As for myself, after two research trips in Fort Franklin and Fort Norman (in 1988 and 1989), I am learning about singing, drumming, dancing and playing in Denendeh, but I am also learning to appreciate a different way of thinking and of approaching life’s fundamental questions. Each culture has a unique way of dealing with the many facets of life and the exploration of this diversity will forever give ethnomusicological work its human and exciting dimensions.

Nicole Beaudry

Notes from the Field

With a Canada Research Fellowship (SSHRC) and a Standard Research Grant (SRC), I was able to undertake the study of the traditional music and games of the northern Athapaskan people, the Dene Indians of the Canadian Northwest Territories. The long-term program includes researching archival material from the Hudson’s Bay Company and from the Oblate missionaries, as well as the ethnographic literature on northern Athapaskans. But it especially entails fieldwork in the areas inhabited by the Mountain, Hare and Slavery Indians, that is, Fort Franklin on Great Bear Lake, Fort Norman and Fort Good Hope on the McKenzie River and Colville Lake, north of Great Bear Lake.

The music and the games of the Dene, never thoroughly studied before, are now, for the Dene themselves, a popular subject; these provide one of the ways of keeping in touch with genuine older traditions that they are proud of. And even though the drum dance songs are of sacred or spiritual origin, the drum dance itself is a greatly appreciated form of social gathering.

A Tribute to D. K. Wilgus

D. K. Wilgus, North America’s finest folksong scholar, died in Los Angeles on Christmas Day from complications following heart surgery. D. K., as he was always known, first came to prominence with his book, Anglo-American Folksong Scholarship Since 1898. It begins with the “Ballad War” about the origins of the ballads, and goes on to discuss the growth of folksong collecting in Britain and North America, describing and analyzing the major collectors and their books, and then outlines the major developments in folksong studies. Although it was published thirty years ago, no work since has presented as comprehensive and valuable a survey.

While teaching at Kentucky State University, D. K. collected many songs in the area and wrote numerous articles about them. He was record review editor of the Journal of American Folklore from 1959 to 1966, and during that time, reported on all the major traditional records produced in Britain and North America.

In 1962, D.K. left Kentucky to join the Folklore and Mythology Program of the University of California in Los Angeles. Over the next
year with tours planned for British Columbia in April, and Ontario in May; a busy folk festival season including their first appearance at Mariposa; the east coast in mid-summer and Manitoba and Saskatchewan in October.

The Cowboy Junkies' cover version of Tamarack's ballad “Mining for Gold” has sold a million copies world-wide as part of the Junkies’ “Trinity Session” album.

A CBC television special, “Tamarack on the Rideau,” is being aired nation-wide. Check your television listings for times.  

Sue Richards

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