



THE NEWSLETTER

mariposa folk festival publication

june '75

Editorial

Summer already and here is our third issue in your hands. It's hard to believe that it's nearly festival time again. Support for The Newsletter has been slow but steady. Hopefully, this publication is becoming an interesting part of your occasional reading. For those of you just joining us, we welcome you. Feel free to write and let us know what kind of information you'd like to see. For our veteran subscribers, you've seen some changes and we hope most have been for the better. This issue brings up some new areas.

There is a fine introduction to one of the most portable of folk instruments, the pennywhistle. Jim Strickland, veteran tootler and singer, gives us all a chance to try it out for ourselves. Grit Laskin contributes a recipe for home-made banjo necks and also one of his own songs. Certainly one of the most important and moving articles we've ever printed is Sara Ogan Gunning's account of her background and influences. We are grateful to be able to share this with you. The point of all this is to try to find a balance between practicality and pleasure, scholarship and fun. And the only way we have of knowing if this is working is through your letters.

Our 1975 Festival is nearly upon us. We hope to see you all there. There should be plenty of opportunities to discover new songs and traditions. If it all works right, you should emerge from the weekend

with many questions about songs, instruments, crafts, etc. Some of them could make excellent articles for this publication. Let us know what you want to see. After all, this is all really for you ■

Mariposa '75

The festival is gradually being pushed and prodded into shape. All the shenanigans over at the post office have kept us hopping, trying to avoid a mail strike that may never happen. By the time you read this, ticket sales will be well under way, so you had better hurry to get yours if you haven't already.

The performer's roster has shaped up to be one of the all-time best. A complete list of performers and programme schedules are available from the Mariposa office ■

After June 1, tickets will be available at the following outlets:

- Eaton's Attraction offices
- Sam the Record Man (downtown Toronto)
- Toronto Folklore Centre (284 Avenue Rd., Toronto)
- Round Records (46 Bloor W., Toronto)
- The Yellow Door Coffeehouse, (3625 Aylmer St., Montreal).

Mariposa in the Schools

The Mariposa in the Schools Program has had an excellent year. There have been 155 workshops put on through MITS guidance at 60 schools since September. There will be an extensive program this summer with 26 workshops offered at playgrounds and day camps of the North York Parks & Recreation Dept. Plans for next year include the possibility of involving Native Peoples and members of Toronto's ethnic communities. Also, be sure to catch the MITS workshop at this year's festival. If you have any questions about the programme, please phone the Mariposa office.



A GIRL OF CONSTANT SORROW

The Mariposa Folk Festival asks all performers to furnish biographical material on themselves for use in the program book. We received this letter from Sarah Ogan Gunning and found it such an eloquent and moving account of her tradition, that we asked her for permission to reproduce it here. She has graciously consented and we print it here just as she wrote it.

March 20, 1975
Hart, Michigan

Received your book and letter. Glad to be invited to the festival. Would have answered sooner but have had the flu. Don't know just what you would like to know about me. Anyway, I was borned in Kentucky in a coal mining camp in 1910. Father minister and coal miner. Brothers coal miners. Husband a coal miner. Sister of Aunt Mollie Jackson. Jim Garland and I sing all kinds of old time songs, ballads, children's songs, spirituals, cowboy

songs--all old timey handed down to me from both father and mother. I left Kentucky in 1934 or 5. Starved out. One baby died of starvation. I composed quite a few songs about my life and hardship in the coal mines. Some are published in Hard Hitting Songs by Hard Hit People. I also have songs in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Mary Elizabeth Barnicle took me and my children that was still alive to New York City. My husband died from TB or black lung as they call it now. I came in contact with lots of people like Alan Lomax, Burl Ives, Will Greer, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly and Martha. We sang at parties and hootenannies and collected money for coal miners, dust bowl refugees and then I came down with lung trouble. Didn't sing much for five years. Had a lung operation in Kentucky where I had returned to die. Most of my friends thought I was dead and the ones that knew I was alive thought I never would sing again. But I fooled them. Then in 1965 Archie Green came around where I lived in Detroit and persuaded me to start singing in public again. So I sing at festivals--Newport one time, Carnegie Hall one time, Chicago three times. American Folklife, Washington, three times, Tufts University in Boston one time, Knoxville three times, Tufts University in Boston one time, Knoxville three times, singing tour Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. One LP on Folk Legacy. Girl of Constant Sorrow. Come All You Coal Miners--Rounder, with Hazel Dickens, George Tucker, Nimrod Workman. And I have an LP coming out soon by Rounder.

In 1941 I married Joe Gunning, a native-born New Yorker who loved me enough to help me raise my children and take care of me when I couldn't take care of myself. Almost three years ago he had a stroke, couldn't walk or communicate very well. He is in a very good nursing home and I live all alone. Children grown and married. Ten grandchildren. I feel awful lonely at times and the way the United States and our Government is acting with all the unemployment I am getting scared, afraid that some of the things that happened in Hoover's time will happen again. Only I don't think the people will just sit down and take it this time. These pictures are not too good. One is me and some of my grandchildren at Christmas. Will be looking forward to hearing from you ■

Bye now-- Sarah Ogan Gunning