



"I'm not old . . . just been here a long time," quipped the 80-year-old Appalachian potter, Cheever Meaders indicating that his vitality was more significant than his age. The comment has interesting implications when applied to cultural traditions. The artifacts and folkways of societies around the globe have been collected, cataloged, analyzed, exhibited, and studied for centuries by scholars attached to museums and universities. An incidental result of these activities is that the material, once removed from its context, scrutinized and exhibited in cultural centers, becomes enshrouded in a mystique best described by a collection of adjectives—rare, exotic, exclusive, invaluable. The sum total is an air of the exquisite not intended by the scholar but perhaps encouraged by the dealer and collector. In fact, the item, be it a song, dance, or a tangible object, takes on the values of the society which has collected it rather than those of the society which produced it. Vitality, if it still accrues to the material, takes a back seat to that venerable quality, age.

To exhibit the vitality of today's continuing folk traditions, the Festival of American Folklife was established in 1967 by Secretary Ripley as a living museum program. The event attempts to present folk cultural material with reference to the context in which the traditions have flourished, existed, or simply survived.

This summer's Festival is the first to include all four areas planned for the Bicentennial: Working Americans, represented by the construction trade unions; Native Americans from the Northern Plains; Regional Americans from the Commonwealth of Kentucky; and Old Ways in the New World bring-

ing together Americans of Serbian and Croatian descent with Serbs and Croatians from Yugoslavia; also in the "old ways" area, British and Irish musicians join Anglo-Scots-Irish fiddlers, ballad singers, and dancers.

It is not only the strength of the traditions that we celebrate but the vitality of the tradition bearers. In concerts, workshops, and panel discussions, and in one-to-one exchanges with visitors to the event, the artists and craftsmen speak for the meaning and for the product of their skills.

We invite you to participate in this celebration by posing questions to participants at their worksites or during discussion programs. Join in a kolo with American and Yugoslav Serbians and Croatians, or take part in a Kentucky running set or square dance. In the Native American area you can participate in quilt and shawl making workshops and in the Working Americans area you can learn to make paint brushes. Fiddlers from across the nation are invited to sign up for the Fiddler's Convention, and if all of these fail to lure you, try some Kentucky barbecued chicken and join with the gospel or Southern Harmony singers.

*Ralph Rinzler
Festival Director*