

# TRANSMISSION



Terri Thompson and Neil Rosenberg at a local performance.

Photo by Rick West

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## INTRODUCTION By Kelly Roubo

This issue of *Transmission* was to have been published at the end of last semester, and it would have been lovely had that actually happened. But there is no need to explain why this became impossible, is there? The end of a semester is what it is, and while this issue might have made more sense in terms of closure at the year's end, there is no harm in stopping to take a look back at the year just passed. It seems to have been a year of globe-trotting, with occasional pauses for regrouping. Memorial University's Department of Folklore was well-represented by both professors and graduate students at several professional conferences this year despite the considerable distances that had to be traveled, and our numbers were noted by other attendees – as I discovered at the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society when a graduate student from Pennsylvania, on hearing I was from Memorial, remarked, “There are a lot of you guys here!” While this sort of attention may not be the ultimate purpose of attendance at conferences, it certainly is nice to have people sit up and take notice of our presence.

In addition to conference travel, there was plenty going on right here in St. John's as retirements, publications, and exams sent repeated ripples through the Folklore Department. Neil Rosenberg retired, much to the resigned regret of all, Cory Thorne (re-)joined us, and *Culture & Tradition's* editorial staff population experienced one of its periodic upheavals as members approach the inevitable point when it is time to make plans for moving on. Also, a significant portion of the department's graduate student population underwent that rite of passage known as comprehensive exams, but all seem to have emerged from the experience relatively unscathed (one presumes). I refer to the entire department here rather than just the graduate students because, regardless of which side of the table you occupy, we all go through it: readers, writers, partners, friends and secretarial staff most definitely included! Congratulations to all on passing and surviving, and thanks to each and every one for not “going postal” at the height of the stress.

In light of the hectic year – and word on the street seemed to point to last semester in particular as being inordinately maddening – this issue of *Transmission* takes on a reflective tone as it looks back over the events of the year just past and how these events lead us into a new year of activity and change. Articles about FSAC, ISCLR, AFS, the Department Mixer hosted by the Folklore Society in October, and the more recent celebration of Neil's retirement and forthcoming *festschrift* are included as part of this retrospective

approach. All of these point to the need to prepare for fast-approaching conferences, deadlines, calls for papers, and all the rest of the hustle and bustle that comprises the start of a new year. And so it goes.



Neil cuts the cake at his retirement party. Photo by McDavid.

## NEIL ROSENBERG RETIRES, FESTSCHRIFT FORTHCOMING By Kelly Roubo

As must happen periodically in any academic department, the time eventually arrives when a valued colleague and professor leaves his or her position in the university. Last fall, the Folklore Department at Memorial University gathered to celebrate with one of their own his passage into that *potentially* meeting- and bureaucracy-free time known as retirement.

On November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004, colleagues, students, fellow musicians, friends and family got together at the University Club in the Arts Annex and celebrated Neil Rosenberg's career of more than thirty years here at MUN, his contributions to the department and the discipline, and honored his achievements with a festive evening of food, music and congratulations. The bar was open, the drink was flowing, the food was abundant and it was an enjoyable event.

One of the highlights of the evening was a performance by Crooked Stovepipe, a band in which Neil has been playing for many years. Crooked Stovepipe includes Ted Rowe on guitar, Rex Yetman on mandolin, Pat Moran on fiddle, Dave Rowe on bass and, of course, Neil Rosenberg on banjo. They played a variety of selections from their repertoire, including folk songs from Newfoundland and away, bluegrass tunes, a Peter Narváez song, and tunes by such well-known artists as Ron Hynes and Bill Monroe. They also played songs from their forthcoming CD, which is untitled as of now.

During the course of the evening, Neil was presented with a variety of gifts from colleagues, friends and family, including fond messages from those who were

unable to attend, a lovely bouquet from family members and two beautiful pewter statues created by renowned artist Ray Cox. In addition to the gift of the two statues, called Two Kings, there was a commission for a third, which has yet to be done.

Possibly the biggest surprise of the evening for Rosenberg was the news that a *festschrift* in his honor was in the works. The book, titled *From Bean Blossom to Bannerman, Odyssey of a Folklorist: A Festschrift for Neil V. Rosenberg*, has been developing for some time and is being edited by Martin Lovelace, Peter Narváez and Diane Tye. The text is currently in the final editing stages and will go to press shortly, hopefully becoming available some time this semester.

Thanks for a great party and best wishes, Neil!



Peter Latta, Diane Tye and Holly Everett lift a glass together at Neil's retirement festivities. Photo by Jodi McDavid

## **DEADBEAT CLUB: ISCLR 2005**

By Ian Brodie

Many of you by now will have received the information about Perspectives on Contemporary Legend 2005, held this year at the University of Georgia in Athens, home to REM (and, for the angst-fearful, the B-52s). This is the annual hootenanny for the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research, abbreviated to ISCLR (pronounced "ISS-cler", to rhyme with "sister," is one really emphasised the first syllable, which is not how most people pronounce it, as in "Scissor Sisters," whose act seems a lot like the B-52s). Last year's conference was held in Aberystwyth, Wales: the adventures of that spree have been reviewed in the last issue of Transmission. Betwixt (and, dare I say, between) lost luggage, English food, and what started as a children's film until everyone got all nekkid, there were some

wonderful papers presented on that most nebulous of genres, the contemporary legend.

Memorial was well represented by three faculty members (Diane Goldstein, Philip Hiscock, and John Ashton from Sir Wilfred Grenfell) and six graduate students (Kelly Roubo, Jon Lee, Rhiannon McKechnie, Anne Lafferty, Julie LeBlanc, and your humble narrator), in addition to the larger Memorial diaspora. Corner them at some future function and ask them about their papers: space does not permit at this moment. Outside of the home team, papers ranged from rumours of street gangs in the Netherlands (Peter Burger), to anime (Bill Ellis), Betty Crocker (Kirsten Hardie), Maltese political history (George Mifsud-Chircop), and body modification (Elissa Henken).

Henken is the host for this year: her work on contemporary legends about sexuality among adolescents is nicely summarised in her book *"Did You Hear About the Girl Who ...? Contemporary Legends, Folklore, & Human Sexuality"*. Given that many of the informants for her research are her students at UG, one may walk around this sleepy southern town and revel at what lies beneath ("Boys in bikinis / Girls on surfboards" *Rock Lobster*, 1979).

One of the benefits of ISCLR attendance, and one of the reasons why students should seriously think about attending, is that it is a small group of scholars from all over the world. There are no concurrent panels, and many attendees have personal policies about never skipping a paper, so it is an opportunity for one to present and have some of the "big names" in folklore actually sit and listen to you. (Granted this can also be scrotum-tighteningly terrifying, but such is the price of academe.) As far as conference attending is as much about building networks as it is about hearing new ideas, you will have few opportunities to be in close contact with peers and mucky-mucks from around the world. FSAC will do it for Canada; AFS is too large to network easily. Only at ISCLR conferences could one borrow Jan Harold Brunvand's wife's shoes. (For the record, I didn't, but I could have, which is my point.) ISCLR, as a policy, alternates their meetings between Eastern and Western hemispheres, with attendees reflective of such. In Corner Brook 2003, I received positive feedback from Elaine Lawless, editor of *Journal of American Folklore*: at Aberystwyth, it was Gillian Bennett, editor of *Folklore*: one schmoozes with the playas at ISCLR.

So roam if you want to, verily, roam around the world. Nevertheless, consider ISCLR for your future contemporary legend paper presenting needs, and

discover how contemporary legend extends beyond spiders in the beehive.

*Trivia question: What bomber-plane is Georgian slang for a beehive hairdo?*



**Ruins in Aberystwyth, Wales, site of exotic ISCLR 2004**  
Photo by Ian Brodie

#### **FOLKLORE STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF CANADA.** By Jodi McDavid

The upcoming Folklore Studies Association of Canada (FSAC) meeting will be at l'Université Sainte-Anne in Church Point, Nova Scotia on May 20-22, 2005. If you are presenting a paper and are not able to receive other funding, there is often the possibility of receiving some travel reimbursement monies from FSAC. Deadlines for abstracts have not yet been posted on the FSAC website.

At the last meeting in Winnipeg, as student representative, I brought several ideas to the executive on behalf of the students. Some of you may already have heard of these changes but it bears repeating for those new to our ranks. FSAC agreed to follow our recommendation to increase student representation on their executive, and to always have a French and English student representative on the board. As a result a French student, Christine Bricault, was nominated. It was agreed that student representatives should have overlapping terms in order to aid in continuity. Our second proposal of a student workshop or panel focusing on career development and publishing opportunities as well as a practical skills session for new professionals and students at the 2005 meeting was encouraged. A student ListServ was approved (this will be launched in January 2005) which will enable students who are interested in folklore to have contact with each other, to post job notices, to look for informants, etc. Finally, a discussion of a student exchange between MUN and

Laval was discussed and I received further information that some effort has already been put into this by heads of both departments.

I was also able to talk to many students in Winnipeg and get some ideas about what they would like from FSAC or how they think student participation can be improved. FSAC has a very open atmosphere and cares about student involvement. Students compose a significant portion of the membership and therefore can actually lead by example and make changes in the association. This year, one student mentioned that handouts or power point presentations would greatly aid in the comprehension of papers which are not in our first language, since many people have a reading knowledge of another language but find it difficult to follow along aurally. Next semester I will be having a roundtable discussion about FSAC, funding, and panels as well as what to expect for those of you that will be attending this as your first conference. Until then please contact me at [mcdavid@nl.rogers.com](mailto:mcdavid@nl.rogers.com) if you have any questions about the upcoming FSAC meeting or if you have any comments about things you would like discussed at the student meeting. For further information please see the FSAC webpage at <http://www.fl.ulaval.ca/celat/acef/>

#### **AMERICAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY 2004 ANNUAL MEETING**

##### **"FOLKLORE AND THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE": BOLDLY GOING WHERE ONE'S NOT GONE BEFORE?**

By Julie LeBlanc

My plane landed in Salt Lake City, Utah in the afternoon of October 13, 2004. This was my first time in Utah and I did not know what to expect. While the plane was landing I peeked through my window to witness a truly beautiful scenery unfold before me. I had seen the Rocky Mountains in Western Canada and all along the American Pacific Coast, but this was different. The air was much dryer and the landscape was particular. I thought it was the perfect beginning to my first AFS meeting with the theme "Folklore and Cultural Landscape." The air, the various vegetation, the scents, the sites, and people were new to me. Once our shuttle bus arrived at the Little America Hotel I checked in and bumped into a European acquaintance. As the afternoon progressed, I found more familiar faces and before I knew it, it was time to attend the opening ceremonies featuring a Venezuelan band with a traditional harpist and Yi-Fu Tuan as a keynote speaker.

Tuan was at first apologetic about his novice notions of folklore but as a professional geographer, he was able to

weave his discipline's theories into an interesting discussion about the relationship between environment and people, the created intimacy within places, escapism, and narrative as substantial to humans. Though some of his narrative and belief theories did not correspond to larger accepted concepts in folkloristics, Tuan nonetheless provided an example of perspective and space; how folklore can be viewed as part of the cultural landscape. This address was followed by various receptions, one created for graduate students to highlight their important participation at these meetings. This incentive was suggested by graduate students the previous year and was a success at this meeting. I felt there was a sense of a recreated graduate community even with the particular hordes of graduates from different schools hovering in homogenous groups.

In the following hours and days, I met various students and Faculty from American and European Universities who were very engaging. It was stimulating to meet those considered academic pillars in our discipline and was refreshing to be surrounded by active members of various organizations and institutions. This meeting was particularly important for me seeing as I no longer am a department resident. This venue provided me with interesting outlooks and inspiration related to my dissertation and future projects. As a Canadian who has attended a FSAC meeting, I did find the two experiences drastically different. While AFS does benefit from a larger membership and participation, its multiple concurrent sessions make it hard to select the papers to attend. There were fine papers presented at the meeting, but I did not anticipate the side effects of excessive participation in every event. In the end, I brought back an unwanted souvenir: a sinus cold and massive headache. It was worth it in the end because I did meet many people. There are luncheons and breakfast meetings that are highly beneficial to newcomers.

There is plenty of advice to be given for a Canadian who wants to cross the southern border to a future AFS meeting. I would personally recommend preparing a paper for at least one AFS meeting in your graduate career. Of course, it is also important to attend Canadian meetings and I highly recommend a combination of both Canadian and American conferences under your belt. This is not simply for the presentation experience, but also to meet those who sometimes do not make it across the northern border to our conferences. In 2007, there will be a joint AFS and FSAC meeting in Québec City. These joint meetings occur periodically and are worth attending for the reasons stated above. Meanwhile, the 2005 meeting will take place in Atlanta, Georgia. Hopefully, by the time AFS makes its way to Québec City, the discipline will not have greatly disappeared in

North America as Alan Dundes concluded in his Plenary address. Until then, Dundes' criticism on the lack of major analytical and theoretical debate within the discipline due in part to romantic folklorists will probably resurface within various departments of folklore in the United States and maybe even Canada. Perhaps a themed meeting will come of it, perhaps not.

Concerns about the discipline's survival in academic environments may be at times refreshing or outdated to discuss. Some of the past "Young Turks" have decided that there is a lack of activist campaigning within universities to promote strong, healthy, and surviving departments of folklore in the United States. When I left Ballroom C, I felt both positive vibes and negative tension from the members who had attended Dundes' address. Some were furious while others applauded in standing ovation. Whether there is a combined effort or external support to promote the discipline and theoretical research within universities, it is still important to highlight the career opportunities in folklore. Until the "new-blood" believes that there is some way of securing employment in folkloristics whether in faculty or research positions, the discipline will be perceived as unconventional, weak, and practically useless by university administration. Perhaps the question lies in what types of opportunities institutions are willing to offer for the advancement of folklore research and how universities may benefit from joint programs to promote the discipline and offer competitive research skills in various marketplaces. If the debate pivots around purist ideals, there will always be problems to manage concerning the survival of the discipline. Without compromising the quality of research and the advancement of social sciences/humanities, folklore departments may fuse with others to create a stronger academic voice all while producing folkloristic research.

Though it is wonderful to create and maintain a folklore department, it is also important to provide adequate services and an inspiring environment. The impression I was left with from the AFS meeting was that there must be a stronger union between folklorists to maintain what few departments exist in the United States. This is a fair and reasonable demand, so long as there are faculty members and students to fill the classrooms and adequate publishing opportunities for research. Perhaps now is the time to begin recruiting and creating new positions to ensure the survival of the discipline within academic institutions. As Francis Ponge once wrote: "L'homme est l'avenir de l'homme", "Man is Man's future." If we truly wish to advance in our discipline and ensure its survival, we have to survive within it.

## SCREECH IN OR SCREECH OUT?

By Alicia Cox

The debate over screech-ins will probably continue for some time. There will always be those that are in favor of them and those that despise their existence. I do not understand what all the fuss is about. Personally, being a Newfoundlander, and a proud one at that, I do not find the screech-in degrading or offensive to Newfoundlanders or to our culture. I look at screech-ins as simply invented traditions that have historical antecedents in our province's history.

To me the screech in is neither demeaning nor offensive for several reasons: First, Newfoundlanders, in general, can take a joke. Secondly, we can laugh at ourselves along with others. Third, we know that the way in which the Newfoundland "screecher" is portrayed is not at all representative of Newfoundlanders or of the province as a whole. The joke thus falls on the outsider. We as Newfoundlanders know that we are not stupid, unintelligible, or backward. I think that any intelligent, articulate person can comprehend the thought that the screech-in is not a part of Newfoundland historical culture per se, but it is a contrived or invented tradition of fun **within** Newfoundland culture. We get the chance to poke fun at the mainlander or other tourist by making them kiss the cod, a puffin's arse or any other activity that they may never actually do in their everyday lives. However, the catch is that we know, as native Newfoundlanders, that we do not do those things everyday either!

I mean Newfoundland screech-ins are but one small part of our known culture. Screech-ins today are used to welcome people from all over the world to our hearty island. Having a reputation as being hospitable, friendly, funny and kind is not a bad thing. In fact it is something for all Newfoundlanders to be proud of. Aside from our respectable reputation, we have the Newfoundland Screech itself to be proud of. It is not very often that any country, province or continent gets its name on a bottle or anything else for that matter. Will we next try to eliminate Iceberg vodka because we do not want people to only associate icebergs with Newfoundland? I would suggest that many more people come to visit Newfoundland for the icebergs than the rum. We could not ask Russia to change the name of "Russian Prince" vodka because it denotes a negative image of Russia, could we?

So what then continues to be the big deal about screech-ins? This tradition is only one activity that attracts people here. Newfoundland does have so much more to offer, yes, but does that mean that we have to eliminate

this practice of screech-ins? Not if people still enjoy it. Tourists seem to love it, because they do feel welcome here. Word of mouth goes a long way, and not all of the talk revolves around screech.

Most importantly, those people who are brought to a screech-in are given a choice of whether to participate or not. So we do not force participation, nor do we expect it. As far as I am concerned it is much ado about nothing. Making a few tourists "honorary" Newfoundlanders by screeching them in does not make them "true" Newfoundlanders, it never will, nor does giving them a piece of paper to celebrate it. Thus we are not losing our identity, just gaining some foreign cousins. So to screech-in a person and to participate is no more of a travesty than giving a movie star or a politician an "honorary" doctoral degree from a post-secondary institution! A piece of paper does not mean that they are real doctors.

Long May Your Big Jib Draw!!

(Alicia Cox's article originally appeared in The Telegram on November 10, 2004 and is reprinted here with permission.)



Kensington Palace

Photo by Jodi McDavid

## SPONTANEOUS VISIT TO A SPONTANEOUS SHRINE

By Jodi McDavid

In August 2003 I spent a week in London, England as part of a larger trip. During my stay I went to Kensington Palace purely by coincidence. I was actually at a bookstore, but thinking about my proximity to Hyde Park I thought I should go if only to check another thing off my "tourist list."

While strolling through the park, I noticed groups of people moving together towards the castle. As I went closer, it was apparent that things were hanging in the gates; things for HRH Lady Diana, Princess of Wales. I

immediately thought I needed to document what I was witnessing.



**Spontaneous Shrine**

Photo by Jodi McDavid

The gates were filled with about twenty different items; bouquets of flowers, single roses, posters, cards, photos, and letters. It had rained the day before and it looked as though these items had been placed here recently; certainly, to add weight to this, the cut flowers were still in good condition. I watched quietly as families came forward and added items, pausing to read and admire other people's contributions and finally posing together for a photo to commemorate the event (it seemed photos were often taken with their cameras by other people coming to pay tribute). The groups, of course, were diverse. Many people had planned ahead and made honourific posters, while others purchased flowers from vendors nearby but outside the park. Many were moved to tears. It was a touching and strange event, six years after her death.

### **AWAY FROM A METHODOLOGY OF PREPARATION FOR COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS.<sup>1</sup>**

By Kelly Roubo

While not every department or program requires its students to take comprehensive exams as part of the requirements for their degree, for graduate students attending those that do, there comes a time when the bullet has got to be bit and the stress about methods of preparation begins. The prospective examinee often feels insecure in their ability to pass and as always when tensions mount and there is a lot at stake, it is natural to turn to the folk record for information on how to get through it. Those in "comps prep" mode will begin quizzing anyone they know who has successfully completed this rite of passage in an effort to help prepare

<sup>1</sup> If you don't "get" the title, you are already in big, BIG trouble.

him- or herself to follow the same path. They will want to know which books and articles were read, how much time was spent studying each day, what questions were asked, and how they were answered.

Unfortunately, much like wearing someone else's shoes, it is not as simple as choosing a path and walking it – each of us has a particular stride, rhythm, and pace. Much of the information collected from "comps survivors" will be of limited use (or possibly no use at all) as each person quizzed will provide different answers, suggest different readings, and emphasize different aspects of the process through their personal methodologies. The pre-exam stress levels may be further heightened as the prospective examinee struggles to assimilate all of the information gathered through these informal surveys, some of which is bound to be conflicting. This is not to say that there is nothing to be done; it is saying that only the examinee can possibly determine exactly what needs to be done and in what way they can best do it. Only he or she can know what they have already read and learned, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and where the time available would best be spent in his or her own personal case. This personalization of needs should quickly become apparent, though it does not usually serve to reduce anxieties, is that there is no *one* method of successful preparation for comprehensive examinations.<sup>2</sup> It is a complex phenomenon wherein each person's experience of the exams and the study period that precedes them is unique to him or her and reflects an individualized approach to knowledge acquisition, however that might be constructed by each examinee. In other words, there is no "right" way to prepare for comps, there is no trick that will make it easier, there is no way to predict how things will pan out for you, and your best bet is to continue with the methods that have worked for you before now.

While all of this seems clear to me now, I know that it is neither comforting nor perhaps especially helpful for those who are facing the "Big C." But like a fireman at his or her first big blaze (see McCarl), it is your training that will see you through these times, and relying on your own work techniques, however unworthy you think them, is the key to success. (You *have* read McCarl, haven't you?!) I am well aware that this is not the answer most pre-comps students would like to hear, but I am confident that those who have passed through this trial by fire will recognize its essential ineffable truth – You're on your own, kid. Good Luck.

<sup>2</sup> My thanks to Anne Lafferty for explaining this to me when I was going through comps myself...though it only made me feel better for about 4 hours.

For those who insist on believing that the personal methods that got them to this point will no longer suffice, I provide below a transcription of notes made during my own comps study months. Some of these, of course, are specific to the Department of Folklore at Memorial University, but many are of general use in such circumstances and may be applied wherever comps terror may be found.

1. Read the sample questions you are given.
2. Allow them to scare the crap out of you.
3. Really, be scared. It's part of the point. You got a lot to learn, baby.
4. Formulate a plan of action, drawing on the system that has worked for you in the past. (Yes, you do have one, or you would not be in this situation.) Now is not the hour for changing horses, so to speak.
5. Examine the reading list and evaluate these sources in light of your particular time frame. Consider the list incomplete and add to it as necessary. If you have only a couple of months to prepare, it's probably not the time to go find all those long books you've always been curious about. Be realistic. Be selective. Focus on addressing your weaknesses.
6. The desire to be part of a warm, supportive group with whom to share work, problems, and stress can be nigh overwhelming. Inventing such a group and "making nice," however, is an expenditure of energy better used elsewhere. Study groups, unless you are part of a particularly tight-knit cohort, do not usually work. Methods vary, tension is high, frustrations abound. Nevertheless, find yourself at least one "bitch buddy" and commiserate periodically. Sharing notes and photocopies is also helpful. So is sharing pizza, chocolate, sushi, chicken pot pie, muffins...
7. You will probably gain weight (See #6), though some are spared. However, starting a diet at this point would be masochistic. If you are concerned, plan ahead: cook healthy foods and freeze them. Many soups freeze well and reheating is easy. Bags of salad are your friends. Love them. Also, consider food exchange with fellow sufferers.
8. Some days will find you feeling fully prepared and ready to go; others will find you despairing of success and certain that you are a complete idiot. Each of these is an illusion. Just keep swimming.
9. As exam time (zero hour) approaches and you find you have not completed all the reading you had set out to do (and you won't), prioritizing

your remaining readings will become ever easier. Reassess periodically.

10. During the final stages, continued reading of texts may seem pointless, especially if it seems as if no additional data is being absorbed by your exhausted brain. However, such reading may reinforce and augment material read previously. More importantly, for some continued reading can serve as a distraction from the impending exams, and help to keep at bay feelings of panic, discouragement, despair, imminent doom, etc. It is, after all, the one thing still within your control!
11. Your own study patterns may not mesh with those just described and you may need to ignore #10 completely! Other successful examinees have stopped studying once the exam period began and felt that the rest was more valuable than further cramming. Your call.
12. Three weeks prior to exam time, go to the store and buy plates, cups and paper towels. Plastic cutlery is optional. Environmentally friendly types may want to choose biodegradable options made of recycled materials, but should still consider this investment. It may seem as if life is spiraling out of control and just keeping the dirty dishes in check can give an inordinate sense of pride and well-being.
13. Try to get plenty of rest and fluids. Seriously, the stress (assuming you paid attention to points 1 & 2) will take a mental and physical toll and steps should be taken to maintain one's health.
14. Whatever the outcome, reward yourself when it's over, preferably before learning the results (just in case).

#### **ADDENDUM**

To further emphasize the very personal nature of the comps prep experience, the following items were added to my own notes by Andrea Kitta in the aftermath of her own successful completion of the exams. Personally, I think the daily exercise is a bit radical, but to each her own. Obviously, this list could be added to by other comps survivors, ad infinitum – that being the entire point of this article – but this will do, I think. (For more on the folklore of comprehensive examinations, pick up Volume 26 of *Culture & Tradition* – hot off the press and selling fast – and read about Dr. X!)

15. Read intro texts as a way of boiling down something you know very well or as a way to learn about something you know nothing about.
16. Spend time clearing and organizing your comps area a few days before the test. Also, organize your notes, books and articles.

17. Reread your notes! Remember Dr. X!
18. Ginger snaps and digestive biscuits are a good way to keep your stomach calm.
19. Buy something to keep your tea/coffee warm.
20. Some exercise is good. I found that a half an hour a day was perfect – it keeps your mood up and is a good time to let things sink in.

## THE FOLKLORE SOCIETY REPORT

By Lynda Strukoff

The Folklore Society had a great year thus far! In October we had a deliciously wonderful bake sale that made over \$200. Thanks again to all who baked, ate, or both! On October 29th we had our Halloween Mixer, and though the weather was spookier than the event, there was a nice turn-out with some wonderful costumes--especially those with a contemporary legend theme! Thanks to those who brought snacks, helped with organization, and especial thanks to Anya Zub for her wonderful posters.

Phillip Balluk, an undergrad folklore student, started a Song Circle that will continue in 2005 and is open to all who are interested. For more information on the Song Circle contact Phil at [duckula7@yahoo.ca](mailto:duckula7@yahoo.ca)

We are already beginning this semester's activities, with a Valentine's mixer on Friday, February 11th, and the famous Mary Griffiths Night is tentatively scheduled for March 31st at O'Reilly's on George Street. The Folklore Society is currently fundraising through the sale of folklore texts generously donated by the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive. These have been selling fast, but there are some remaining. If you are interested, contact Lynda Strukoff ASAP before they are gone. The "Folk U" t-shirts are also available in limited quantities and sizes, as well, so act fast if you want one! Plans are in the works for a Pub Crawl. Contact Anya Zub for more information [russkiev@yahoo.ca](mailto:russkiev@yahoo.ca) We are also planning some fundraising for a few projects which will be finalized shortly, as well as generating some small pieces of writing to get a Muse monthly column going. We are also hoping to have a Logo Contest for the Folklore Society and some other fun events, so keep your eyes peeled! (Ouch!)

And for more information on the Folklore Society contact Lynda at [chitotoro@hotmail.com](mailto:chitotoro@hotmail.com) or Gillian at [gbohnet@gmail.com](mailto:gbohnet@gmail.com).

The Folklore Society's board is:  
 Lynda Strukoff--President  
 Gillian Bohnet--Vice President  
 Leslie Pierce--Treasurer

At this time we are seeking someone to take on the position of secretary. Best wishes to Jeanette Brown for a speedy recovery.



Paul Smith, Martin Lovelace, Steve George and Phillip Balluk.



Gerry Sullivan, Johanna Coady, Cyone Cotton, Leslie Pierce and Gillian Bohnet.



Philip Hiscock, Laura Scott and Lynda Strukoff.

~ Photos this page by Lynne McNeill ~

## Conference Bound: How to live out of a suitcase three times a year

By Jodi McDavid

The occasional conference trip can quickly go downhill when you run into unseasonable heat or torrential rain. And even the most well-traveled academic has had that “ah-ha” moment when they realize they packed two suitcases without so much as one pair of underwear. For this reason, I present conference travel tips for the travel impaired.

**Pack light:** usually conference travel includes a plane, and at least one means of public transport, before finally terminating in a third floor residence room. Packing light means you can split a cab with three other conference goers and have room for all the bags. It also means if left to your own devices you can haul your bag up three flights of stairs.

**Bring two pairs of shoes:** there is always a lot of walking at conferences, mainly time spent looking for restaurants. While you might want to look pretty for the conference sessions, you’ll appreciate a comfy pair of shoes for the evenings spent hunting for sustenance. Just remember, while sandals are often a good conference bet, they don’t really accommodate the inevitable rain day.

**Be weather-wise:** check out Environment Canada’s website and find out the average temperatures for the area at the time that you will be there.

**Accommodation in residence:** it is never a waste of time to confirm your accommodation before you leave and get further instructions about where it is located. On some of the larger campuses, it can actually be quite challenging to get keys and find the place you are staying for the night. If staying in residence remember to bring an alarm clock, shower shoes and a towel. While they do provide towels, they are typically quite small and embarrassing to get caught in! Small caddies for bathroom items are also handy.

**Bring entertainment:** a conference day can be tiring. Many accommodations such as hostels and residence rooms won’t have access to televisions for “maxing and relaxing.” Bring some small portable games or some books to read to while away the evening.

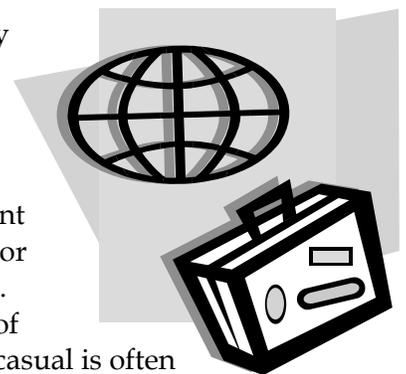
**Plan to share:** there isn’t really a need to drag everything with you if you plan to share a room with someone or stay in residence or a hostel with a bunch of friends. Pare down on items such as hairdryers, irons and alarm clocks and only take what is necessary. This is also helpful if you don’t have certain items (like a travel-size hairdryer) and were planning to buy them only for travel.

**Bring food:** it is hard to find a grocery store (and to find the time to get to it) at a conference. Bring some non-perishable items with you and have stuff on hand for snacks. This also helps save money in the long run.

**Budget:** look online to find out how much things in that area cost, to scope out restaurants, etc. Comb the conference literature as well as their website and reports from previous conferences to see what is included with the fees. Many conference fees include coffee breaks or snacks as well as the banquet. Some also have the occasional free lunch.

**Packing:** pack all toiletries in Ziploc-type bags in case they bust. Bring a big plastic bag to put dirty clothes in. Later, this can help keep them separate from whatever you don’t end up wearing. It keeps your suitcase cleaner and is especially handy in residence rooms or hostels that don’t provide a lot of storage. Packing the most essential of toiletries as well as a change of clothing (or at least underclothes) in your carry-on bag means that if your bag is lost you will have something to help you get by until it arrives or other solutions are found. It also isn’t a bad idea to bring an empty bag in case you make purchases on your trip.

**General clothing ideas:** it is easier to pack while thinking of the different events at the conference. For example, every conference generally has a banquet, meaning that you will need at least one nice evening outfit. You may want something specific for the day you present. And, having a pair of jeans or something casual is often handy.



# Bluff Notes

Welcome to our initial offering of Bluff Notes! These notes are intended to provide information on essays and articles that may be overlooked in the reams of reading material that we tackle every semester, in much the same way that book reviews give scholars critical assessments of texts. We hope this will be of particular use to graduate students, especially those in the comprehensive examination phase of their degrees, in providing direction and resources for research and study.

We welcome submissions to this forum, as well as critical responses to the evaluations presented here. If you know of an article that you would like others to be aware of, or if you feel other articles better represent (or refute) the position of articles discussed herein, please feel free to submit your Bluff Notes to the editor of *Transmission*!

**“Grammar, Codes, and Performance: Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Models in the Study of Vernacular Architecture” by Michael Ann Williams and M. Jane Young.**

**Synopsis:** This article discusses the problems with using linguistic and sociolinguistic models on material culture. Williams and Young show that the study of material culture is theoretically dependent on the study of verbal art and discusses the reasons why this model does not work with material culture and how the use of this model shows our own scholarly insecurities.

**Why should you read this article?** In addition to explaining why linguistic models do not work with material culture, Williams and Young also address issues such as social context, feminism, and theory. This article also functions as a good contrast to Henry Glassie’s *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* since it focuses on those who actually live in a structure as compared to Glassie’s focus on the builder.

**Quote:** “The limitations of transformational grammar are compounded when applied to material culture. The emphasis is on an idealized maker or builder, rather than on actual individual, which reinforces the stereotype of the anonymous folk artist or builder. The primary focus on unconscious pattern gives little attention to the role of deliberate action or conscious motivation in the production and use of artefacts. Furthermore, the emphasis on production rather than use is even more limited in material culture studies because production and use are fundamentally separate in a way that is not the case in spoken language.” (41-42.)

By Andrea Kitta

**“Just Folks Designing: Vernacular Designers and the Generation of Form,” by Thomas Hubka, in *Common Places*, eds. Vlach and Upton.**

**Synopsis:**

We can no longer accept that vernacular architecture is “unselfconscious”—thought and methods go into it just as with professional architecture, so there is a need to study design and intention, just as we would with any other aspect of architectural history.

Hubka begins by rejecting several common misperceptions of vernacular architects: that they have an intuitive genius, that the direction of influence only goes from elite to folk, that there is no pre-planning, that primitive buildings are the predominant vernacular form, that the architects are unselfconscious and naively spontaneous, and that the dual role of owner and builder means there is no special skill at designing within any one person. All of these assumptions discredit the skill of the vernacular architect and can lead to faulty understandings of the processes of creation and the resulting structures.

After having established that there *is* a conscious design process involved, Hubka “carefully distinguishes the vernacular builder’s process of design, in which existing models are conceptually taken apart and then reassembled in new buildings, from the professional designer’s manner of working, in which elements from disparate sources are combined to solve design problems anew.” He connects the vernacular architect to Levi-Strauss’s “bricoleur,” and the professional architect to a “scientist”—they are both designers; they just choose their solutions to various design situations from different fields of ideas.

**Why should you read this article?**

There are several reasons: to understand the stereotypes that many scholars place upon vernacular architects, to better appreciate the skill involved in vernacular architecture, to understand the folk process better, to become familiar with a study that—a la Glassie—applies the concepts of structural linguistics to architectural form, and to understand the way in which even professional architects must still internalize a large amount of information into a symbolic mental grammar, as do vernacular architects.

**Quote:**

“When a design method is allowed to folk builders, it is often couched in explanations amounting to naturalistic determinism—as if these people, like birds, naturally make shelter.”

By Lynne McNeill

## AROUND THE DEPARTMENT:

Please join the staff of *Transmission* in Congratulating the following people:

### RECENT HIRES:

Dr. Cory Thorne, September 2004

### RECENT GRADUATES:

Caoimhe Ní Shúilleabháin, M.A., October, 2004

### COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS:

Andrea Kitta, November, 2004

Lynne McNeill, November, 2004



### AWARDS:

Anne Lafferty – The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary David Buchan Graduate Research Award, February 2005

Julie LeBlanc – The David Buchan Graduate Research Award, October 2004

Kelly Roubo – The David Buchan Graduate Research Award, October 2004

Paula Flynn – The American Folklore Society’s Don Yoder Prize, October 2004

Kristin Harris – Runner-up, The American Folklore Society’s Elli Köngäs-Maranda Student Paper Prize, October 2004

### THE 2004 GOLDEN GUMBO AWARDS!

Lynne McNeill – Runner-up for the Golden Gumbo Award, an honor “for the best paper personally attended by Bill Ellis that was delivered by a person who is not a personal friend, long-time colleague, or co-panelist.”

Diane Goldstein and Lynne McNeill – Winners of the Gumbo Ya-Ya Award “for the most coherent and consistently good panel personally attended by Bill Ellis.” In 2004, it was “the one on ‘Ghosts in Contemporary Folklore’ hosted by ISCLR’s ‘Rowdy Girls,’ including Diane E. Goldstein, Jeannie Banks Thomas, Sylvia Grider, and Lynne S. McNeill.”

According to the email from Ellis announcing the winners, “All the winners’ and runner-up’s names will be written on parchment and placed underneath a mylar cast figure of Skuld, the Scandinavian Goddess of the Future (now semi-permanently in residence in Japan) to ensure the success of their forthcoming endeavors.”

Hmm...

### BOOKS:

Congratulations to Diane Goldstein on having her new book, *Once Upon a Virus: AIDS Legends and Vernacular Risk Perception*, published. This book is available from Utah State University Press ([www.usu.edu/usupress](http://www.usu.edu/usupress)) or from major retailers such as Amazon.ca and Chapters.ca.

*Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*, by Elisabeth Bristol Greenleaf and Grace Yarrow Mansfield  
Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Publications,  
Available from the Folklore Department or local distributors for \$42.75, taxes included

“In 1933, Elisabeth Greenleaf and Grace Mansfield’s landmark volume *Ballad and Sea Songs of Newfoundland* was published for the first time. Since then, interest in and research on Newfoundland vernacular song has flowered: as a consequence, this facsimile of the original edition will be warmly received by scholars and fans alike. In addition to reprinting MacEdward Leach’s Foreword to the 1968 edition, this new volume includes a Foreword by Neil V. Rosenberg and Anna Kearney-Guiné that, by offering readers a guide to recent publications and archival sources and drawing upon previously unavailable information, gives additional glimpses into Greenleaf’s work and helps place this fascinating book in context.”

## AROUND THE DEPARTMENT (CONT):

### THANK YOU:

I just wanted to use this opportunity to thank everyone for their help and support when I had my surgery. I really appreciated the lovely bouquet from the Department as well as everyone's continued effort to help me out. The surgery was a necessary evil, but if I ever hear the words "bone" and "saw" in the same sentence again it will be too soon! I have now fully recovered and have made peace with the four titanium plates and eight screws in my jaw. Thanks again.  
- Jodi McDavid.

### NEW CULTURE & TRADITION EDITORIAL BOARD FOR VOLUME 27:

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### ☐☐ **Did You Know?** ☐☐

The deadline for submitting abstracts for the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society is April 15<sup>th</sup>. The meeting will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, this year and runs from October 19<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup>. You can submit your abstract online and, if you have a credit card, pay registration and/or membership fees.

For more information, go to:  
[www.afsnet.org](http://www.afsnet.org)



### HOW YOU CAN HELP:

-We intend this newsletter to be available to undergraduates and to have it provide people with worthwhile information. We encourage undergraduates to contact us if they are interested in getting involved with the newsletter, through writing, organisation, brainstorming, or handing out issues in their classes.

-We're interested in receiving any feedback or critiques. Let us know what you think and what we can do for you!

-Anonymous questions can be sent to us at any time. Please mention in your email if you wish to remain anonymous.

-Submit recent achievements, an abstract from a conference paper, or a short statement of research interest.

-Submit selections of interview transcripts for publication, or short articles (please ensure that you have publication permission from interviewees.)

\*Contact us at [culture@mun.ca](mailto:culture@mun.ca) with the subject "Transmission" with your questions or comments or for more information.

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