

# JOHN DILDINE

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April 23, 1965

## President's Report to the Folklore Society of Greater Washington

Since the formation of the society in October of last year I believe that we have made an excellent beginning. We have set up a regular monthly meeting schedule and managed to have good monthly programs. We have presented one special program in the nature of a concert (the McPeake Family) and had one open sing. We are now being called upon for advice on programs being presented by other groups and we have a group within the society who have appeared on television and are planning some special programs for children. These are the public activities which are noticed the most. You will note that most of them are concerned with traditional music and are to a certain extent educational.

Our treasurer, Sol Sehneyer has made an excellent statement regarding the society which I feel you should hear. He wrote this in answer to a question on the form applying to gain a tax exemption status for the society. The statement is as follows:

" The purpose of the Society is to help to preserve the folklore of America, in song and story, as a living tradition. It is our conviction that this heritage constitutes a significant source of cultural and esthetic enrichment for our people and that it should be preserved not only in archives, but in the everyday life of the community. Since we know of no existing community organization addressing itself directly to this issue and we do not believe that the need which we see can be met through commercial channels, we hope to:

1. Serve as a focal point for individuals in the greater Washington area who are interested in the broad area of American folklore.
2. Carry on a program of activities which will disseminate folk materials and information about them. Although the Society is primarily concerned with American Folklore it is also interested in the folklore of other countries, particularly that of other English-speaking countries.
3. Stimulate the interest of the community in folk materials in terms of active participation as well as passive appreciation.
4. Stimulate interest in the study of, research on and collection of materials relating to the folklore of America. "

The statement which I have just read is one which does an excellent job of presenting the purposes for which this society was formed. We have made a good beginning in fulfilling these aims. As always, there is much to do. We have plans for continuing our monthly regular meetings (as indeed we must if we are to live up to the terms of our bylaws). These will probably not be held over the summer months. There are plans for various special events including a square dance, more open sings, concerts, a summer "micro-festival" etc.. We will eventually get into the area of more elaborate publications, possibly into sound recording releases, etc. At the moment we are limited by funds and participants in many areas and we need more involvement in activities on the part of the general membership.

We have built up a small archive of tape recordings of our various functions which is accessible to those who have legitimate reasons for listening to them. We also have a dulcimer built by Howard Mitchell using his special fretting technique. This and information on construction of dulcimers is available to anyone who is interested. We hope to increase our archive of reference material and make it more accessible to interested people.

If I may, I would like to make a few comments on directions which I would like to see the society move in. First I would like to suggest that we are dealing in an area of great importance to the lives of people. We cannot afford to separate the material of folklore from the people who preserve and add to the body of songs and stories which make up our traditional heritage. We must not make the mistake of

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of mistaking volume for quality or immediate appeal for lasting value. In other words we must watch the temptation of popularization of this material through techniques which rob the material of its value and dehumanize it. We are engaged in communication of values and we must not allow ourselves to be used as a vehicle for those who are engaged in selling our traditional heritage down the river of commercial entertainment.

I would like to see us continue to attempt to present people to other people. I would like to see us begin to make it possible for folklore scholars, folk song enthusiasts, folk singers and story tellers and just people to be able to sit down together and share experiences and feelings through communication with each other. We must strive for a sort of cultural continuity in this fragmented society in which we find ourselves. We are engaged in an endeavor which has possibilities of reminding us that we are human beings and not machines or objects or statistics. Not only that but its fun. Lets go on from here. We have the organization off the ground, we are headed in the right direction and I think that we have a future. If we can continue to learn and grow and educate and entertain and enjoy what we do we shall not have been formed in vain.