



The "scientist," for example, will maintain that nothing worthwhile would have been learned from his field project save for his skills in, say, nondirective interviewing; the "humanists," on the other hand, will contend that it was his sensitivity to the lifeways and indeed the souls of his informants that made the whole thing possible.

Thus does each side disqualify the methods of the other. The point that a knowledge of interviewing techniques and a poetic sensibility to people and places might BOTH be useful attributes to the fieldworker tends to be overlooked—as does the point that a little common sense might be more useful than either of the more rarefied virtues.

The simple truth is that whatever the limitations on the fieldwork of the non-specialist, there are some things he can do as well or better than the professionals.

This has been proven in Arkansas, where Vance Randolph is the dean of American folktale collectors. It has been proven in North Georgia where the students of Rabun Gap High School, under the guidance of their teacher Elliot Wigginton, have been publishing reports and photographs of their community traditions in a remarkable periodical called *Foxfire*. And it has been proven here in Maryland, where the field experience of Alta Schrock and members of the Council of the Alleghenies has been directed to helping the mountain people and culture survive in the face of overwhelming pressure to give up their traditions. Vance Randolph, Alta Schrock, and the students and teachers of Rabun Gap High School are all "amateurs," but amateurs in the older and nobler sense of that word—people who do something for the love of it. In the presence of these inspiring examples,

*Chairmaker Lon Reid is interviewed by Elliot Wigginton, teacher at Rabun Gap High School in Georgia and advisor to the student periodical Foxfire, and student Mary Jane Shepard.*

no other "amateurs" need have reservations about going into the field.

Here are a few suggestions for anyone who might like to find out about his community's living past.

First, write to the American Folklore Society, University of Texas Press, Box 7819, Austin, Texas, and request the names of local and regional associations which might be joined.

Second, buy a copy of the handbook that is the standard reference work for all collectors of oral tradition: Kenneth Goldstein's *Guide for Fieldworkers in Folklore* (1964).

Third, gain a basic knowledge of what might reasonably be expected to turn up in traditional culture by reading Jan Brunvand's *Study of American Folklore* (1968) and Henry Glassie's *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (1969).

Next, the would-be folklore fieldworker should select some specific topic to pursue with informants. Weather lore, church music, foodways, hunting and fishing, horse training, rug weaving, almost anything that will engage the interest of the people one hopes to talk to will provide a good beginning.

The purpose of focusing on a particular topic is to avoid that embarrassing silence that falls over the crossroads store when one walks up to the counter and says, "Say, can you tell me if there's any folklife around here?" One can go about fieldwork the wrong way, make no mistake, but the right road is easy enough to find and easy enough to follow.

## SEEKING OUT INDIAN PARTICIPATION

by Tom Kavanagh

The end of July is a beginning and an ending. It marks the final mop-up of one year's Festival of American Folklife and the start of extensive planning for the next. For us, in the Indian Awareness Program, it marks the time when we can get out into the field once again and renew old friendships, make new ones, and learn more about the tremendous amount of traditional Indian culture still existing within the Indian community.

Indian participation in the Festival of American Folklife is more than a presentation of a colorful but irrelevant past. It is the presentation of modern adaptations of traditional Indian cultures within the context of 1972. The Festival is not a performance out of the past; it is a celebration of the present.

The fieldwork that goes into the Indian participation at the Festival must therefore search out the people who will best represent the living aspects of Indian culture. A potter comes to the Festival because there is still a demand for Pueblo-made pottery, not because pottery is something the Indians used to do. There are dancers on the Mall, not because they are the visible and best-known image of Indians, but because the dancers and songs play a vital part in Indian life today.

The job of adequately representing the Indian cultures during the five days of the Festival is impossible. Not only are those cultures complex and inter-related, but the gap between the Indian cultures and the general white population is wide enough to discourage most attempts at presenting them. The cultural differences between other ethnic minorities—Basque dancers, say—and the average visitor to the Festival are minimal compared to the differences between the same visitor and any Indian.

The job of representing the Indian culture truthfully, in such a way that the average visitor can understand, or at least accept the differences, is largely up to the fieldworker in his choice and recommendation of participants.

There was a time when Indian people were not fully aware of what was hap-

THE HORSE AND  
MARYLAND:  
Three vignettes  
by Richard Hudson

pening in other Indian communities. As a result of boarding schools, the military, and the general need to work together for common goals, Indian people have now become closer and better informed about events elsewhere.

Outstanding craftsmen, singers, and dancers are known all over Indian country, as are the major social events. People travel long distances to attend those events, knowing that the best performers and craftsmen will be there. This is where the fieldwork begins.

Once contact with a performer or craftsman is made, and the skills are confirmed, the fieldworker must find out whether the individual is interested in taking part in the Festival. Very often a person is unwilling to come here alone, so arrangements must be made with a friend or relative (who is also a performer or craftsman) to go along.

The scarcity of funds often limits the beauty and variety of offerings on the Mall. Choices have to be made, for example, between five dancers and a singer who could represent the ceremonial dances of one tribe and six craftsmen and spokesmen for six different tribes who could bring a variety of experience and philosophy to share with the public.

Fieldwork is many things. It is the excitement of attending a powwow and debating the merits of the various dancers with other visitors. It is the beauty of watching the Shalako dancers on a snowy night in Zuni Pueblo. It is the fun of tracking down a storyteller or the maker of rabbit-fur blankets.

Seldom does a fieldworker come away from Indian country without new friends, new experiences, and a thankfulness for the feeling that this is where the real people are, the real love and concern.

*We'Wha, from Zuni, New Mexico, came to the Smithsonian in 1890 to demonstrate Zuni-style weaving. She uses a European-style reed heddle on her belt loom.*

*Zuni turquoise worker drilling holes in beads to be strung and then rounded on the stone slab in front of him.*

