



# It's a Small World

by S. Dillon Ripley  
Secretary, Smithsonian Institution

This year's Festival is aptly delineated in a word coined by Horace Walpole (1717-1797) to name the happy discoveries one often makes unintentionally while in pursuit of another seemingly unrelated goal. Derived from an Iranian fairytale of three Sri Lankan princes who continually discover, by chance or by wit, things for which they were not searching, "serendipity" (from Serendip, an old name for Ceylon or Sri Lanka) describes the creative connections that have come to light among this year's four apparently unrelated Festival programs: French and French-American traditions, New Jersey traditions, the Folklife of Flight, and the National Heritage Awards of the National Endowment for the Arts.

A moment's reflection by those with an historical eye will trace the link between France and New Jersey through the 200th anniversary of the Treaty of Paris which formally brought the American Revolutionary War to conclusion and which was ratified by the Continental Congress then meeting in Princeton. On a similar historical trajectory, one's mind surveys the span between the culture of present-day American aviation workers and the beginnings of manned flight two hundred years ago in France in the balloon of the Montgolfier brothers. And the final link to be discovered among the programs – one which truly turned up like a treasure to a royal Sri Lankan personage on a quest – is Dewey Williams, a National heritage Award winner from Alabama, who makes a yearly journey northward to lend his voice and spirit to an annual celebration of the continuing cultural ties that connect his community in the South with some of its members who have relocated in New Jersey.

Dewey Williams' festive community celebration, together with a re-created Montgolfier balloon, French and French-American performers and craftspeople, New Jerseyans who keep the rich traditions of their state, and present-day aviation workers will, I feel sure, uncover for you even more delightful serendipities during your visit to the 1983 Festival of American Folklife.