

Judy McCulloh: JM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

TW: This is Tracie Wilson in Champaign-Urbana interviewing Judy McCulloh in her house on Oregon. Alright well my first question is, how did you become interested in traditional music? I know we talked about that a little bit the last time I met you, and I'm sure it's something that might not be that simple to answer.

JM: Well the big jump came during the so-called "Folk Revival." I had gone to junior college, Cottey College in Nevada Missouri. Where my English composition teacher, Joan Miller, was becoming interested in folk song and folk music, and introduced us into recordings of Burl Ives and Dyer-Bennett and things like that. From there, I bought a few recordings, LPs back in the old days, and kept getting closer and closer to original sound of folk. I may have told you this, but I remember when Richard Dyer-Bennett came to Nevada, Missouri to give a concert he introduced the program by saying, 'I need to make a distinction, there are folksingers and there are singers of folksongs. I am a singer of folksongs.' And I thought, "Wow, an epiphany!" So, I realized that what I had first heard that my English teachers LPs were singers of folksong, and what I became more curious about the folksingers themselves from which these songs came. So I started buying Folkways records and Prestige, International, Kenny Goldstein was putting out some recordings not too long after that. I forget if he was already putting them out, the Folkways, Stinson was around, Asch Records some of those, and gradually accumulated a library. But I hadn't heard too much when I was growing up, I never put a label to it. My mom sang maybe two songs at home, and that was about it. Church-style turns out to be something of a traditional style, unaccompanied four-part singing, related to Amish-Mennonite singing, German as well as in English actually at the same time, depending on what your first language was. But I never thought of that as anything unusual because it was all around.

TW: Is your family German?

JM: My four grandparents were born in Germany, and my folks spoke German when they were little and went to school. My mom says when she was in Sunday school when she was little, they used to teach the kids German, so when they grew up and went upstairs to hear the sermon, they could understand the sermon, which was still in German. Gradually as the first generation died off, the next generation were mainly English speakers, and the sermons and hymnals gradually went into English only, not this whole dual language thing.

TW: Do you know what part of Germany your family came from?

JM: They were mainly, roughly southwest around Stuttgart up in the area called Kraichgau near Gemmingen. Before that they had come from Switzerland, from Berne, south of Berne, and they were some of the early Mennonites who were persecuted there and got kicked out. A pretty bloody affair back then. That batch fled up into Holland and then over to Pennsylvania, that route, but they came up into southern Germany, and then pretty directly to the Midwest.

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TW: And what was the name of the town the, you said your family, you went to school in Missouri?

JM: Oh that was college, that was in Nevada, Missouri and that was Cottey College sponsored by the PEO Sisterhood, which I suspect, although they claim it's a big secret, I suspect it stands for 'Philanthropic Educational Organization' at least that would fit their mission.

TW: What part of the state is that?

JM: It's, let's see, it's on the west side not far from the Kansas border because we used to take bus trips up to the Kansas City Philharmonic, maybe a couple of hours. It was pretty much straight south of Kansas.

TW: I'm from Missouri and I don't know that part of the state very well.

JM: Oh, are you?

TW: I'm from Ste. Genevieve, Missouri, in the eastern part of the state.

JM: That's French country.

TW: Yeah, but my family's mostly German, too. So that was the 50s?

JW: That was, let's see, I went there in '52-'54 I was in Missouri. I graduated in '54, that was a long time ago.

TW: But your interest continued after that?

JM: Yes, it did. And I had the chance to hear a few people live from both categories, folksingers and singers of folksong. I remember when I was in Ohio after that Pete Seeger came through and it was a rather unusual concert because he was up against the House of Un-American Activities Committee, in those days. He didn't get around too often.

TW: So you went to school in Ohio after that?

JM: From Missouri I went to Ohio Wesleyan for two years, got my BA there. And then when to Ohio State, got an MA in English in '57. then started a doctorate in Middle English, Old English that sort of stuff and got a Fulbright for '58-'59 to go to Belgium to study Sanskrit, which tied in with what I was doing. Now in the spring before, the Ohio Folklore Society had a meeting in Columbus, and a fellow named Richard Dorson came over to give a talk and he brought with him a musical group. I think it was Ellen Stekert

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and Bruce Buckley and maybe Joe Hickerson, and part of that, people like that would have come over, and I can't remember specifically without looking it up. But he said, 'Oh, this summer there's going to be a folklore institute at Indiana. It's two weeks long, and a lot of good people are gonna show up, you all should come.' So I thought, I've got a free summer before I've gotta get on the boat and go off to Belgium, so I went to Indiana and just fell in love with everything that people were doing there. It was the most incredible mixture of people, there were utter amateurs who knew nothing, they were interpreters, they know that; there were people who were doing research, people who had been writing for decades. Archer Taylor was there, Vance Randolph came, Catherine [Lua-mella] came from Hawaii. Just wonderful people, and then a lot of students at different levels, they had a smattering of knowledge which is what I would say I had at that point. Everybody was equal, there was no sense of rank or status or privilege there. It was just one big family with everyone interested in tradition. And it was so unusual, so unlike the academic departments where you are constantly watching over your shoulder to see if someone is going to steal your dissertation topic, and write it up before you get there, that kind of thing. Suddenly the world's, the intellectual world, is wide open. Anyways, I was there for the summer and then went off to Belgium, and instead of going back to Ohio State, and back into English, I instead came to Indiana and started on a Ph.D program there, got through, graduated and that was that.

TW: Interesting, Dorson has a reputation of not liking folk music that much.

JM: Oh he didn't understand it, he was tone deaf. Because he didn't do anything with music, he assumed that nobody else could do anything with music either. And he could make life miserable for anybody interested in music. I mean, Neil Rosenberg, who's book we just saw the first copy of there, was doing his doctorate work down there wanted to write about the music scene over at Bean Blossom where Bill Monroe had his festival and his jamboree. Neil was doing incredible first-hand research; he was playing in the house band and running things for a while. And Dorson said 'No, no, this is not a true topic. Thou shalt write on parrot jokes.' Or some such thing, and Neil had to do his dissertation on something like parrot jokes or some stupid thing.

TW: So, what did he do in the end?

JM: In the end he got his degree writing on something that was non-musical and started teaching up at Newfoundland where he finished his history of bluegrass. As he said, it gives you perspective to be up there and listening to Newfoundland, so he more than overcame the challenge of trying to work with Dorson. I got through only because my real advisor was George List, who came out of the music school down there, who directed the archives for many years. He had managed to get a number of grants, and this is something that Dorson respected.

TW: (laughter), yes.

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JM: You know, money talks. And he thought, 'You know, this is a power player, so be nice to him.' I'm sure that's the only reason I got through. Mayne Smith wrote his masters on bluegrass with Alan Merriam, an anthropologist down there, an ethnomusicologist, you know, world renowned. Dorson gave them so much grief over that that Merriam swore off ever working with any folklore student ever again.

TW: That's too bad.

JM: Dorson's mind was not as open as it might have been and his tolerance was not as wide as it might have been. I remember when I was there the first day when all the folklore students gathered, we could then fit around a library table on the third floor of the old library. There weren't very many of us. And Ellen Stekert was there, we were sharing a house out on South Rogers Street. And she had made a mark as a singer of folksongs, and she had done some collecting, and by that time she had made a record or two. She had a lovely voice, had a long braid down her back. And I remember he looked around the room and he said, "Now, we're students of folklore. And we're going to be respectable, we're going to be respected, we're going to make the field respected. We are going to act the part," and he says, looking at her, "there will be no long-haired singers of folksongs in this folklore program."

TW: Hmm, but she stayed right?

JM: She stayed long enough to get her masters and then she went to Penn. She just cleared out and got her degree from Penn then. See, he could make life pretty interesting for people and not too happy. You know, there are a lot of Dorson legends, and it may be kinder not to repeat too many of them. But those I know firsthand.

TW: My next question then is, how did you end up at the University of Illinois?

JM: I was trying to finish my coursework in folklore, and I had some required courses to take yet. And we got married in '61, and this was the closest he could get a job. So we were commuting our first year, and I had to stay at Indiana and finish up some coursework which Dorson was teaching. So, the beginning of the school year, I went to see him because I could find any of the courses scheduled anywhere. And he said, "Oh, I decided not to teach those until next summer." So, there I was, and there we were commuting. So, it was an excellent department as it turned out for Leon, so we stayed here. And eventually that's where I met Archie and got involved in the folksong club. And this was before interstates, so we'd trundle back and forth every weekend either going one way or the other way. We knew all those little towns and cafés.

TW: It was probably more interesting to travel that way.

JM: Well, yes.

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TW: So, did you meet your husband in Bloomington?

JM: I met him in Ohio, back when I was at Ohio Wesleyan, he was actually a year ahead of me there. And he later went to Ohio State, a year ahead of me. We kind of kept track over the years, and we got along pretty well so we decided we might as well make it permanent. So, we did, and it's been a while.

TW: That's great that the move here worked out.

JM: Oh yeah, it actually worked out very well. Who could predict!

TW: So, how did you get involved with the Campus Folksong Club? Do you remember how that came about?

JM: Not specifically. But I know that there were folk sings, some in the basement of Channing Murray, a place called the Red Herring, it was like a coffee house sort of place.

TW: There is still something there.

JM: I think there is something, I haven't been there in quite some time. They used to gather there, when they grew out of that space the group that got together and took turns singing and playing at each other for whatever audience might show up. They started booking some of the larger halls like Lincoln Hall, Greg Hall, and would get together there once a month, something like that. And you'd see posters around, 'Folk Sing. Come, sing, get on the program.' We were never on the program, but we started going to the folk sings. And since Archie was brought in as the faculty advisor, every group on campus had to have a faculty advisor. You know how Archie is, you can't not get drawn into it. And so everybody, we became part of the steady people who didn't graduate and move on. So it was probably a combination of the folk sings happening, and Archie corraling everybody he could for the cause.

TW: Right, do you remember meeting him?

JM: I had met him before, because he had come down to Indiana. And when he was coming through doing research for his, I want to say it was his book *Only a Miner*, which was first his dissertation and then he added two or three chapters when he turned it into a book, which is the first book in the music series. And this is maybe book 135, the one I just showed you. Archie claims he named that series, *Music in American Life*, and who am I to say 'no,' I don't know, I'll give Archie credit for just about anything. So, where was I going with that?

TW: Oh, I was just asking how you met him?

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JM: Oh, right well he came through and I think he slept on our floor, of this little house we had on South Rogers. And he knew Ellen more than he knew me, probably because she had been out doing some collecting herself and was known as a singer. And so I was just there, and got to meet him. But he would have been, he tended just to pick up and travel around and interview people. Incredible work, actually.

TW: And he was here at that time, or was he somewhere else?

JM: He had come here at the invitation of Martin Wagner who was then director of the ILIR Labor Institute. And went to school here, got his masters in library science, so he was here for a while. Then he tried to break into the folklore crowd, and get papers and published and what not, and he said he kept running into this opposition of disdain. People would say, "But you don't have your Ph.D, how could you possibly know anything about folklore?" Well he had done more work than most of those people had, and eventually he left here and went to Penn and got his degree there, and wrote the dissertation on coal mining songs, which eventually turned into the book *Only a Miner*. And so he was around as long as I can remember.

TW: So, before you came here, he was here?

JM: It could have been. I'll have to check notes about when he did, but he very well could have been.

TW: It sounds like, what he told me is that he came here, did his masters degree in like a year or something, and then maybe went back briefly to San Francisco, and then they came here.

JM: I'm not sure maybe Louanne and the kids were not here the first time, that's possible. I'm not too sure of his movements, but I have the impression that maybe he was here by himself when he got his masters, and then went back and brought the family, because once they were here and the folksong club was putting on concerts, it was always Archie's house that was open afterwards. And Louanne would just put food out, and people would bring food, and it was not fancy at all, but it was just so friendly and so hospitable, and just another chance for people from the campus and people from the town and people who were brought in to perform. It was just like the folklore institute at Indiana when I first went there, it was a wonderful atmosphere, the breaking down of barriers.

TW: So, you think that kind of breaking down between town and university was present at Indiana as well, when you were first there?

JM: No, because there wasn't such a group as the folksong club. They did develop a club later, but that was after I left so I can't speak to that. But in terms of the folklore institute, I don't know how much there was from town.

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TW: Oh, you're talking about the summer institute?

JM: Yeah, and otherwise there wasn't that much give and take. Some of us went out to listen to people play, and some went out to play with people who played in the countryside. And then went to square dances where the fiddler played and that sort of thing. But I don't have any sense that there was a kind of breaking down of barriers at Indiana through the regular year, in the regular course of things as there was here.

TW: But here you think that was a really strong force?

JM: Oh yeah, it was highly unusual and it was an incredible thing to have happen. And partly it was Archie's democratic spirit too. He wasn't going to pull status on anybody, the first thing he does is he comes in your house and he takes his shoes off. You know he feels at home. He'll take his tie off, even though he rarely wears a tie; he'd take his jacket off, loosen his collar, sometimes he'd take his socks off. (laughter) I'd think 'Alright, be comfortable.'

TW: So, was there this involvement from the local community, was that something that evolved, or was it there from the beginning?

JM: It had to evolve, and people from the community who were there had to be discovered, as it were, and brought in. Archie took an ad over to the *Daily Illini* once for a concert or a folk sing or something, and I've heard it two ways, one he either met one of the printers over there, or someone said "Oh, there's this guy, he's a printer for the *DI*, who is a musician from southern Illinois." Anyway, Archie met Lyle Mayfield who's down from Greenville on old Route 40 towards St. Louis, and discovered that he and his wife were traditional musicians from down there, who also played some popular stuff, like 40s and 50s songs. They played the whole gamut, whatever people wanted to hear, which is how it usually is, as you know. And so he said, "Come pick a few songs at the folk sing." And Lyle at first thought, 'These college kids are just gonna ridicule us hillbillies.' But he came and everybody made over them, and they just got taken in. And you'd hear about somebody living up here on Hickory in Urbana, who was an old time singer. And somebody went to visit and said, "You know, you can really sing some great songs, why don't you come sing with the folk sing?" and so that person would show up. And then Lyle knew an old time fiddler, Stelle Elam, and she played fiddle down near Greenville, and he brought her up one time, and she came out. They were very well-received because what counted was the music; and it wasn't the status or the race or the economic status or the political persuasion. If they had started talking politics, it would have been sparks, I'm sure.

TW: And you don't remember that happening?

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JM: No, and people were pretty careful I think, too. They just let the love of music bring them together. It was a very democratic effort, unusual for the campus I would think.

TW: Sounds like it.

JM: Yeah, well I was gonna say, some of Archie's efforts, well there was a little newsletter, and Fritz, I think was editor for a while.

TW: The *Autoharp*?

JM: Yes, yep, the *Autoharp* and Ron Foreman did reviews of blues and jazz records, and other people would review other things. People would write reviews of concerts, recordings, it would be previews of coming attractions. It was just run off a little mast head, I've got it somewhere. It was just run off a little I want to say, Ditto machine, or Mimeo machine, and then stapled and stuck in campus mail, and then out it went.

TW: So, who printed those?

JM: I'm not sure they were professionally printed, they may have been. Archie kind of schlepped a lot of stuff from the Labor Institute, so I'm not sure exactly where those things were printed.

TW: Huh. I didn't think to ask that.

JM: Yeah, and I, frankly, don't remember, because I wasn't involved with that. I got more involved with recordings that the folksong club put out. Not the first one, not the first one, which was the Philo Glee & Mandolin Society. Have you talked to Doyle Moore?

TW: Not yet, I'm hoping to soon. I talked to him on the phone briefly.

JM: Yeah, you need to do that because he was one of the members of the PGMS. That came out first, and then there was field recordings from central and southern Illinois with the Mayfields, Stelle Elam, and some other people who were around here. And then the third one was Glenn Ohrlin the cowboy rodeo guy who came through here, and really ran on to the Ozark Folk Festival, it was in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, I can't remember if it was called the Ozark Folk Festival. Archie describes the scene of Harry Glenson, late at night, his haunting cowboy song would send chills up his bones. And typical Archie struck up conversation, and we invited him up to give a concert, and he gave one at Purdue en route, which was his first college concert. And then came here, and recorded the concert; most of the record was from here, with maybe a cut or two from Purdue.

TW: So the album...



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JM: It's called "The Hell-Bound Train"

TW: ...was recorded here?

JM: I believe it was. I want to say it was.

TW: So, Archie heard him playing at a festival in the Ozarks?

JM: Yeah, because Glenn had gone down there, he was a cowboy, and he wanted some land where he could run cattle. And they had pretty cheap land in Stone County, Arkansas, where this Jimmy Driftwood, a name you might know, he lived near there. And they still had open range, and so Glenn bought him some acreage and some cattle, and pretty much lived hand-to-mouth. But he would pick up a few extra dollars singing places. He was very good, he would paint signs with poster paint on storefront windows saying, "Rodeo coming to town!" and he would put the title and there was great animated bucking horses and riders. He was a wonderful artist, really a creative guy. So, he'd pick up a few bucks that way, and he'd live by his wits pretty much. And so he came up here and he said, somebody asked him, I think it was Roger Ebert who reviewed that concert, when he was here. I'm not sure if it was Roger who quoted this, but he said, "Glenn, are you nervous giving a concert at a college?" And a real iconic guy, he says, "No, after falling off bucking broncos, I can't get too hurt falling off a chair." And he just came out with his guitar and his hat, just all by himself, and he just mesmerized everyone. Told stories, yeah, he's good.

TW: He still lives down there doesn't he?

JM: Yes, he does. He's still down there.

TW: Because I just came across something about him on the web at the cowboy poetry gathering.

JM: Yeah, he's been invited out to the Elko thing a few times already because like many cowboys, he's written many songs. And he's gathered, he's a natural folklorist. I mean he was gathering songs before we ever met him, and we persuaded him to pick his hundred favorite songs and a few stories and write them down, and talk about them.

TW: So you worked on a book with him?

JM: Yeah, that was that book, also called "The Hell-Bound Train" which very closely followed Archie's in the series.

TW: That's great, I'll have to look at it more carefully.

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JM: Oh yeah, it's out of print now, but it's a great book. It went into paperback, lasted quite a long time.

TW: Let's see. What role did the club play at the U of I?

JM: Well, it was this democratizing role I would say. And it obviously had huge entertainment value. And it was a participatory group, an opportunity for students to make music, to hear music, to learn about music, to get involved in the mechanics of running an organization to the extent that there were committees and somebody had to chair the committee. I remember Archie went into somebody one time, who was not used to governance procedures, let alone governance language, and the student was telling somebody "Oh, I'm involved with the Folksong club, and I rule over such and such a committee." And Archie says, "You do not *rule* over a committee." He may chair a committee, but that's it. So Archie, he was coaching all the time, and he was teaching life lessons that I'm sure people had no idea what he was teaching them. And yet you run into some of the students who were in the club, you know, years later, and they still think back on that experience as something formant too. And I think it was Archie's example of what could be done, when people work together for a common good, or a common cause. So I would say that was a very major contribution that the folksong club made to this campus and to the community because it did pull in people from all those realms without a sense of prejudice or hierarchy.

TW: So did the political climate of the 1960s have an impact on the club and how its members perceived themselves? Was that a component at all?

JM: I don't remember it as a major component, I think by the time Vietnam came along, the folksong club was easing out of its prominence. And that happened when rock and roll became more prominent, and students who were not committed to traditional sounds, or doing anything with them, kind of shifted their allegiance over to rock. And membership in the club fell, and after a while it was not really viable anymore and disbanded. I don't remember that it was a huge political organization at the time; people could have expressed themselves in song, politically, and I don't think that would have been frowned upon, I have no memory of anybody getting very agitated about that. But I associate, for example, Archie's strategies in striking the anti-war on campus, that was a slightly later period.

TW: I see, so '67 maybe '68?

JM: Yeah, around in there somewhere.

TW: When would you sort of say was the heyday of the campus folksong club?

JM: Oh, I'd say in the mid-sixties. '63, 4, 5 yeah, around in there. At least to my memory.

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TW: That sounds about right. I was just looking at *Autoharp*, and getting a sense of when it seemed like people were really contributing, and how often it was coming out.

JM: Yeah, that's a good measure.

TW: How would you describe the impact that your involvement in the club had on you then, and later?

JM: Oh then? Well let's see. I think what the club compelled me to do was to get involved in research that I had not planned to get involved with. Like writing notes for the two records made me learn more about local culture, local history, and more specific histories of the songs and tunes involved. Certainly I never thought very much about cowboy music, but made it a point to learn what I could about that, and started that part of my library. Archie grew up on cowboy stuff, with movies and being in the west and all. But around Peoria, Illinois you don't see too many cowboys, and we didn't go to movies, so I didn't have that exposure, so part of it was just learning about new things and also practice of getting stuff out, being productive in a tangible sense. That is, there was the little bibliography of Illinois folklore that I put together, and working on the two LPs, that was something I'd never done before. I don't think I got too involved in the concert arrangements, that tended to be handled by somebody else. The newsletter, I might have helped with a little bit but that was not in a major way. Kind of ferrying people around, because I knew some folklorists already, lecturers came in, and you could help explain to them what the club was about and be a facilitator in that sense. Although, I don't think I was ever at a microphone to do a public presentation. About as close as I got to a microphone was before one of the folk sings, I took my cylinder in, and some cylinders, you know the old Morning Glory Horn. I forget what I played or why I was doing this. [Side conversation away from recording device]

TW: In terms of sort of a long-term influence on you, were there some things that sort of stayed with you?

JM: I would say habits, and with Archie as a model for how things could be accomplished. Very good things could be accomplished with few resources and a little bit of imagination, and a lot of collaboration with other people is necessary. That was a huge model I think for everybody, I mean, I keep coming back to Archie, but people do, they keep coming back to Archie, which is why he got this whole big legend.

TW: Yeah, he seems like he's been an amazing influence on so many people.

JM: Well, he made everything seem worthwhile, it wasn't just a lot of fun and frills. I mean there was fun, and there were some light moments, but I think we all had the sense that what we were doing counted for something. It was really important to do it, and the people we were working with, whether town, gown whatever, everybody merited some

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attention for whatever reason. And I think for those students who were maybe a little elitist when they came here, that was a good corrective. And for those of us who didn't come out of an elite background, it was affirmation that we were worth something too, just like neighbors and friends. People came in to sing or to talk, again it was very democratic. Like Archie used to say, when he was lobbying for the Folklife Center, he went into some senator's office, and the senator said, "Professor Green, are you a conservative?" and Archie says, "Senator, I'm so conservative, I still believe in democracy." [Laughter] That was just classic, just great.

TW: Well, there are just a couple specific things I wanted to ask you about. One was about the *Music in American Life* series, I know we talked a little bit about it before, and I know, it sounds like it started back then.

JM: Yeah, now that's not the folksong club. We're switching gears here.

TW: I guess we are switching gears, but I guess since that's one of your major accomplishments.

JM: Yeah, I didn't actually start that.

TW: Oh really?

JM: I came in on the ground floor, but our former director, Dick Wentworth, had been director at LSU Press. He likes jazz a lot and he had published some jazz books down there. In fact I was just down in New Orleans, and people still remember his books, the *Danny Barker* book. So, when he came up here as associate director, he looked around and he saw that nobody was really doing American music, in the broadest sense. He proposed to the, then director, that he start a series which Archie claimed to name, because Archie was here then, this would have been around maybe '70 or so. And so he got permission to start the series called *Music in American Life*. And he did what you do when you start a series, you go out and sign up a dozen books or so and then you make a big hoo-ha announcement. And Archie's book had sort of been floating around and was sort of in limbo somewhere else, and Archie fetched it back. And what's published here is the first book; and it's really, in some ways, the best book in the series. In terms of visual appearance, just the richness of it and the import of it.

TW: Is it still in print?

JM: Just went out of print. Just recently went out of print. It was selling about two copies a year, and it came out in '72. That was the first book. And I did the index for that, so the Press kind of knew me from that. And manuscripts started coming in and Wentworth was kind of too over-busy, mainly because he was the history editor. So, he needed some help, and he mentioned this to Archie, and Archie said, 'Oh there's this woman in town and she just got her degree, she knows everybody and everything.' So

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Wentworth asks me if I'd be interested in coming to the Press to develop books in folklore and music. And I didn't have any other prospects. I'd run into the nepotism thing here because Leon was on the faculty, so there was no hope in the English department or anyplace else except part-time, low paid, last minute work to which I thought, 'Life is short, I don't think so.'

So I went over to, there was a half-time opening for a copy editor in the spring of '72, and I went for that. This was before we had to do affirmative action and all that, I just got hired and schlepped in that way, and pretty much acted as the editor-in-house for the series ever since then. So, I worked on Archie's book, I worked on Glenn Ohrlin's book, I copy-edited that. Jeff Titon's *Early Downhome Blues*, that was the first manuscript that I looked at when I walked in the Press, I just sat at a desk and went through and made notes on it. So, my involvement with that started officially at the Press in February '72 and lasted until May 15, 2007. So it was a little bit more than 35 years. There's a hundred and thirty-some books out and *The Music of Bill Monroe*, Neil Rosenberg and Charles Wolfe is the most recent one.

TW: Are there several others that are still...

JM: Yeah, there are some. There are some in the works, I'll get copies of them when they come out. This came over the weekend while I was away, so I was very happy to see it. It's not officially published yet, because books don't get published until maybe six to eight weeks after they appear. I mean, you have to get them into the warehouse and log them in, get their reviews copies out, so when their reviews do come out, you have to plan everything ahead of time, all the publicity.

TW: So how did you do...had you had much editing experience before that?

JM: No, no, not really. I had edited a little newsletter down at Indiana the Archives, called *The Folklore and Folk Music Archivist*. That was maybe a four pager, a six-pager, not very much. All I did there was solicit, check the language check the verses. It was honest editorial work, but I had never done anything that major. Book editing, that was a little bit different, so I just read the Chicago manual at night and looked at how other people proofed and marked manuscripts to see how they did it, and I went forth and did likewise. It's not hard if you have a basic sense for language, and I think I do. And it comes with practice. Now everything's edited on screen, it comes in on disk. [conversation about flipping tape over]. So now everything's edited on disk now.

TW: Oh really?

JM: You see the copy editors with the manuscripts on the screen, and they can type in queries, and do their suggested editing in a different type face or in a different color. And that's printed out, and the author looks that over, and they resolve all the queries, and then the copy editor goes in and zaps out all the stuff that doesn't belong there anymore. So you wind up with a nice pristine disk, which then goes to the designer and then to

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production, and then to the printer and so fourth. So, it's quite different now, I'd have to learn new skills. I did some copy editing for about ten years and then got full-time into acquisitions, which is what I had gone there to do in the beginning. And copy edited maybe one or two books that were very special later on, like the Hank Snow book, I wanted to keep his language which is very distinctive. He's from Nova Scotia and had kind of interesting turns of phrase that might have got evened out if a standard grammarian type had gotten loose on. So, that I did.

He was said to be prickly although I never had any problem working with him. He was really great to work with. And then I got to present the book to him on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry when he was performing one night. Yeah, that was a lot of fun. Yeah, he seemed to like it.

TW: So, was it hard to work with some authors?

JM: Oh, there are some that fall into an easy pattern quicker than others do. Some it's a matter of teaching every single step of the way, why you do something this way, why you don't do that, and what you need to have in, and don't forget now, and you can't do it with all your permissions in hand. And so yeah, some are harder to work with, some are easier to work with. It's a cross section of people, but at least everybody is pretty good; because they know in the long run they want the book out, and it's just going to be a little bit smoother if they understand how things work at our end.

TW: So, your involvement with the whole U of I press really followed the folksong club.

JM: Yes, because the club was really out of it, by the time I finished my degree which was in '70, and started looking around what to do. [Door opening] Whoops, well here comes Leon. This is Leon, this is Tracie. This is the maker of the friendship bread.

TW: Well, it's very good. Bye. [Door closes, exit sounds]. Wow, so you moved here in '63?

JM: Yeah, I got married in '61 and we came over in '62 and we lived in a sabbatical house, and bought this place in '63. So, it's got some age on it, the mortgage is paid off. The house is falling apart, or it was. We spent our life savings trying to fix it up again.

TW: Well, this part looks good.

JM: Yeah well, you don't see the boxes inside.

TW: (laughter). Well, one other thing I wanted to ask you, just something I was thinking of. My parents actually have a house in Arkansas, not too far from where I think Glenn Ohrlin is, and I was considering trying to get in touch with him. I was just wondering if you think he would be receptive, or if that would be bothering him a lot?

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JM: Well, the worst he can do is say no.

TW: Yeah, that's true.

JM: He's in Mountain View, that's out in the country. If you look up the town.

TW: There's a lot of folk music activity around there.

JM: Yeah, that's a whole kettle of fish too because there have been factions. And you know Glenn can, you know if he wants to, he can tell you a lot. But he might or might not want to. And the way Jimmy Driftwood, he was part of a faction, and the Bill McNeil, who was the folklorist at the Folklife, that was our folk center for a long time, which apparently just closed in the collections are going elsewhere, and it's just strange.

No, he got along with people who didn't get along with other people. People would come into the area who were not from there and would want to sing or want to do things, and get driven out again by Driftwood or some other faction. And then you had Arkansas state politics getting involved with funding for the folk center. You know parks and recreation whatever it was, I think they put some money in, some other people put some money in. I remember one time we were down there and Jimmy Driftwood said they were thinking of building some kind of a center for folklore and folk music down here, and we need some specs for an archive and a library, you know, could you help us out with that? And I think Doyle was down there too. And we came up with a lot of detail, you need this room for reception, this room and this equipment, and you need shelving, you need climate, and all this stuff. And we sent this packet of stuff off, and never heard boo, not even 'We got it' let alone 'Thank you.' And then time went by, and next thing we knew they're building this center with a little archive. And I have not seen it so I don't know how close it is.

TW: Really? I was there a couple of years ago, very briefly just for a couple hours.

JM: Oh, was Bill McNeil there, do you know?

TW: Yeah, I think he was. Yeah, I was doing some research in southern Indiana, on traditional fiddlers and ran into some rivalries. I guess it's inevitable, it's human nature. Well, I guess another component of my question about Glenn Ohrlin is, my project is focused on the folksong club and I know that he was a performer for them and I know that you collaborated on a couple of projects. Would he be enough of a component to merit talking to? I mean, I know that he merits an interview in his own right.

JM: What would be interesting with Glenn would be the perspective of somebody from the folk community. And we ran into this when Neil Rosenberg was editing *Transforming Tradition*, which was a collection of essays about the revival, it was all from the perspective of outsiders discovering others, recording them, appropriating their music, performing it, whatever. And I said, can't you get some quotes, at least, from the

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folk, to balance this out. Like, what is it that we're transforming, when we say transforming tradition? And I told him that story about Glenn's quip about falling off the chair versus falling off a horse, and that kind of comment from people who have been brought forward and put out to the public, that kind of comment is very hard to come by. So, anything you can do to flush that out. Like, when Glenn was singing at this Outdoors at Night festival, after the festival proper performance in Eureka Springs, and Archie went up to him, what did he think? I mean this funny little guy is coming up and talking to him about cowboys songs, and I think he had sang "On a Hell-Bound Train" and it just sent shivers through you because it was kind of dark and moonlit and kind of spooky anyway. And what did Glenn think when he got invited to come to do a concert on a college campus. His first experience would have been at Purdue, as I said, and this was the main one that he came for. And later he was at the Chicago Folk Festival. What was it like? What did he think about the students? What did he think about the way he was received? Music, stories, himself as a person, what did he think about all that? And what did he take away from the experience? Because obviously, even though he traveled here, we were intruding into his life.

TW: Yeah, that's interesting in the whole process of being put on stage and sought after.

JM: Yeah, and then the record came out and he became a known quantity. And he got other college gigs, and he went out to the cowboy poetry gathering, and he's been different places. Does he see that as a fleeting thing? That his life doesn't go in that direction anymore? And was that attention dependent on the strength of the revival, you know, the presence of those of us who were around at that time, and went beyond that period. And what did his neighbors think, when he was doing all this stuff? We just don't know. If we could just ask questions like that, of everybody who's ever been stuck onto a stage, I think that would be absolutely fascinating. And might set some of us back a step or two, because we might think we're doing the right thing, but are we doing the right thing?

TW: Yeah, it's hard to know. They mentioned on the website for the Cowboy Poetry Gathering, that he had also received a Natural Heritage Award.

JM: Yeah, it was one of the NEA Folk Arts Heritage awards.

TW: So, I'm sure this was all part of that later recognition.

JM: Yeah, probably wouldn't have happened without, that is the folksong revival gave credentials to people, and the folksong club was part of that for whatever purpose somebody wanted to make of credentials. Like I can make some extra money if I do this concert, and then I can say "Well, I was at Illinois, and that's mecca, so you can hire me too, and here's my fee, and here's when I can come." Or "They loved me there, are you sure you don't want to do a recording of me?" And what kind of deal can you cut. I mean it gave people some arguing space if they wanted to use it, but if they didn't, they



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didn't have to. But we don't know a lot of those answers which I think is a failing in a way. As democratic as the folksong club was, in a way it was self-centered, in that sense that we thought we were doing the right thing and we knew what the right thing was. And we tried to be responsible, but in retrospect you just don't know.

TW: Also, it would be interesting to talk some of the other musicians, maybe even more local people. I don't know how many of them are still around, and I don't know how to go about tracking them down.

JM: Lyle and Doris would be down in Greenville, 420 Trindall Ave. And Greenville is just off of old Route 40. Or what is that interstate? It would be I-70 maybe? Goes down to St. Louis? 70 parallels 40, yeah that would be there. Now, they're still down there as far as I know. Stelle Elam's gone. The Goodwins are gone. Cathy Reynolds might still be singing down there somewhere. She and her husband did gospel. She had an incredible voice, oh my goodness. Just over and out, just a huge, powerful, wonderful voice.

TW: And she's on the *Green Fields of Illinois* as well?

JM: Yeah.

TW: Just wondering, did the name have anything to do with Archie's last name?

JM: No, there was this fiddle tune called "Green Fields of America" and I can't remember if it was Stelle, Stelle played that tune, and I can't remember if she called it "Green Fields of Illinois" or if we just sprung the title to fit the recording. She (Cathy Reynolds) might be down there, and if anybody knew where she was, Lyle would know. I think I heard, in the last couple of years, she was observed to be singing in somebody's church, so it could be that she's still down there. But boy, did she have a voice.

TW: I remember some of the songs.

JM: Yeah, she did "Tramp on the Street." Lyle I think played mandolin for that. They just messed around, and old Thatcher Robinson had his tape recorder running, and they said 'Oh, let's do "Tramp on the Street"' and they just kind of launched into it, and they closed the album out with it.

TW: With that version?

JM: Oh yeah, it just meshed.

TW: So, do you remember how the idea to do albums came about?

JM: It was what you did. Because that's what people who got involved in the folk revival did. Kenny Goldstein was the master of that. And that was a way to get traditional

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sounds into the ears of people who might otherwise not hear them, and a venue for writing about the music and writing about the people who made it. It was a model for, if you're a scholarly society you have to have a journal because that's what they do. Well, we were putting on concerts and discovering traditional musicians, and that's what you do, you just put a record out.

TM: I actually came across a website dedicated to the *Green Fields of Illinois*, and it's by someone from the area who talks about how much he has been influenced by the album. And I emailed the guy to ask if he had been involved in the CFC at all, and he said not really, he was a high school student at the time, but he vaguely remembers going to some of the folk sings and hanging out in the back, and he doesn't really remember what he saw, but he was really influenced by the albums.

JM: Gosh, that's really something. Do you remember what his name was?

TW: David something. He told me to get in touch with somebody who's a professor here. I guess he was a high school friend of his at the time, but now I can't remember that last name. See, that's interesting too, just the kind of ripple affect and how the influence can remain. I don't know, I don't have anymore questions. Is there anything else having to do with the club that I might have missed that you think of as being important?

JM: Well, nothing much comes to mind that we haven't addressed at some point, I don't think. I don't think I've added anything specific to your...

TW: Oh no, but it's good to get other people's perspectives. I guess I'll just go ahead and shut it off.