traditions.

COCKFIGHTING AND HIGH COCKALORUM

Toward the end of his life, SIR JOSEPH VERCO, a well respected resident of Adelaide, wrote a memoir about his boyhood days in the 1860s. This remarkable account of a mid-nineteenth century childhood in what was then little more than a large provincial city - although the capital of South Australia - remains largely unpublished, apart from extracts which have been used by June Factor in Captain Cook Chased a

Chook: Children's Folklore in Australia (Penguin 1988) and Australian Childhood: An Anthology (McPhee Gribble 1991, co-edited with Gwyn Dow). We publish here part of the extract printed in Australian Childhood. Young's is the private boys' school Verco attended.

What games were played at Young's?

Of course the school ground was altogether too small for games such as cricket or football. Such games as could be played in a very confined space were the only ones which were possible in Stevens Place. The following were some of those which the confined space would allow.

Cockfighting A small boy mounted the back of a big boy, the bigger and bulkier the better. Mr Peter Wood could recall how he was carried pick-a-pack by Charlie Kingston in these encounters. Two such pairs, or more if there were two sides in the contests, attacked one another: the little rider grappling with his enemy rider and trying to drag him from his saddle, or the steeds in the persons of the carriers, the big boys bumping and jostling their opponents and striving to push them from the field of conflict.

Another curious, rough and almost dangerous form of amusement was *High Cockalorum*. One boy stood with his back against the wall, a second bent forward with head against this one's stomach and steadied himself by grasping the first boy's hips with his hands. A third pushed his head against the second one's tail and held on by his hips, and so did a fourth. The leader of the other side in the game from behind this line of bent backs took a leap as in playing leapfrog and putting his hands on the last one's back jumped as far forward as possible and alighted (if one can use such a word under these circumstances) on one of their heads, necks or backs. The three other boys followed his example till all were seated and had a good grip. Then these all began to holloa 'High cockalorum jig, jig, jig, High cockalorum jig, jig, jig, High cockalorum jig, jig, jig, High cockalorum jump off'. It can easily be understood that if one of the unfortunates who was bending down happened to get one of these carcasses on his head and another on his neck, and a third on his back, it was no easy task to bear the weight of them without giving way and sinking to the ground before those on top had completed their high cockalorum song. Should the feet of any of those who were riding touch the ground before their jig song was finished it was their privilege to repeat the process as before, whereas if these pygmy Atlases were able for so long to sustain these worlds of flesh upon their shoulders it was then their opportunity to bump down upon the

necks or loins of the boys who had so used them. One would suppose this game to be very dangerous, and that it might even result in a broken neck: but no catastrophe ever resulted.

Sir Joseph Verco, unpublished manuscript, Mortlock Library, South Australia.

CHILDREN'S GAMES ARE STILL ALIVE

A Study of Children's Games in a Suburb West of Copenhagen, by ERIK KAAS NIELSEN

The background for the study is the assertion often put forward that today's children have no games or at the best know very few, which they seldom play. The cause of this state of things is said to be the small family pattern of today with one or two children, who are supervised most of the day in nurseries, schools and recreation centres. The children's leisure time is spent on organised sports (football, etc.) and hobbies, or on different kinds of entertainment like tv, video, computer games, etc.

However, there is no doubt that children still have their games, practised above all in school, but also in the open near their homes, especially if there are enough playmates in the neighbourhood. Of course fine weather in our climate promotes outdoor game activity. In kindergartens (nurseries) a certain instruction in games takes place, but children in these institutions also play in the open the games they like, though under some supervision.

The information about the games for this study was obtained at school by means of questionnaires filled in by the children with more or less help from their teachers. Letters, drawings and descriptions from the pupils were also helpful, though of course for most or the children it was too difficult to describe a game. Information about popular games was given by most pupils, and likewise how often they played: daily, several times a week, rarely or perhaps never. Participation in the study was voluntary (that means decided by the teacher).

Ten classes from the first to the sixth grade and from four schools in the municipality took part in the study - altogether 200 children. They gave information about the kind of games they played in the breaks at school and near their homes in the open: in playground, street or courtyard and possibly in recreation centres or

afterschool centres. Group interviews were taken in the nine classes. The result showed that most of the children played daily, many of them in every break, some of them a few times a week. Though game activity definitely declines at 6th grade, it seems as if boys at this age prefer to play in school breaks and the girls in their spare time.

On Starting A Game

In the municipality, counting rhymes/dippings are no longer or rarely used to decide the role in a game, but still many children know rhymes and seem to like them. Instead, they use a short race to a goal agreed upon (a pole, a wall, etc.). The child who arrives as the last one will 'be' (local term for 'be it'). The explanation of this procedure may be that the children want to start the game as rapidly as possible. The same procedure is also known and used in Norway. Drawing lots with a small twig is also sometimes used here.

Singing Games

It seems as if singing games in our suburb are declining. In the sixties at least 27 examples of such games were known and played at the local schools. In 1992 the girls could only mention 6 singing games they had played during school breaks. Only the youngest ones in the first and second grades now played and sang during school breaks, but very seldom in their home playgrounds. The girls of 4th and 5th grades considered singing games too childish - perhaps owing to the use of that genre in nurseries and on tv with preschool children. Singing games seem to be used seldom during school lessons, perhaps because the boys dislike them and often refuse to participate and join singing games arranged by their teachers. Some girls said they would like to know more singing games.

Clapping Games (Klappespele)

In the sixties some clapping games with songs could be observed among girls in the school yards, but during the seventies this kind of game became very popular, especially after 1975. Today in the nineties no doubt hundreds of songs with variants and combinations exist all over the country. In 1990, when a video was taken to some classes at a school in the municipality, one class alone had a repertoire of 26 songs. Some of the songs required very complicated clapping patterns, almost exclusively demonstrated by girls. Yet some of the boys had made their own songs, which were a kind of parody of one of the girl's songs. Examples of 'rap-talk' in Danish were also shown. Many of the texts were in a kind of English, a mixture of Danish and English - Pidgin-Danish or 'Danglish' as it is sometimes called. Some Danish texts - at least a few of

them - are surprisingly witty.

The chapter on Clapping Games in the report gives only a few examples of this popular genre, since videos were made at some of the schools. An important part of the standard repertory turns out to be international - e.g. the song *Anna Dia-ana* seems to be known in most countries in Europe and on other continents too.

[Erik Kaas Nielsen continues by describing games of Hopscotch, Skipping, Elastics, Tiggy, Hide and Seek and a variety of other games.]

Some Tentative Conclusions

In children's games and play there are still traditions, some of them old ones, others rather new. Games and game genres change, new ones come into being and establish themselves, but innovations need not always be quite new. Generally there are elements of old traditions in them, often from bygone traditions, local or national ones or from foreign cultures.

Recent Danish game traditions are marked by international influence, often of American (or perhaps English) origin, but other cultures are perceptible too. Danish songs, rhymes, jingles, etc. are - judged from local reports and observations - apparently on the decline in favour of American/English or 'Danglish' examples.

Play in the school playground is an important arena of tradition and innovation, in many districts with a low number of children no doubt the most important. Generally the children in a class play with their classmates, and in games where both boys and girls participate the girls often or usually take the initiative in starting the common games. In their leisure time boys tend to prefer games with other boys - not always in the nearest neighbourhood or local playground. Games with mixed neighbourhood groups at different ages also occur - perhaps not so often as in the 1960s or earlier.

A Personal Point of View, Based on Some Experience

Interest in children's games and play from grown ups - parents, teachers, etc. - encourages the children's interest in and regard for their own games. To some extent adults can influence children's games. They can warn and persuade children - especially boys - from games that are violent or dangerous to themselves or others. Also brutal games can be reduced, but of course one cannot be sure that new ones will not arise and spread.

It is often possible to teach children new - or old - games, but the effect will be limited locally and usually also temporarily. Arrangements of games, in my opinion, should be concentrated on children's own games and performances and on what children can learn from other children. To teach children games by means of tv and video programmes is according to experience in Australia also reported to have positive effects. And one should not forget that children are often inspired by stories, fairytales and novels which have been read to them, or they have read themselves. Also events, shows, films and incidents on tv have an influence - though not always a good one.

Sports and organised games - above all football - have an enormous prestige, and the school supports the importance of sports through arrangements and matches between schools. In former times they were considered with great seriousness and combined with solemn ceremonies.

As a supplement to sports days and other arrangements between schools, game and play might gain prestige and popularity by featuring at local festivals and days where children's present repertoire of games - and perhaps some good old ones - were the theme of the events. Most important, however, is to make such arrangements and events a good experience with lots of fun and laughter.

Readers interested in this study should contact its author through Foreningen Danmarks Folkeminder Birketinget 6, DK-2300, Copenhagen, Denmark.

SOME INSIGHTS ABOUT CHILDREN'S PLAY OBTAINED FROM AN ANALYSIS OF A NUMBER OF ORAL RECORDS.

by Amanda Bate

It has long been known that play has been an essential part of human activity since the dawn of time. (Contrucci, 1992)

Every one of us has at some stage in our lives, played a major role in the transmission of folklore. Child folklore has been transmitted from generation to generation, from child to child and from adult to child. Transmission of child folklore occurs as children transmit games, songs and rhymes that have been said

and played and changed by thousands of children before them. As lore is transmitted, each individual child is inadvertently practising socialisation skills, learning that words can have more than one meaning, combining repetition with the fundamental skills of counting, colour recognition or saying the alphabet.

Additions and variations are made to rhymes, verses, and games. Old lore is adapted to new situations. New lore is invented based on existing lore or events. The lore repertoire of a particular community of children is unique, yet fundamentally similar to other communities of children all over the world.

TABLE I

Age in 1992	Sex	Place folklore used	Childhood years lore used (approx only) from 5-12
75	Male	Lara	1922-29
74	Female	Anakie	1923-30
69	Female	Avalon	1928-35
46	Male	Wales	1951-58
44	Female	Yugoslavia	1953-60
35	Female	Anakie	1962-69
25	Male	Bell Post Hill	1972-79
25	Male	Laverton	1972-79
21	Female	Bell Post Hill	1976-83
20	Male	Anakie	1977-84
18	Male	Anakie	1978-85
15	Female	Lara	1982-89
13	Female	Lara	1984-91
10	Male	Teesdale	1987-92
9	Female	Lara	1988-92
8	Male	Teesdale	1989-92
4	Female	Corio	1992

Age when lore used is approximate only, assuming that lore was most frequently used when child was aged 5 to 12.

Counting Out Rhymes

Counting out is a most important part of children's games. Games are often played in stages where selecting who will be IT or choosing sides is 'almost a game in itself' (Opies, 1970, p.2). The time spent counting out can often equal the time spent at playing the game and could be considered as the first stage of the game. Games often start on the impulse of a child and the IT may be simultaneously chosen as the game begins, but most frequently counting out rhymes and games are used and are considered to be the fairest way of determining who will be first to take on the role of IT or HE. Counting out rhymes play a major role in children games in deciding who will be the IT or HE in a game of chase, or the 'enders' in skipping or elastics, for example. The IT is looked upon as someone whose touch is deadly, yet not lethal, children are both 'delighted and fearful of the proximity of IT' (Abrahams & Rankin, 1980 p.xvi).

Children frequently spend as much time preparing for a game as they do actually playing the game. When children decide to play 'Hide and Seek' at Teesdale, to determine how much the IT had to count up to (after a counting out rhyme was done to determine who was IT), a ten year old boy, told me about 'Snakey, Snakey'. This involved one person tickling the ITs back and then removing their hands. They then asked IT 'Which finger did I touch last?' The IT pointed to each finger trying to guess which one. Every time IT made a mistake 20 points was added on. When IT guessed the right finger then they had to count up to that number. Similar games to this one are included in *Cinderella Dressed in Yella* (Turner et al., 1978, p.52) for example: 'Draw a snake upon your back, and who tipped your finger?' The versions listed are said to have been used in Sydney in 1945; West Victoria 1962; Victoria, 1973 and Melbourne, 1961 (p.52).

A popular counting out rhyme was Eeny Meeny Miney Moe, known in the following form to every individual interviewed:

*Eeny, Meeny, Miney Moe,
Catch a nigger by the toe,
If he hollers, let him go,
Eeny, Meeny, Miney Moe.*

This rhyme appears to have remained the same since the early 20s (and probably before this, in the area of those interviewed). Further evidence suggests that it was also a popular rhyme of people in Central Victoria in 1875 (Turner, Factor, Lowenstein, 1978) where it was recorded from the 1920s right up to the 1990s in the above form.

A study by Robbins Burling 'found that children's verses in Chinese, Arabic, Yoruba, English, and many other dissimilar languages have a four-beat line that disregards unaccented syllables. Burling suggests that this may be among the universal linguistic patterns that are narrowed and shaped by the rules and restrictions of particular languages.' (Knapps, 1976 p.22).

The following rhyme was related to me by a 44 year old woman. She informed me that it was a favourite of hers in Yugoslavia in her childhood (approximately 1953-60) and it is a nonsense rhyme:

Croatian	In English it sounds like:
Hicketi Piketi tuketi Me	Ecketa Becketa Tukota Meh
Abe Habe Dominos	Arber Harber Domino
Theu piku saree piku	Ickoo Tickoo Sharum Pickoo
Trech Troth Trech	Troof Traff Troof.

There are four syllables to each line excluding the last line which only has three syllables. Perhaps this could be included as a further example of 'Eeny meeny' - a seemingly almost universal counting out rhyme.

Another of the most popular counting out rhymes I collected that all of the individuals interviewed were familiar with was:

*One potato, two potato, three potato, four,
Five potato, six potato, seven potato, more.*

To conclude this, a young girl aged 13 (1992, Lara) informed me that the rhyme went on to say:

Bad spud, you're out!

This ending was not included in the repertoire of people who were children from 1920s-40s or from

1950s. It was used by one woman who was a child at Anakie in about 1962-69. The ending may in fact be one that allows the counter to have some influence over the end result.

Counting out rhymes have similarities in their structure. Children stand in a circle and put either hands, fists, or feet 'into' the circle. There are always one or two dominant children (usually the oldest) who do the 'counting out' in a specific group. When a child becomes particularly skilled at this, he or she can manipulate the rhyme and the number of syllables included in each word of the rhyme, thus having some influence on who will become IT. The other children in the group usually catch on if the counter is cheating. Other counting out games are sometimes adopted to make it fairer for all involved, where the end result is decided more by chance than by manipulation. ('Eeny Meeny' and 'One Potato Two Potato' appear to be among the easiest ones to manipulate).

The following game told to me by a nine year old girl from Lara is an example of what was regarded as a fairer method:

(We're) All in a circle and say '21'. We shake fists (all at same time) together and hold up any number of fingers. One person counts them out until they reach 21, that person is the 'ender' in elastics or in any game.

'In folk games children demystify their ideas of rules and fairness. They learn that rules are not made by God or the teacher, and that fairness is an imperfect balance of competing interests.' (Knapps, 1976, p.33). Those counting out rhymes that ensure fairness is maintained 'are not (as) popular' as rhymes such as 'Eeny Meeny' where the IT can be decided on through manipulation of the rhyme (Knapps, 1976 p.33). The fun may lie in the child's ability to trick the other children.

Individuals who were children attending schools at Bell Post Hill (1976-83) and Anakie (1962-69) and (1977-84), were familiar with the following counting out rhyme.

- (i) *Little Miss Pink fell down the sink,
How many miles did she fall?
'Eight'
1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8*

(Girl 9, Lara, 1992)

I found it particularly interesting to note that the 'Little Miss Pink' rhyme was recited by a female, aged 21 (Bell Post Hill) and also by males aged 18 and 20

(Anakie) and females aged 9 and 13 (Lara), all whom had attended or were attending different schools (refer table I). Each of these individuals used the word 'miles' despite the fact that they were taught metric measurement, and this was the 'metric era', the imperial system being phased out in about 1970 before any of these children were attending primary school. Yet in another area, (Corio), a four-year old used the line 'How many metres did she fall?'. It seems metric has permeated children's folklore in one area of Geelong, and not others.

Frequently, children will add on endings to ensure their friends, or they themselves, are or are not chosen as IT. Popular endings recited to me by three females aged 21, 15 and 13 and two males aged 18 and 20 (refer table I) included the following examples:

- (i) *Pig snout, you're out,
And out you must go.* OR
- (ii) *Boy Scout, you're out,
And O-U-T spells out,
And out you must go.* OR
- (iii) *Boy Scout, you're out,
Girls skin, you're in.*

Rhymes are always being changed and altered by children either through misunderstanding, incorrect interpretation, or by individuals choosing to change the rhyme to make it more amusing. The following rhyme comes from two females aged 9 and 13 (refer table I)

- (i) *Mickey Mouse is in his house
Pulling down his undies,
Quick mum, smack his bum,
And that's the end of chapter one.
1 - 2 - 3*

(Lara, 1992)

Not dissimilar to:

*Mickey Mouse was in a house
Wondering what to do.
So he scratched his bun-tiddlyum
Out goes you.*

(Surrey, from Opie, 1967 p.111)

A further example of a rhyme that has been changed from its original form is the following:

Ask: There's a party on the hill, would you like to come?

Reply: Yes.

Ask: Bring a bottle of rum.

Reply: Can't afford it.

Ask: Then pack your bags and get lost!

OR

Reply: No.

Ask: Then who is your best friend?

She will come with a pretty dress on and have a very good time.

OR

She will come with a sausage up her bum,

And not have a very good time!

(Girl, 13, Lara)

This version is similar to verses current throughout Britain in the late 60s as quoted by the Opies, (1970 p.60.) and said to be based on a nineteenth-century song 'Will you come to my wedding, will you come?':

*There's a party on the hill, will you come?
Bring your own cup and saucer and a bun.
Dipper aside: What's your sweetheart's name?*

Player: Mary.

*Mary will be there with a ribbon in her hair,
Will you come to the party will you come?*

Clapping Rhymes

Clapping rhymes take much skill and concentration. Each child aims to participate, clapping faultlessly to the rhyme. After one is very practised, the rhyme and clapping may be done at a more rapid pace. The Knapps (1976) acknowledge that, 'One function of clapping is to advertise friendships between girls...' (p.127). After several interviews with both males and females it appeared obvious that boys participate in this particular type of game less frequently than their female counterparts; as one male put it; 'I did them once or twice and I wasn't good at it' (18). Boys do occasionally participate however - perhaps not under the watchful eyes of their male peers.

Of the rhymes I collected I found 'Miss Mary Mack' or 'Mary Mac' to be one of the favourites.

- (i) *Miss Mary Mack,
Dressed in black,
Silver buttons,
Down her back
She likes silver,
I like gold,
Mary Mack dressed in black.*

(Female, 69, Avalon)

- (ii) *Mary Mac dressed in black,
Silver buttons down her back,
She likes coffee, I like tea,
She likes sitting on a black fellow's knee.*

(Female, 75, Anakie).

- (iii) *Miss Mary Mack, Mack, Mack,
All dressed in black, black, black,
With silver buttons, buttons, buttons,
All down her back, back, back.
She could not read, read, read,
She could not write, write, write,
But she could smoke, smoke, smoke,
Her father's pipe, pipe, pipe.
She asked her mother, mother, mother,
For fifty cents, cents, cents,
To see the elephant, elephant, elephant,
Jump over the fence, fence, fence.
He jumped so high, high, high,
He reached the sky, sky, sky,
And never come back, back, back,
Til' the fourth of July.
She climbed the stairs, stairs, stairs,
And bumped her head, head, head,
And now she's dead!*

(Girl aged 13, Lara)

Some lines of this rhyme, especially 'til' the fourth of July' suggest an American influence. The rhyme, although virtually the same as that printed by the Knapps (1976 p.136-137), includes slight variations in the ending combinations. Another variation of this is printed in *Cinderella Dressed in Yella* (Turner, Factor & Lowenstein p.36). The rhyme is present in Australia, the U.K. and America. The Knapps write that apparently 'Miss Mary Mac' did not begin as a clapping rhyme, but rather as a riddle (p.137).

Clapping rhymes can have very complicated clapping combinations that test and challenge the skill of the individual. The following rhyme was used in several different combinations, in very fast succession:

*Ronald MacDonald (clap partner's hands)
Shh, Shh (shake hands separately) Shabiska
I got a boyfriend, (clap partner's hands)
Shh, Shh (shake hands separately) Shabiska
He is as cute as (clapping partner's hands)
Shh, Shh, (shake hands separately) Shabiska
Ice cream sundae with a cherry on (thumbs down) top,
Ice cream sundae with a cherry on (thumbs down) top,
Ooh baby, I don't wanna' let you go (cross arms to shoulders)*

*Down by the roller coaster (link fingers together and roll hands and arms)
Shimmy, shimmy, shimmy pop,
Shimmy, shimmy pow, (arms up)
Shimmy, shimmy, shimmy pop,
Shimmy shimmy WOW! (Girls lift dress up or lift leg and put thumb up under leg).*

(9, 13 and 15, Lara).

It seems this rhyme may have developed from a combination of several different sources, including songs and other rhymes. Ronald MacDonald is of course the mascot of McDonald Family Restaurants. Other rhymes similar to this one could not be identified.

Germes and Jinxes

Children can be very tough on one another. This is evident in a particular game, a game 'to make sure you didn't get the germs from yukky people' (Boy 18, Anakie). Everyone in the 'Yukky' individual's vicinity would call out 'Needles' and cross their arms over and pretend with either fingers or pens to inject themselves, thus being 'immune' from 'germs'. Children may call out 'You've got Penny's germs, needles', and everyone runs away in mock terror. The 'Yukky' individual may have been weaker, less attractive or have some physical disability. 'Needles' is identified as 'Cooties' in American children's lore (Knapps, 1976, p.78).

When two people say the same word, 'Jinx' is called by one of them; this person is the only one who can break the spell and allow the other person to speak again by saying that person's name. This game was used by my informants between approximately 1975-82. A different version has been explained to me. A 13 year old girl from Lara (refer table I) told me there is 'Special Jinx' which is called out when two people say a word at the same time and anyone can free the person (by saying their name), or 'Personal Jinx' where only the person who called out 'Personal Jinx' can break the spell. The (Knapps, 1976) mistakenly suggest that this custom has only been evident in the United States; they state that 'One might expect ... (the jinx) custom to be found in other English-speaking nations, but it has so far been reported only from the United States and U.S. bases overseas' (p.12). In fact, this custom has permeated children's folklore in the area studied. An individual familiar with this lore said she believed that jinx or jinks was a word of American origin and 'associated it with America' (female 21).

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To be continued

Amanda Bate undertook a folklore component in her third year as an undergraduate at the School of Early Childhood Studies, University of Melbourne in 1992.

ADULTS PROVE SERIOUS ABOUT MARBLES

Readers may be interested in the following information from the U.S.A. Is there any Australian equivalent? Should there be?

The Marble Collectors' Society of America was founded in 1975 and currently has over 1600 contributors. The Society is a nonprofit organisation established for charitable, scientific, literary and educational purposes. Our objectives are to gather and disseminate information and to perform services to further the hobby of marbles, marble collecting and the preservation of the history of marbles and marble makers.

MARBLES' NAMES

Alphington Primary School 1988

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| • Oilies | • Claypot |
| • Cat's Eyes | • Egg |
| • Beach Bums | • Blue Moon |
| • Bird Cage | • Broccoli |
| • Tiger's Eye | • Coke |
| • Ice-cream Jelly | • Bloodsuckers |
| • Spaghetti | • Pearls |

: Different sizes: Junior, Tombowler

Carlisle, Western Australia, 1954

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| • Daig | • Shirley |
| • Alley | • Dubber |
| • Agate | • Dutchy |
| • Cat's Eyes | • Bot |
| • Blood Real | • Stonk |
| • Tomboller | • Ball-Bearing |
| • Pee-Wee | • Honey-Sucker |
| • Duck's Egg | |

SPECIAL OFFER!

Out of evil cometh good...a publisher's surplus stock of two of Gwenda Davey's books, *Snug as a Bug* and *Duck under the Table*, means that they can be offered to readers of ACFN at a special discounted price of \$6 each including postage (RRP \$9.95). *Snug* and *Duck* are collections of family sayings used with children and will delight not only children's folklore aficionados but children around 6-11 years of age. Both are illustrated by Peter Viska. Send orders to June Factor, Australian Centre, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Vic. 3052.

All proceeds to this Newsletter!

RECOGNITION FOR DOROTHY HOWARD

The National Preservation Office, established by the National Library of Australia in 1992 to assist the development of a national preservation strategy for that portion of the country's documentary heritage held primarily in libraries, this year awarded 15 grants as part of its Community Heritage Program.

One of the 15 grants (selected from 205 applications) was awarded to the Australian Children's Folklore Collection, currently part of the Australian Centre at the University of Melbourne. The project: to work on the Dorothy Howard Collection, part of this unique archive.

We publish below an extract from the National Library Of Australia News (November 1994), written by Yvonne Cramer, which describes the award and its purpose.

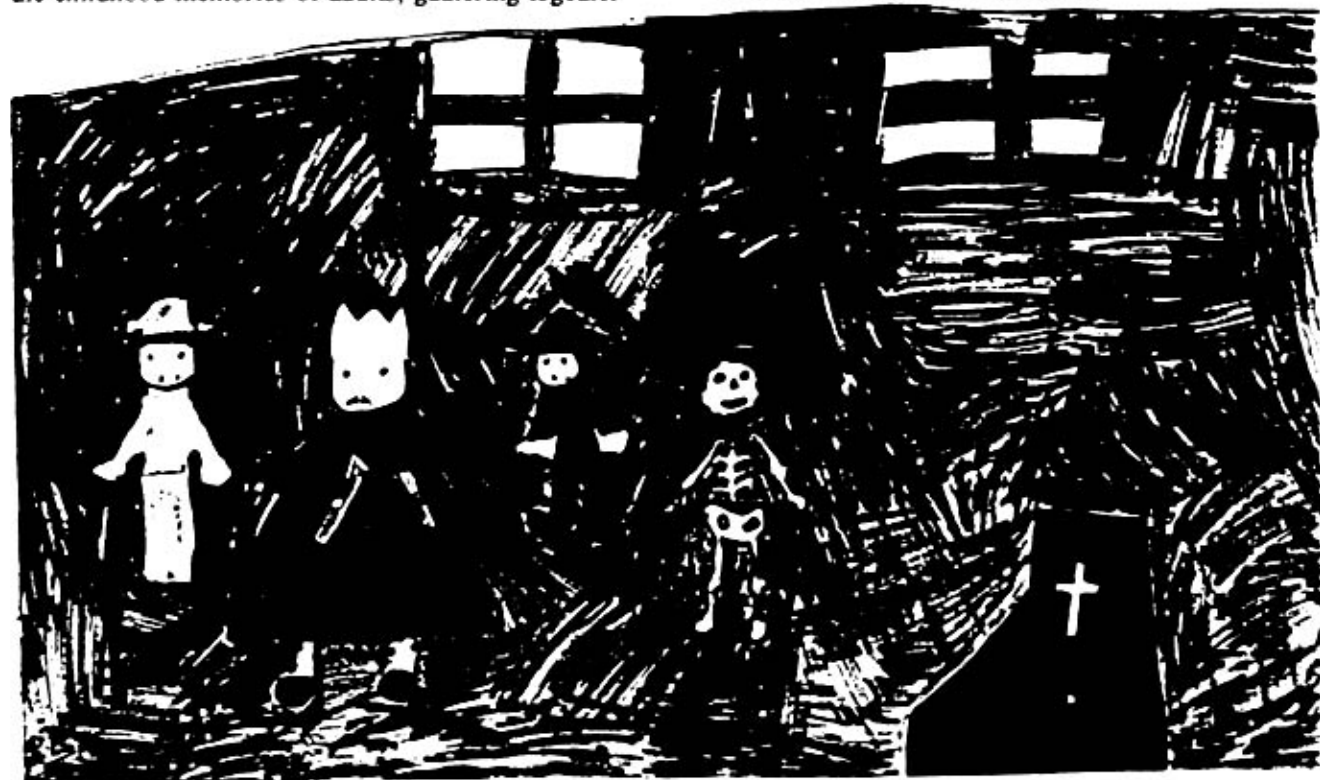
Dr Dorothy Howard, who was a post-doctoral Fulbright Scholar, travelled every State of Australia in 1954-55. She was a pioneer in her field on two continents and in three nations and was the first professional to recognise the variety and significance of our children's folklore.

In Australia she recorded in letters and photographs the rhymes and games of hundreds of children as well as the childhood memories of adults, gathering together

a vast collection of play lore from 1870 to 1955. Much of the material has never been published despite containing invaluable insights into the social and cultural life of Australian children over an 80-year period.

In metropolitan Melbourne the Australian Children's Folklore Collection, housed in the Australian Centre, has received a grant of \$4,872 to complete the documentation of a most remarkable collection. As well as letters, photographs, children's games and rhymes, the Dorothy Howard collection also contains material from people prominent (then or later) in Australian life including the writers Ethel Turner and Fairlie Taylor, leading educationist Margaret Lyttle, anthropologist C.P. Mountford and principals and schoolteachers, many of whom were significant figures in their own States. Until a listing of all correspondents is made it is impossible to tell whether any of the children involved later became prominent Australians, though certainly some were the children of leading citizens of the time.

The grant will provide resources to complete the documentation of Dr Howard's remarkable work, stabilising it to prevent further deterioration and ensuring its safe accessibility to researchers and writers who wish to make use of this extraordinary evidence of Australia's developing culture.



LETTERS

From Andy Arleo, Saint-Nazaire, France

Regarding the rhyme 'Ikke backa...' (ACFN Nos. 25 & 26), see R. Abrahams and L. Rankin, *Counting-Out Rhymes A Dictionary* (University of Texas Press, 1980) p.108 ('Icka backa soda cracker') and especially p.8, no.10:

*Acker backer, soda cracker,
Acker backer boo.
Acker backer, soda cracker,
Out goes you.*

Seventeen references from 1888 to 1976 are given, all from the U.S. and Canada. Many contain the words 'tobacco' (variant: 'tobacker') or 'cracker', so 'acker, backer' may have arisen through sound-play. Although we can't absolutely rule out a connection with Danish or Swedish, this would seem unlikely given the long history of this rhyme within the English-speaking tradition and its apparent rarity in these Scandinavian languages (according to E. K. Nielsen, ACFN No. 26). On the other hand, I think this belief is a good illustration of the folk tendency to attribute nonsense rhymes to 'exotic' languages or cultures.

I enjoyed Gwenda Davey's perceptive overview on pre-school children's verbal humour. Readers interested in this subject might also consult John McDowell, *Children's Riddling* (Indiana U.P., 1979), especially the chapter on 'Acquisition', and B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (ed.), *Speech Play* (U. of Pennsylvania Press, 1976). I have also seen reviews (in *Language* vol. 70, nos. 2 & 3) of two recent linguistic studies on jokes and humour (not necessarily among children) that should interest your readers: Delia Chiaro, *The language of jokes: Analysing verbal play* (Routledge, 1992) and Neal Norrick, *Humour in everyday talk* (Indiana U.P., 1993).

G. Davey rightfully points out the difficulty of providing an 'overall sequential classification of pre-school joke-telling skills'. One of the problems is that one stage does not entirely supplant an earlier stage, but extends and diversifies the child's abilities: for example, play with noises and sounds (an early stage in Garvey's scheme) may go on throughout one's lifetime, in particular for musicians. In regard to developmental models in general, I've often wondered about how 'gifted' or prodigious children fit into them: did Mozart and Picasso go through the same stages as other children, but at a faster pace? How well do these

models hold up across different 'cognitive profiles', across cultures and through history? Furthermore, we tend to associate 'concreteness' with young children and 'abstraction' with older children. However, the example of the 1 yr 11 month girl who jokingly used socks as 'gloves' reveals understanding of an abstract category: socks and gloves share many semantic features and therefore belong to a higher category that could be roughly paraphrased as 'clothing that covers the extremities of one's members'. So, a sock is a footglove, a glove is a handsock. By the way, the French have footfingers (les doigts de pied) rather than toes! Young language learners generalize all the time, but their generalisations do not always match those of the adult community. A number of years ago the daughter of one of my friends (I think she was about 5 yrs old) called all cafes 'baltos', since she lived next door to a particular cafe called 'Le Balto'. Many similar examples are given in the literature on language acquisition. Learning to speak a language (or how to tell jokes) involves making the 'right' generalisations by realizing how words *differ* from each other. Perhaps the incongruity, and the charm, of children's early speech and humour stem from their linguistic and conceptual elasticity, a characteristic that they share with poets and other creative language users.

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN SPEAKING

ACFN readers will know that June Factor is engaged in a major research project into Australian children's vernacular speech. This letter is addressed to children, but responses from adult readers would be welcome - either recollections from the past or current knowledge. Please reply as soon as possible!

Do you know any of the words listed on the following pages? Children or adults have sent them to me, but not always with a clear meaning or explanation.

Please write down the meaning of those words that you recognise as part of children's ways of speaking. (Some words have 'ordinary' meanings that you can find in any dictionary - but they also have meanings special to some or all children. It's this special meaning I'm interested in.)

If you can, write a sentence showing the way you and your friends would use each word. And if you know where a word comes from - for example, from *Ninja Turtles*, a television show - then please add that information.

Sometimes, the word or expression is the name of a game, or a move in a game. In that case, if you can briefly explain the game and/or the move, it would be most helpful.

There are also words that are rhyming slang (pie and sauce = horse), or shortening of another word (bro from brother). Sometimes an expression comes from another language. Please note down anything about the word or expression you think could be of interest.

If you say or spell a word differently, just jot down how you say/spell it.

FOR EXAMPLE

dobber

MEANING a person who tells on someone, a tell-tale.

EXAMPLE You're a dobber, you told the teacher what we did when she left the room.

OTHER INFORMATION My parents and grandparents used this word too, so it's been around a long time.

Many thanks for your help. The dictionary of Australian children's words and phrases will be all the better for it. Even if you only know a few of these words, please get in touch.

June Factor
Australian Centre
University of Melbourne
Parkville, Vic. 3052

alienoid
bag out
bimbo
blinder
blockbuster wild
bogie
bomber
bommie
booga
boombarlady
boot
bowl
break off
breakfast
breath
budju
buff
burning hot
butt head
butt wipe
butter
cake
camel's dick
caramba
cards: flicks
carrumba
cashed out
cat
charge
cheesy
chigga
choppy choppy
choulitch

chunu
clubbing
clumsy
coada
coit
conilious
coochee
cop out
cowie
crispy
cut 90
death trap
def
demo derby
digital dummies
dim sim
dirty
disk head
dissin'
distant
ditch
dog's bum
doh
don't be cool
doori
double bubbles
drongo
drop kick
dudical
duga
duga duga
eda blea
egg head

evil kenevil
faction
fan jet
feed
fish for tea
fish lips
flabs
flash as
flemoughed
flemwad
flinch
flipsy
floppy disks
flump
fly
fob
fog
foof
freak out
freakshow
fubar
funzagoon
fuzz
gaff
game
game over
game: downball
game: handball
gang bang
garbo
garde
gash
gibber

gimmo
gleek
glop
go (I'll go you)
go block
going off
gonad
goompy
goop
gorgeous hunk
graffiti: rider
greaser
green guy
grid
grunge
gruntal
gug
gunde
gunk
hack around
hamburg
hammer
handball: king
hang out
hard hooves
hark
harry
hasta la vista
heavy
herk
HHR
hmms
homeboy

hottie	meat & gravy	ranked	stoked
innos	merde	raver	stressed out
Iova	metal head	redgie	stressing
jaffa	mondo wierdness	rich bitch	strop
jelly on plant	monkey grip	rocker	stummo
jig	morgue	rolo	suck
jilligittie	morton	rotten banana peel	suckerpan
Jock McGurie	mygodish	rude	suit
johnie	na fred	sambo	swamp
joke	narley	sasquatch	swimmers
joke off	night crawlers	savaba	ta da
juice	nightmare	scheme	take a gate
jumalay	niok	scone	technic
junk place	nip	scote	the man
kerloomfers	niz beg	screamer	thingamejobalie
kiss	noel	scrotta	tictacs
kook	nona	scum	tidal wave
kork	nong	severe	tippa
kreegah bundolo	not the moma	shaft	tippy
lard	nugget	shame	togs
ledge	nunga	sharpie	toxic
lellow	oogan frugen	shishkebab	tuck shop
lemonade & sars	oral history	shitvers	tucker
limbi	pack	shove it	type of deal
longons, long `uns	padsie	shovelled	ugga
lord	parra	skin	uncle's coldie
luigi	pekkahead	skip	varhair
lunga	piece of Mary	slick	warm brother
mac	pin dick	sloppy joe	whippy
macadoshous	ping pong	small elm	wicko
malaka	planet	small hollows	wish
malas	plastic	smurfs	wiz face
marble: bonker	pogga	snickers	yarndi
marble: bonkers	privacy place	sookie rug	yeti
marble: butterfly	psych	sour milk	yibedi yibeda
marble: cherries	punk	spac, spack	yoyo: around the corner
marble: coffee	pure hysteria	spag bag	yoyo: around the world
marble: giant	quatercarter	spekey	yoyo: dog's bite
mare	rad dad	stamaroid biscuit	yoyo: loop the loop
mean machine	rammin'	stingo	yoyo: walk the dog
			yuz juz

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