

Dodging the Poison Ball

John Evans

In a recent edition of the *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* (Vol. 72, No. 4, April, 2001), no less than six pages were devoted to a discussion about the merits or otherwise of that most traditional of games which Americans call Dodgeball and which we call Poison Ball. There would hardly be an adult or child anywhere who hasn't, at some stage or other, played Poison Ball. While there are a number of variations to the game, basically it involves people standing outside a square or circle and throwing a ball (or balls) at those standing inside with the intent of hitting them, and thus eliminating them from the game.

I recall it being a very popular game both on the playground at recess and in many Physical Education (P.E.) classes. I was therefore surprised and interested to pick up this particular edition of the journal and find some 20 teachers, students and university professors each putting their case for and against the inclusion of Dodgeball in a P.E. program. Those who were opposed to the game felt that it had no place in any respectable P.E. program. Their criticisms were based on the fact that it is essentially an elimination game (those who are hit with the ball are eliminated); that it is a game in which the participants are targets (in the sense that the ball is thrown at them); and that it is too easily dominated by the few skilled players with the less skilled always the ones who are quickly eliminated. They contend that any game where the object is to throw a ball at someone with the intent of hitting and thereby eliminating them from the game has no place in a P.E. program. One of the critics of the game had this to say:

When one uses only one ball, Dodgeball gives individual students few opportunities to participate; thus the skills of throwing, fleeing, and dodging – which are worth acquiring – are not sufficiently practised for learning to occur. Furthermore there is the social stigma of being 'beaned' because one is nerdy, unliked, or an easy target. There is the physical pain of being struck with a hard ball thrown as violently as possible, most probably by a macho boy who hogs the ball and delights in 'pegging' his classmates. Once hit, students are eliminated and wait on the outside for another round to commence and another dose of embarrassment – of being hit and out of the game early while watching peers get eliminated one-by-one, leaving a lone winner amid a multitude of losers. I highly doubt that we wish to provide experiences composed of zero-sum competition, elimination, low engagement, coeducational inequity, high risk for injury, and wounded psyches.

These are powerful words indeed. The other point of view holds that there is nothing inherently wrong with Dodgeball and that kids love to play it. As one proponent noted:

Dodgeball is a great way for students to enjoy participating in Physical Education while learning a variety of movement skills, such as throwing, dodging, and teamwork.

And another:

I find the game to be a helpful tool in teaching many skills such as throwing, catching, dodging, ducking, balance, and aim. In addition I can monitor the

continued on page 2

student's honesty in play, teamwork, decision-making, cooperation, and sportsmanship.

Then there is always the argument about children needing to learn about competition because life is like that and games such as Dodgeball teach them about winning and losing. *Dodgeball is one of the few 'reality' games left; it gives students a peek at what the outside world is really like. Sure it's competitive, but so is society. Yes, there are going to be losers but only in a perfect world can one win at everything.*

Still others argued that the game is fine if it is modified in such a way that the two major objections are overcome. This can be done, they point out, by making the game inclusive in the sense that children aren't eliminated (a points scoring system is used instead) when they get hit and that, by using a soft ball, they don't get hurt. If they were to watch children organising their own games, they would see that this is precisely what they do.

Children don't want anyone to get hurt either so they make up rules (you can only hit someone below the waist or you throw softly at the smaller and younger kids) which protect those inside the circle. They don't know what 'inclusive' games are, but their rules are such that they make sure that no-one stands out for too long. They know only too well that someone who is hurt or left out is likely to be unhappy and may even consider leaving, so they invent rules to keep everyone interested and involved. When you are hit you join those who are throwing the ball until everyone is eliminated. Or there might be a rule that when someone catches the ball they can bring a person back into the middle.

Children are past-masters at designing games which cater to the needs of the group. In the street or park game the assembled players may well have to mix and match children of varied ability, age, size and sex. As well, they have to take into account ownership of the equipment, because that bestows certain privileges. In sum, the organisation of the game requires a well-developed sense of fair play and a capacity for innovation and creativity when the need arises. Few arguments or injuries occur and the game proceeds with a momentum that most Physical Education teachers would envy. So why the furore about Poison Ball?

Sadly, in adult-organised settings such as Physical Education, or even adult-supervised settings such the playground at recess, there is a preoccupation with safety which has led to what play specialist Brian

Sutton-Smith calls the 'domestication of play'. We have already seen schools introduce rules banning tagging and tackling and most forms of what we know as rough-and-tumble games (wrestling, rolling, play-fighting, etc.) in the playground. It is not inconceivable that games such as Poison Ball, which involve human targets, will soon join that list as our sensitivity about safety grows. What this means is that, at least in the context of schools, the crucial elements of risk, challenge, danger, uncertainty and spontaneity are in danger of disappearing.

The argument over Dodgeball is yet another example of how our obsession with safety is rapidly reaching absurd proportions. One fears for the future of Four Square and Hopscotch.

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Poison Ball — should adults make the rules?

Megan Young contributes an old rhyme she heard from a 7-year-old girl at Collingwood College in Melbourne in August, 2000. Other variations are welcome.

Girls are weak
Chuck them in the creek,
Boys are weaker
Chuck them in deeper.
Girls are strong
Chuck them in long,
Boys are stronger
Chuck them in longer.

Don't believe everything you read about today's children

June Factor

Children today are cheekier, lazier, fatter — aren't they? The age-old practice of viewing the young as less worthy than previous generations — they have it too easy, don't know what hard work means, lack respect, etc — has recently found a new focus.

Once, critics dwelt on children's supposed lack of moral fibre, intelligence or initiative. Now, with widespread concern about community health and fitness, research is increasingly directed towards assessing children's diet and weight.

Newspapers regularly report studies that claim our young grow inexorably heavier because they eat the 'wrong' foods and don't exercise enough. Governments use health arguments to justify investing more in sport — although most of the money is directed to a small number of talented athletes. Education departments promise — or threaten — to increase the school time allocated to Physical Education. Experts denounce TV and computer games, not for their inane content but because they encourage sedentary habits among the young.

Media response to the recent Bureau of Statistics report — *Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities* — fits this pattern exactly. Headlines that emphasise youth inactivity further fuel parental anxiety. While the report contains much of interest, most journalists appear to have read no further than the 'summary of findings' and have not subjected the report to critical analysis. The Bureau asked questions about 9700 'children aged five to 14 years who were usual residents of private dwellings'. Information was obtained 'from any responsible adult (15 years or over) in the household, who was asked to respond on behalf of the children in the household' about those children's 'selected organised cultural activities and organised sports outside school hours during the 12 months prior to interview in April, 2000'.

No children were interviewed, or observed. No 'unorganised' (by adults) cultural activities or sports were included. No free-time activities that took place during school hours were surveyed — but school-computer use is carefully tabulated, together with out-of-school use.

The 'responsible adults' were also limited in their answers by the Bureau's choice of 'four selected cultural activities' — playing a musical instrument, singing, dancing and drama — and 'five selected leisure activities' — watching TV or computer games, riding bikes, skateboarding or rollerblading, and 'art and craft activities'.

The report can tell us much that is useful, though hardly surprising, about the restricted access to organised play and leisure activities suffered by children in poor families. Lack of money regularly means lack of opportunity. And the report documents well-recognised gender traditions, which show girls favouring the arts while boys play sport.

But there is nothing in the study to justify the assertion that 'Australia's children are spending more and more of their free time staring into screens' (*The Age*, 19/1). We aren't provided with the comparative information over time necessary to make such a judgement. The report notes that most computer use takes place in schools, and the evidence from previous TV-user surveys suggests all of us — young and old — are watching the box less and less.

More fundamentally, the limitations of the Bureau's 'selected activities' result in some very odd omissions. Reading, still a favoured leisure activity among many young people (consider the recent craze for the Harry Potter books), is not 'selected' and therefore not counted.

Also invisible are the myriad play activities that engulf school playgrounds at recess and lunch times: chasing, catching and hiding games, skipping, elastics, marbles,



Chasey — not included in the survey

ball games, let's-pretend games...the list is endless. These games are rehearsed and extended in backyards, parks and even the occasional street, where we also find kick-to-kick football, home-made billy carts, and friendship groups with their own cubby house and secret password and code language. This is active and inventive play, culturally rich, occupying a significant role in children's leisure pursuits and not limited to the comfortably off or those with conscientious parents. But it has no place in the Bureau's survey.

Doom and gloom about children is no more warranted now than in Plato's day. They are neither lazy nor inactive. Apart from an increase in certain respiratory diseases such as asthma, our current crop of youngsters are probably healthier — and will live longer — than any previous generation of Australians.

And when schools recognise that the collaborative and imaginative play of the schoolyard offers entry to all children, not just the skilled and the sports enthusiasts, perhaps they will reconsider the curricula.

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SPITTING

James Lambert

Expectorating is a basic human instinct, just like sneezing, suckling, laughing, crying and walking upright. How we use this instinct as adults depends largely on the culture we are living in. Among adults in Australia spitting is frowned upon in company, unless there is a really good reason for it - for example choking on something or gagging on some abominable tasting food. Sports men and women are allowed to spit during a game, and such spitting is often shown on television without comment. Spitting on someone as an insult occasionally occurs amongst adults, but only under extreme provocation. It is a far worse insult than any swearing, and falls just shy of actually thumping someone. In contrast to adults, children have a different attitude towards spitting altogether - it is much more exploratory!

We learn how to use all our instincts while growing up. By the time we are adults we generally have them down pat, and this is because, as children, we explored the possibilities of our various abilities in order to gain better control over them. So it is no surprise that spitting habits amongst the young are much more varied and interesting than those of adults.

Although there is no strong taboo attached to the subject of spitting, it isn't talked about much. Children's literature steers well clear of the subject for the most part.

It is generally assumed that there is a definite gender difference with regard to spitting, ie. boys indulge more freely in the practice than girls. I know many women who claim to have never spat in their lives. I have never known a male to make the same claim. I should in all fairness point out that it was only within the last year that I narrowly escaped being spat upon in the street by a fairly average-looking schoolgirl who appeared to be about 10 or 11 years old.

The importance of a topic to a set of people can be gauged by whether or not there is a subset vocabulary associated with it. The lexicon that accompanies spitting is not very extensive, but exists nevertheless. The terms associated with spitting will change regionally, as they belong to the slang end of the language spectrum. I will here discuss, by way of example, those words used when I was a child growing up in the dull Sydney suburb of West Ryde in the 1970s.

In West Ryde there were four largely synonymous and simple words used to describe spitting in all its myriad forms. Firstly, there was the standard English word *spit*, which as a verb was used both transitively (*to spit food out*) and intransitively (*Don't spit in the corridor*). It was also used as a noun to refer to that

which is ejected from the mouth. This is a word that dates back to Anglo-Saxon times; it is our ancient and native English word.

The other words were *spag*, *slag* and *golly* - much more recent terms.

Spag as a verb was used the same as *spit*, though it was much more commonly used intransitively. As a noun it could be both a count noun and a noncount noun, that is, it could refer to the stuff (*He saved up tons of spag in his mouth*) or to a singular glob of it (*You should have seen the big spag on the blackboard*). It has been around in Australia since at least the 1960s. *Slag* had the same meanings and uses as *spag* and has also been around since the 1960s.

Golly, as a verb, worked in the same way as the preceding words, but as a noun it was used mostly as a count noun, referring to a 'glob of spit' as opposed to 'spittle'. Professor Gerry Wilkes states that he remembers *golly* from conversation dating as far back as the 1930s.

Associated verbs were *hang* and *drop*. One could 'hang a golly' or 'drop a spag'. These two verbs are similarly used when speaking of other linguistically taboo or 'rude' bodily functions, such as 'hang a piss', 'hang a shit', 'drop a fart'. Also they have a colloquialising force which clearly marks out the utterance as kidspeak, not adultspeak.

By the time I was in high school many of us knew the word *expectorate*, and this had some use due to the jocularity of using such a high-brow, technical term to denote such a low-brow, boyish activity.

The only other word I remember knowing is *hanger* - this referred to a golly that was very viscous, and of such a large mass that when spat onto an object, such as a tree branch, ledge, etc., formed into a long gooey drip. A good hanger was a thing of admiration, and I remember one that my older brother was bragging about was still there the next day, in the branch where it had been deposited 24 hours previously. It was somewhat dried up, but still there. It even retained the dripping form like a frozen moment, albeit, according to my brother, much smaller than its original proportions. The intimate detail with which this particular piece of mucus and spittle was discussed is indicative of the importance of spitting to young boys.

A prerequisite for spitting is some matter to spit out. This matter usually takes one of two forms - either saliva gathered in the oral cavity, or such saliva admixed with mucus obtained from the nasal passages. The method for obtaining this mucus is to sniff back hard to draw it from the nasal passages into

the back of the throat. Often one nasal cavity will be closed in order to increase the pressure differential between the lungs and the outside air, thus causing a stronger draught through the nasal passage with the hope of dislodging especially reticent mucus. After sniffing, the mucus will have collected at the terminus of the nasal passage in the back of the throat above the oesophagus. It is brought forward into the mouth cavity by performing something akin to a uvular fricative. This last process produces a loud, harsh, gurgling sound. The greater the mass of the mucus the better the aerodynamic properties of the sputum projectile, so being adept at the preparatory stages is essential.

But, just what things did we do with these spags, slags and gollies?

Often we engaged in contests of accuracy and distance. At our high school there was a set of three or four 'bubblers', or drinking fountains, directly below the third-storey balcony of one of the blocks, and a common pastime while awaiting the arrival of the tardy art teacher was to spit off the balcony into the bubblers below. Scoring a direct hit into the bowl, or even better, onto the nozzle, was the object of the game. Maximum grossness equalled maximum cool. This was a not a practice we could engage in frequently, lest we be seen by a teacher. In spite of this, impromptu bets and accuracy competitions abounded. They were social engagements at which one showed off one's spitting prowess.

Competition and accuracy aside, spitting onto perfectly innocent things that just happened to be in the immediate vicinity was a common practice. For instance, my cousin Patrick and I were once on a train during the holidays, and as the train began to pull out from the station we leaned out through the automatic doors and spagged on to the signal light. Why? Well, why not? It was there. This doesn't strike me as much of a philosophy when I think about it today, but we were kids, and that is what we thought at the time. It seemed like spitting just for the hell of it, but of course it was all part of exploring the medium and honing one's skills. Unhappily, the guard spotted us slagging on his signal and yelled at us! We were 'busted', and so beat a hasty retreat through the carriages. This attempted evasive action was ludicrous, for there is a limited number of carriages to any one train, and once you've run through them all, you're cornered. The guard chased us and inevitably caught up with us in the front carriage, standing there trying not to look guilty. He let us off with a warning.

Some students, to amuse themselves or show off, spat from such heights as the school architecture afforded on to other students. This bombardment was perpetrated by base and cowardly types, for the spitters would use their vantage point to hide themselves and retreat, and so conceal their guilt. They didn't even have to look to see who their target

was or exactly who they hit. Many's the time I have seen an outraged spat-upon student go racing up the nearest stairwell in a vain search for a culprit who had already decamped or blended into the crowd. Another type of cowardice was found in the attitude of the school 'toughs' or bullies who would spit on certain kids quite blatantly, with no fear of retribution. Naturally they never spat on anyone they considered an equal opponent in a fight.

Among teenage boys, spitting was almost synonymous with toughness. It showed a healthy disregard for authority (not to mention an authoritative disregard for health). Interestingly, spitting done for the sake of image was only of the light spittle variety, no hawking back to get a really good golly. Furthermore, it was usually done repeatedly, sometimes incessantly, but only while one wanted or needed to feel particularly tough.

Being spat on is not a pleasant experience but for a boy at a boy's school, unavoidable. It happened to me on a number of occasions in my school career - twice by complete strangers, boys from other schools. Once on the way to sport I was standing by an open train door, and as the train pulled into the station beside another train at the adjacent platform I felt some slight precipitation. Being an overcast day I glanced upwards, only to discover that it was not the heavens sprinkling, but two boys in the upper-storey of the other train spitting at me. It may seem weird to me now, but instead of fleeing this unsavoury onslaught I immediately spat back at them. They shut their window quickly and the incident was over. It was a common thing for such sorts of taunting and abuse to be hurled from the safety of a train or a platform, as it was unlikely that someone would willingly give up their train ride just to go over and exact retribution from the stirrer. However, cowardice in these situations was rife, and kids mostly seemed to wait until the train was actually moving before hurling abuse, taunts, spag, or what have you.

Another similar event occurred when I was at Ryde Swimming Pool. This time I could easily have run up the stairs and caught the culprits, but they were only kids, about seven or eight, and I was a high school senior. I could hardly go and bash their heads in. Once again spitting back, fighting fire with fire as it were, was the effective response to bring the situation to a speedy end. The little kids decamped, swearing at me.

I remember a different occasion which was much worse. I was in our backyard swimming pool with my older brother and his mate Grant. We had been spitting at one another in a joking way, and ducking under the water to avoid being hit, but the fun ended when one of Grant's gollies landed perfectly in my mouth. The taste of one's own mucus is not generally conceived as pleasant, but when it is someone else's! Spitting on one another was just a bit of crude fun we

continued on page 6

sometimes indulged in, but this was not meant to happen. It transgressed the unwritten laws of kids' etiquette. I spat it out and rinsed ardently with copious quantities of chlorinated pool water, and was very upset. Grant felt bad, for this was not what he intended, and my brother felt sorry for me. It was generally accepted that this was a 'slack' thing to do. Grant apologised, and it was arranged that I was allowed to punch Grant as reparation for the crime. He was two years older than me and can't have feared my punch much, but it was a fair dinkum effort at reparation, whatever the terms.

One day a group of us had an all-out *spit fight* in our backyard. There were four of us. Basically all this entailed was running around the backyard attempting to spit on one another. Mostly what was spat was just saliva since a constant supply of saliva is more readily available than one of mucus. The skill was to get close enough while you had ammunition and they didn't, and to avoid them when you had just depleted your supplies and they hadn't. We designated a particular part of the yard as a re-arming station. You

entered this when you were all spat-out, and were inviolate while you let your bone-dry mouth return to its normal salivary state. It was an impromptu game without any winner as such, and we never once returned to the sport.

I have heard from a female friend of mine that her brother used to play a game of domination over her in which he held her down and then dribbled out a long trail of spittle, dangling it over her face. At the last moment the saliva would be sucked back up into the mouth and so no real harm was done, just a scare. I imagine for some people this would be their very own Room 101, though my friend seemed to have weathered the ordeal well enough. She thought it was a typical enough example of childhood interaction with boys.

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Old Games, New Games

Many local publications are treasure-troves of folklore, including the traditions of children. An example comes from the September, 1952 issue of *The Queensland Countrywoman* newsletter. A regular columnist, calling herself *Mary Martha*, often referred to children's play.

Mary Martha Again—

I did not get around to marbles last month, did I? What a game that used to be, combining acquisitiveness with the zeal of a collector! True, off and on the youngsters of today do play marbles, but the glory has departed. Where now do you find those enormous 'glassies', rainbow-coloured and the size of plums, which were so devastating in a game of eye-drop? Or those pebbles like blended cream and golden syrup, spoken of reverently as seventy-two-ers or hundred-and-four-ers? That was real value in the days when stonkers were twenty a penny. I never yearned for agates or 'Chows' (China?), very much over-rated, washed-out looking affairs, but I did surreptitiously borrow a seventy-two-er often for a taw. (Woe betide me if I lost it!)

Even the names have changed. 'Gingeries' are now 'warts', for instance, and no doubt the famous ritual 'Fain any, fain me, every you, fain fenanny me, every you—' which we juniors chanted, not understanding half of it, has fallen into disuse.

Card games, too, were inclined to be parochial. 'Snap' was 'Grab' in the next village. I remember the thrill of learning 'Kiss Ena' (with Little Kissena and Big Kissena), and 'Beggamanava'. Later I successfully diagnosed these as Casino and Beggar-my-neighbour, a variant of our Strip-Jack-Naked, but at the time they had the thrill of the exotic.

Perhaps our old games will recur in cycles. I wonder often if that folk dance schools now perform under the name of 'Theyde Uganda' is not named after a Colleen's 'Thady—you gander!' to a gallivanting Thaddeus (of Casino and Kissena).

Anyway, believe it or not, yesterday at a little country school near Toowoomba, I saw a little bush cubby-house, such as we used to build of leafy gum boughs in the summer holidays, and furnish with what we could coax or purloin from the house.

Don't children ever make stilts now? A whole generation of us tottered, staggered or strode on crazy home-made things, yet the only broken limbs I recall were (1) a boy who swung on the monkey-rope vines

down Mt. Coottha's 'Devil Slide'; (2) a boy who fell off a two-foot high gate. We learnt to come off our stilts.

Ah well, the bush has retreated from the cities like a middle-aged tonsure from its owner's forehead. Gum-suckers are scarce, and timber is dear. Maybe cubby-houses and stilt-walking and bush hockey—oh yes, and 'Cat' (how came I to forget that game?)—are relegated to that colourful past, when breathless kids bounded up to the teacher's study, or to your front door, to say, 'young Ginger got his head split open' playing hockey (or Cat). And we realistic little ghouls rushed to get a view of the gaping brains (just like adults at a fire), only to find that Ginger had a sizeable cut with an f.a.q. amount of gore on his copper-top. Very disillusioning.

Them were the days. Today's youngster gets his thrill from Hopalong popping off the baddies at the rate of two a minute.

—M.M.

Editor's note: 'Hopalong' is a reference to Hopalong Cassidy, the star of a popular cowboy series shown on TV during the 1950s.



Marbles game, 1950s: Dorothy Howard Collection, Australian Children's Folklore Collection

Schoolyard Games 2000 - Glendal Primary School, Melbourne, Vic.

Catherine O'Connor

TIGGY (Tag)

There are three sorts -

Off-ground Tiggy where you run around, and if you are not touching the ground you are 'barley' and cannot be tagged.

In another version, you run around staying off the ground, that is, don't touch the grass or stuff like that, and if your feet touch a tree it still counts as the ground. You are allowed to jump from a slide to a see-saw or something, too.

The last version is pretty much the same as the second version. You are allowed to take as many steps on the ground as the people playing agree to.

TWO-SQUARE

You have a ball and two even boundaries like a rectangle with a line down the middle.



One person bounces the ball so that it lands in their own half, and then on the other player's side. Then the other player must hit it with their hand so that it lands on the first person's side. This continues until one of these things happens:

The ball may bounce on the line in the middle. Then one person throws the ball down on the line and whichever side it bounces on it becomes the turn of the person on that side.

The ball may bounce twice in one person's square, or the person may miss hitting it. Then that person is out and another person comes in.

HIDE & SEEK

We find a certain spot and one person, who is It, counts to the number of seconds that everyone agrees to, like 25 or something.

While It is counting, all the other people run to spots where they think It can't see them.

When It finishes counting, she tries to find the other people. The first person hiding who is found is the next person to be It.

ELASTIC SKIPPING

Skipping song: *England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales,
Inside, outside, puppy-dogs' tails.*

Two people hold some elastic which has been tied to make a large circle, and hold it with their hands in a long rectangle shape.

One person puts one leg in the middle of the elastic and the other leg outside the loop. Then the people holding the elastic start singing the skipping song. The person moving to the beat jumps so that the leg that is in the middle goes to the outside and the leg that is on the outside ends up in the middle.

This goes on until the *England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales* beat finishes. The person who is doing the jumping then puts both legs inside the elastic and then jumps outside the elastic, and when they get to *puppy-dogs' tails* they jump on to the elastic and push it down to the ground.

SCHOOLYARD SONG

Good King Wenceslas looked out, on the feast of Stephen,

When a snowball hit him on the snout, and made it all uneven.

Brightly shone his nose that night, though it pained him cruel,

When a doctor came in sight, riding on a mule.

Catherine O'Connor is 9 years of age.

A reader remembers the following contribution 'from history lessons in the "Baby Boomer" era':

Julius Caesar let a breezer (go)
On the coast of France,
His brother tried to do the same
And did it in his pants!

SONGS WITH PICTURES

Judy McKinty

In Issue No. 38 of *Play & Folklore*, Erik Kaas Nielsen described traditional 'drawing stories' from Denmark and Sweden. Children at the International Primary School in Bulolo, Papua New Guinea, have a similar activity. They draw a progressive picture while singing a song in Pidgin. The following are two examples collected in November 1999. The same tune is sung for both songs, and adapted to fit the words.

SHIP

Wanpela man,		(one man)
Tupela man,		(two men)
Tripela man,		(three men)
Fopela man,		(four men)
Snek i ronim ol,	S	(a snake chases them)
Krossim bris,	SH	(they cross a bridge)
Ren i kam,	SH	(it starts to rain)
Go insait long sip!	SHIP	(they go inside a ship)

The musical notation consists of two staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes. Below the staff, the lyrics are written in two lines. The second staff also has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes. Below this staff, the lyrics are written in two lines. The lyrics are in Pidgin and include a reference to 'TED-DY BEAR!'.

Wan - pela man Tu - pela man Tri - pela man Fo - pela man Snek i ro - nim
(pela pron. 'pia')
Lik - lik sekul Lik - lik sekul Bik - pe - la se -
Si - i kis, si - i kis, Nam - ba te - ti -

ol, Kross - im bris Ren i kam Go in - sait long sip!
kul, Lik - lik sekul Lik - lik sekul Ka - nu long - a man.
stids, Si - i kis, si - i kis, Maun - ten long - a man. TED - DY BEAR!

SONGS WITH PICTURES continued
TEDDY BEAR

Liklik sekul, liklik sekul,

0 0

(little circle, little circle)

Bikpela sekul,



(big circle)

Liklik sekul, liklik sekul,



(little circle, little circle)

Kanu longa man.



(a canoe)

Sikis, sikis,



(six, six)

Namba teti-sikis,



(number thirty-six)

Sikis, sikis,



(six, six)

Maunten longa man.
TEDDY BEAR!



(a mountain)

Reference

Mihalic, F. (1971) *The Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin*, Milton, Qld.: The Jacaranda Press



Playing Five Stones, Bulolo, PNG

(Young) Women Who Write on Walls: girls' graffiti in the 1990s

Gwenda Beed Davey

During the last ten years of the twentieth century one of my research projects concerned women's graffiti. I was interested in the topics which persuaded women to write anonymous messages on walls in a variety of public places, including schools. There seems to be very little research in this field, although Emma Otto, a Brazilian researcher, collected graffiti on university campuses in 1990, and found the female writers' main concerns were with personal problems, romanticism and morality¹. My own collection ranged somewhat wider, and dealt with love, men, sex, humour and the meaning of life, with self-hatred, and with opinionated statements on a variety of topics².

It was not always easy to ensure that the graffiti collected was in fact written by women, though some items seemed to provide *prima facie* proof, such as *If he beats you leave and Dead men don't rape*, both found on a factory wall in Richmond, Vic. Obviously the best source is the women's lavatory, as with Emma Otto's restroom research. The women's loo in the Library at Melbourne's Monash University included a riddle:

What do you have when you're holding two little balls?

A man's undivided attention.

Which proves that women can also make jokes about men, as well as offering death – or castration – threats.

Most of the items of the women's graffiti collection I assembled in the 1990s were written by mature women or university students (of varying degrees of maturity), but a few came from primary and secondary schools, and for these I have to thank Jenna and Kylie Seal, of Perth WA. Apart from the prolific 'John loves Jane' and 'I hate Sally X' messages, there are some children's graffiti which involved somewhat more complex statements. The following reflect primary school children's interest in basic bodily functions. All three are hardy annuals, and offer good advice in all cases:

Save gas, fart in a jar.

*If you sprinkle when you tinkle,
Be a sweetie and wipe the seetie.*

*Better to fart a little and stink a little
Than bust your arse and be a cripple.*

Perth's prestigious secondary school, Perth Modern, contributed the following truism:

*Virginity is like a balloon
One prick and it's gone*

The following are some more *latrinalia* from Perth Modern:

*Smoke dope
Eat soap
And fly home in a bubble.*

Shit happens.

*Pass on the vibe
And take it easy
Just go, baby, go.*

*Life is a waste of time
Time is a waste of life
So let's get wasted
And have the time of our life.*

This famous educational institution has produced many noted Australians including the former Prime Minister, Mr R. J. ('Bob') Hawke. Has some of the above graffiti been on Perth Modern's walls since Hawkey's day? *Smoke dope*, *Shit happens* and *Pass on the vibe* seem reminiscent of the flower-power era of the 1960s and 1970s, unless they are part of today's 'New Age' reinvention of flower-power. *Let's get wasted* puts a somewhat more energetic and cheerful twist in the tail of what starts as another gloomy prognostication. Perhaps it's sending up the other messages! Another item from Perth Modern is a hardy annual recitation:

*It's a man's obligation
To stick his cockulation
Up a woman's ventilation
To increase the population
Of the younger generation
I got this information
From the Board of Education
If you'd like a demonstration
Please make the bed.*

I suspect the punch-line here is a rather modern feminist alteration to the traditional rhyme. Where did this youthful secondary school student learn this rhyme?

Perhaps from a friend; in which case, where did the friend learn it? We know that most children's folklore is passed on between successive generations of children, though sometimes it comes from adults.

continued on page 12

Some parents pass on 'rude lore' to their children just for fun, although they probably have strict limits about how far to go. The rich field of family vulgarity (farting, lavatory humour, 'rude jokes') has scarcely been studied. Dad's farting can be quite a theatrical performance, and in my mother's quite puritanical family, the outside toilet was known as 'Ethel's opera house', because she used to sing there, at length. This kind of family humour may occur in the most respectable - and loving - families, and shows a robust attitude to educating the younger generation in the weird ways of the world. It's a healthy opposite to families where nothing is spoken but much may be done, in some cases including sexual abuse of their own children.

The 'literary' forms used in graffiti are always of interest, and the examples in my collection include simple declarations, riddles, rhymes and dialogues, or multiple responses to a statement. Rhymes are not so common today as in former times; an English eighteenth-century collection (*The Merry-Thought: or the Glass-Window and Bog-House Miscellany*)ⁱⁱⁱ is almost exclusively in rhyme. The small number of

items from Australian schools includes a number of rhymes, perhaps reflecting children's regular use of skipping and clapping rhymes, counting out rhymes and the like. As June Factor has often said, 'if only teachers who complain that children 'don't like poetry' would realise how much of it is regularly practised in the school playground!'

References

- ⁱOtto, E. (1993) 'Graffiti in the 1990s: a study of inscriptions on restroom walls', *Journal of Social Psychology*, 133 (4), pp 589-590/
ⁱⁱDavey, G B (2000) *Women Who Write on Walls*, unpublished manuscript.
ⁱⁱⁱ*The Merry-Thought: or, the Glass-Window and Bog-House Miscellany*, London, J. Roberts in Warwick Lane, 1731-?. Facsimile edition by The Augustan Reprint Society, Publications Number 216, 221, 222, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California Los Angeles, 1982 and 1983.

CAN YOU HELP?

Graham Seal from Perth has asked if Play and Folklore readers can help with some detail about the following:

A pinch and a punch for the first of the month (to which the response is A hit and a kick for being so quick.)

Maureen Seal regards this routine as well-known in Sydney. Is it known in other regions of Australia - and are the words the same?

A reader has asked for help in completing the following ditty, which he remembers from childhood:

*If you never care a fig
 And leave the bathroom like a pig
 Pray, remember others too
 Must use the bathroom after you.
 Do be quick, not like a slug,
 Just bend your back and pull the plug.
knights of old.....???*

Two small verses and a saying from James Lambert's mother, who was born in 1939, growing up in Edensor Park, Sydney:

There was a frog - sat on a log
 Mourning the loss of his daughter.
 His eyes grew so red at the tears he shed
 That he jumped right into the water.

A pound of tea at one-and-three,
 A pot of raspberry jam,
 Two new-laid eggs,
 A dozen pegs,
 A pound of rashers of ham.

Why?
 Because Y's a crooked letter and you can't straighten it.

H O M E - M A D E T R E A S U R E S

Issue No. 35 of *Play & Folklore* included advance notice of an exhibition of historical hand-made childhood items, from the Edith Cowan University's Museum of Childhood in Perth, Western Australia. The exhibition, titled *Home-Made Treasures*, has been touring Australia, and Judy McKinty caught up with it in Melbourne.

The *Home-Made Treasures* exhibition is an unusual and engaging collection of home-made toys, games, babies' articles, furniture and school aids dating back to 1893. Staff at the Museum of Childhood have been collecting objects like these for over twenty years, as much for the stories behind them, and their evidence of human resourcefulness and ingenuity, as for their visual appeal.

Visually, the exhibition is a number of booths, each with a particular theme, and a 'train' displaying soft toys, a ride-on locomotive, a beautifully-crafted doll's bed and a toy Tiger Moth plane, as well as a bagatelle game, the forerunner of the pinball machine. There is also a large cubby-house with dress-ups and toys to play with, and a section called *Can do Can play*, with toys and activities made from cans. (Remember tin can telephones?)



Fancy dress costume - lovingly stitched

hand-sewn in 1913 and modelled on the pictures in a little girl's story book. There is also a steerable toy 'car', made in 1993 at the Alekarenge Aboriginal Community in the Northern Territory from discarded pieces of wire, tobacco tins and an old metal pump seal. The pump seal is carefully positioned over the rear axle so its weight will provide traction for the wheels on the sandy ground. There is also a wooden desk, made from kerosene packing cases, with jamtin ink wells. A Western Australian mother made one of these desks for each of

her five children, and they were used for correspondence lessons at home.

For Sheer Joy is all about the pleasure of making things as an outlet for creativity, or as a recreational pursuit. At the back of the display there is a large photo of children playing on a river in home-made canoes. The canoes are made from sheets of old corrugated iron, bent into shape and the holes filled with bitumen scavenged from the road. There are also a number of wooden toys from the 1930s, as well as a beautifully crafted child's table and chairs set.



A Burkett home-made doll

Wartime spills across two booths, and their contents are a testimonial to resourcefulness in times of disruption and nationwide shortages. In one booth are papier mache-and-compound dolls and puppets, made at home by the Burkett family during World War I. Modelled on commercially-made dolls of the period, they were originally intended for family use, but became so popular that everyone wanted them, and so began the first doll factory in Western Australia. There are also a wooden toy locomotive and trucks, which were rescued from the rubbish dump at Pemberton, W.A., and donated to the Museum by someone with an appreciation for their cultural value. After a plea for information in the local newspaper, the origin of the toys was discovered and their story recorded. This story was a sharp reminder of the fact that many people simply throw away the playthings of childhood once the children have outgrown them, or give them away to younger relatives or the local charity shop.

Improvisation at School is about the creative improvisation of teaching aids, particularly by teachers in little one-teacher schools across the country. It includes a counting-frame made from quandong seeds and a hand-painted globe of the

world. A quandong is a medium-sized tree, which grows in semi-arid parts of Australia. The fruit of the sweet quandong is edible, and in some places it is called the 'bush peach'. It has round seeds, about the size of a marble, which children have used in many ways — as playing pieces for Chinese Chequers, threaded on a wire and used like 'conkers', or for an improvised game of marbles, and, as this exhibition shows, to learn to count.

The *Enforced Leisure* display contains items made by people who were incapacitated by disability, injury or illness, and by those in enforced isolation or confinement. Among the items is a large wooden yacht, complete with sails.

Hard Times reveals the years of the Great Depression, when resourcefulness and ingenuity meant survival. Among the items on display are rag dolls made from scraps of fabric by an unemployed mother, who sold them on street corners in Perth to support her family during the 1930s depression. There is also a child's chest of drawers, made from kerosene tins. Added to the time it took to make this piece of furniture would have been the time spent in collecting all the materials, in this instance kerosene tins and scraps of wood.

In the words of Exhibition Curators Brian Shepherd and Stephen Anstee, the exhibition 'celebrates the power to make-do or improvise, particularly with regard to children'.

This exhibition is concerned with an important segment of our national folk life as expressed through its material culture. In contrast to commercially produced items, all objects in this exhibition have been produced through genuine need or desire in particular places and circumstances. A strength of the exhibition is its ability to tell the story behind items because of the strength of recorded provenance. Inevitably these stories reveal the power in the human spirit to provide objects of nurture irrespective of period or geographic or economic circumstance. The human values revealed by the objects and their stories are important to today's audiences as they provide something of an antidote to the often too pressing insistence by the advertising media that we succumb without question to the mass-produced items for a consumer society.

Home-Made Treasures will be on tour until May 2002:

Launceston, Tas. — currently on display until early September 2001; Mornington, Vic. — early Nov. to early Dec 2001; Canberra, A.C.T. — mid-Dec. to early Feb. 2002; Portland, Vic — mid-Feb. to end of March 2002; Esperance, W.A. — April to early May 2002.

For further details contact the Edith Cowan University Museum of Childhood,

ph. 089 4421 1373.



Home-Made Treasures

TWO TOODLEMBUCKS

In Melbourne in the early 1900s, a Toodlembuck was a type of children's gambling wheel made from a butcher's skewer, a cotton reel, a large cardboard disc, a length of string, a button and a pin. The disc was ruled into sections, each containing the name of a horse running in the Melbourne Cup. It was attached to the cotton reel, which was wound around with the string and threaded onto the skewer. The pin acted as a pointer on top of the skewer. Pulling the string made the disc spin, and when it stopped the horse under the pointer was the winner. Children bet cherry stones (cherry 'bobs') on the outcome.

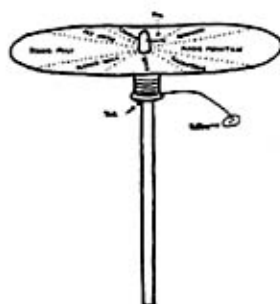


Diagram of a Toodlembuck collected by Dr. Dorothy Howard, the American folklorist who visited Australia in 1954-55 to collect children's folklore.

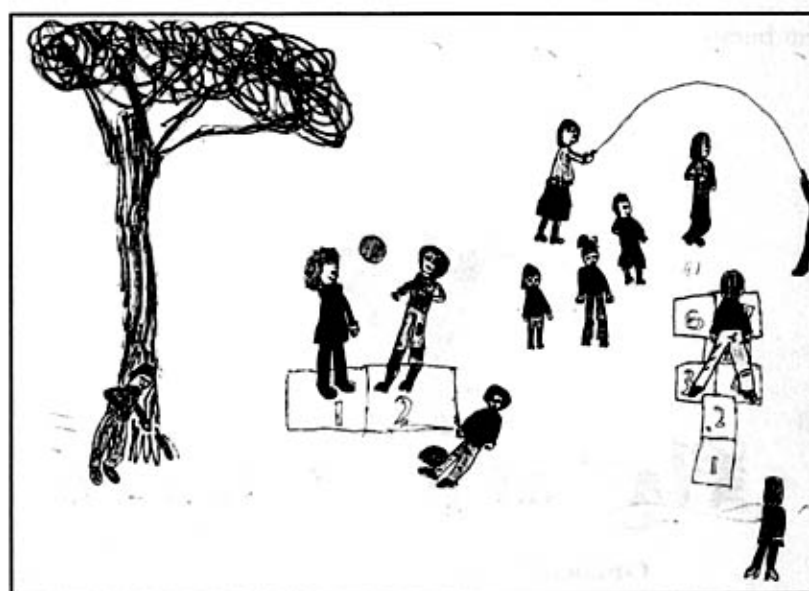
The Toodlem Buck of the adult world had a similar function to the children's gambling device. The following description comes from a reader who would like to find out if there was a connection between the two:

During the period 1900-1930 it was fashionable to have a mascot on top of the car radiator.

One of these mascots was like a witch with a tapered hat, carrying a shepherd's crook. It was called Toodlem Buck (possibly a person's name). The figure stood about 3 inches (8cm) high, and was on a flat base, which was about 1 1/2 inches (4cm) in diameter.

The base was hollow, with a sort of fan inside, which would spin when the wind blew through the base as the car travelled along. The base was half shielded around the outside, and half open, to let the wind blow through.

The mascot must have had a revolving disc or drum with numbers on it, because the occupants of the car were each given a number. When the car stopped at a hotel, whoever's number came up paid for the drinks.



In this issue of Play and Folklore you will find:

Dodging the Poison Ball

John Evans

1

Don't believe everything you read about today's children

June Factor

3

Spitting

James Lambert

4

Old Games, New Games

7

Schoolyard Games 2000 - Glendal Primary School, Melbourne, Vic.

Catherine O'Connor

8

Songs with Pictures

Judy McKinty

9

(Young) Women Who Write on Walls: girls' graffiti in the 1990s

Guenda Beed Davey

11

Home-Made Treasures

13

Two Toodlem bucks

15



Play and Folklore

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