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
twenty-five years, he inspired many generations of students with his love of folksongs.

He became deeply involved with Irish song, and made repeated visits to Ireland to research material in the archives. Up to that time, very few Anglo-Irish songs had been published. Meanwhile he was writing articles on various aspects of folk music. He was an authority on country and western music, and also on the comparatively new concept of the blues ballad.

For many years, D. K. and Eleanor Long have been working on a system of classifying ballads, and have given papers on it at international ballad conferences and meetings of the American Folksong Society. It is an elaborate method designed to overcome the weaknesses in the Laws classifications which overlap a great deal. Theirs makes it possible to compare any ballad with any other that shares common features.

D. K.'s death is a tremendous loss to folksong scholars all over the world. A fund has been established in his memory and those wishing to honour him may send cheques to the JEMC—Wilgus Memorial. The address is P.O. Box 83812, Los Angeles 90083, U.S.A.

Edith Fowke