



# THE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE NEWSLETTER

May

1986

No. 10



## EDITORIAL

This is the 10th issue of the ACFN - a matter for modest celebration when it is remembered that Australian cultural history is littered with the relics of small publications that died soon after Vol.1 No.1.

In our case, a modicum of assistance from our *alma mater*, the IECD, together with the warm support of our readers, has allowed us to reach double figures. With a little luck - and persistence - we hope to be able to celebrate our 20th issue a few years from now.

The first issue, which appeared in September 1981, contained the following lines setting out the publication's *raison d'être*:

This is the first issue of a new publication which we hope will draw together people from a diversity of backgrounds and professions who share a common interest in children's folklore. More particularly, we intend to focus on Australian children's folklore -- territory sadly neglected despite the

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evidence of an enduring, buoyant and richly inventive 'underground' culture of childhood in this country. From Aboriginal Australia to the multi-cultural Australia of today, there are continuing tracks of play ways, vulgarities, taunts, tricks and taboos which mark out the domain of childhood. This Newsletter is a tool and a resource for all those adults with a personal or professional interest in such territory.

To a considerable degree, the ACFN has fulfilled these aspirations - but much more still needs to be done to establish the centrality of folklore studies in Australia.

We therefore welcome the newly established Committee of Inquiry into Folklife in Australia (sponsored by the Department of Arts, Heritage and Environment, The Australia Council, The National Museum of Australia, and The Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs). One of the ACFN editors, Gwenda Davey, is a part-time member of the Committee, so readers can be confident that the particular interests of children's folklore, and of folklore studies generally, will not be overlooked. Elsewhere in this issue we publish the terms of reference of the Inquiry, and urge our readers to let the members of the Committee know their views.

There is also currently an inquiry into the teaching of Australian Studies in this

country, and some interest has been expressed by that committee into folkloric matters. Perhaps Australia's Bicentenary will mark a significant recognition of Australian folklore and folklorists. Roll on 1988!

June Factor  
Gwenda Davey

# COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO FOLKLIFE IN AUSTRALIA

## Terms of Reference

The Committee of Inquiry is asked to consider and report on:

- (i) the nature, diversity and significance of Australian folklife;
- (ii) existing institutional and other arrangements for safeguarding Australian folklife, and the need for new arrangements, having regard in particular to:
  - (a) collection, documentation, conservation and dissemination of folklife materials;
  - (b) support for the practice and development of folk arts.
- (iii) Other measures appropriate to the proper safeguarding, dissemination and appreciation of Australian folk life.

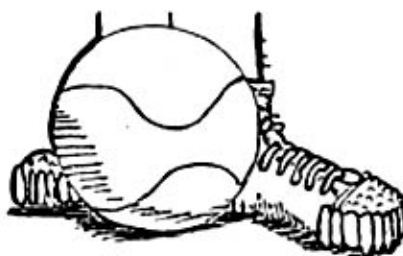
Submissions and enquiries should be directed to:

Ms Julie Miller  
Secretary  
Committee of Inquiry into Folklife  
in Australia  
GPO Box 1252  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Telephone (060) 46 7262  
or toll-free line (008) 026337

The next issue of the ACFN will include an INDEX to the first 10 issues.  
 Don't miss out - make sure your subscription is up-to-date.

## Rebound



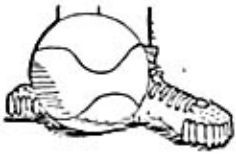
Heather Russell's piece on the game 'Fly' in our last issue has produced some interesting responses. Below we publish extracts from the comments of two correspondents.

From Kel Watkins (Adelaide).

I just got back from 11 weeks away to find the last Folklore Newsletter was waiting and I was interested to read your piece about the playing of "Fly" (ACFN No.9, 1985).

My primary schooling was in (very) rural Western Australia from 1955-1962 and we played Fly often. It was as the Brisbane girl described. The way that one got "out" was to touch any of the sticks as they were jumped. The idea was to make the last jump as large as possible (ensuring that it wasn't too long for yourself) and also try to get a longish gap at the third last jump. In other words, the next player had, as the last three jumps, a long, then short, then long jump. I don't recall any limit to the number of players. We had no reference to spiders, webs and flies.

My housemate, whose schooling was rural South Australia (1966-1973), has never heard of the game, so perhaps it has died out a bit.



From Priscilla Clarke (Melbourne)

I remember playing "Fly" as a child on family holidays (1953-63) and also I think at Primary School.

We used sticks, or drew in the hard sand on the beach. We laid the sticks about 2 feet apart. The person who could jump all the sticks without a mistake (such as knocking the sticks, or missing one) could choose any of the sticks and lay it at the end, where his/her feet landed (behind your heel!).

The object was to make it as difficult as possible for your opponent to jump. Sometimes you only jumped a short distance at the end, so that the next person had to jump a big distance and then a small distance. I usually made it so hard that I went out at my next go!

If you knocked a stick, or landed on one, or missed one, you were out.

The winner was the one who successfully negotiated all the sticks and beat the others.

In our version you could move any stick, including the last one, but you could only put one foot in each section except past the last stick, when you could land on two feet.

I remember having difficulty taking short steps to get in between the first sticks, and then having to do an almighty leap into the last one!

We called it "fly" but I didn't know about spiders, and webs, etc. I thought it referred to "flying" through the air.

In our version there was no limit to the number of players. Generally one person was better than others and did win. It was great training for the long jump in the school sports! It was good at the beach because it was soft to land.

The rules as I remember them were:

1. Any number of players could play (usually 10-15).
2. Any number of sticks or lines could be used, (sometimes we made it extra long to make it harder).
3. You worked out who went first with a hard starting game (e.g. one potato, two potato, or, eenie/weenie, etc.)
4. You were out if you touched, moved, jumped on, etc., a stick.
5. You could move any stick, including the last (but you generally didn't move the first).
6. You tried to make it as hard as you could.
7. The winner was the one who successfully jumped the sticks when everyone else had failed.

Variations

1.

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Basic  
starting  
pattern

2.

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A gap would sometimes be left in the middle which made it hard to land, and take off again

3.

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Sometimes a very narrow space would be left, then a big one

## Joseph Jacobs and 'English' fairy tales in Australia, 1860

by Graham Seal

Joseph Jacobs was born in Sydney, Australia, in 1854. He was educated there and at the Universities of London and Cambridge, later distinguishing himself as a scholar of Jewish history and as a folklorist. At one time he was editor of Folk-Lore, The Journal of the Folklore Society (UK). Apart from the works mentioned below, Jacobs also published collections of Celtic and Indian fairy tales as well as an edition of Aesop. Towards the end of his life, Jacobs worked in the United States. He died in 1916 and should be recognised along with Percy Grainger as an early Australian contributor to the development of folklore studies.

In 1890 Jacobs published his collection of English Fairy Tales, following this up four years later with the unoriginally titled sequel, More English Fairy Tales. In these anthologies, Jacobs presented a selection of 'fairy' (folk) tales that he considered authentically 'English', drawn from both oral and printed sources. In

(Western Australian Institute of Technology)

these works Jacobs' intention was to popularise, and he frequently amended or re-wrote the tales he presented, accurately citing the Grimms' similar practices as justification for this. But he was also a folklorist (in the nineteenth century style) and took pains to point out where and why he had modified the original texts. In addition, he cited his sources with some care, a fact which makes Jacobs of some interest to contemporary Australian folklorists.

Two of the texts he provides were told to him in Australia when he was six, in 1860. These were 'Henny-Penny' and 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. The first-mentioned of these is reproduced here as a very early example of the perpetuation of Anglo-Celtic folklore for children in Australia. Jacobs also recalled hearing versions of 'The Rose-Tree' and 'The Old Witch' here at the same time. Unfortunately Jacobs' professionalism did not extend to providing

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the kind of contextual information that modern folklorists consider essential to their work. But at least the texts themselves have survived, rarities that seem deserving of preservation.

### HENNY-PENNY

One day Henny-penny was picking up corn in the cornyard when - whack! - something hit her upon the head. 'Goodness gracious me!' said Henny-penny; 'the sky's a-going to fall; I must go and tell the king.'

So she went along, and she went along, and she went along, till she met Cocky-locky. 'Where are you going, Henny-penny?' says Cocky-locky. 'Oh! I'm going to tell the king the sky's a-falling,' says Henny-penny. 'May I come with you?' says Cocky-locky. 'Certainly,' says Henny-penny. So Henny-penny and Cocky-locky went to tell the king the sky was falling.

They went along, and they went along, and they went along, till they met Ducky-daddles. 'Where are you going to, Henny-penny and Cocky-locky?' says Ducky-daddles. 'Oh! we're going to tell the king the sky's a-falling,' said Henny-penny and Cocky-locky. 'May I come with you?' says Ducky-daddles. 'Certainly,' said Henny-penny and Cocky-locky. So Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, and Ducky-daddles went to tell the king the sky was a-falling.

So they went along, and they went along, and they went along, till they met Turkey-lurkey. 'Where are you going, Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, and Goosey-poosey?' says Turkey-lurkey. 'Oh! we're going to tell the king the sky's a-falling,' said Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, and Goosey-poosey. 'May I come with you, Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, and Goosey-poosy?' said Turkey-lurkey. 'Oh, certainly, Turkey-lurkey,' said Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, and Goosey-poosey. So Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, Goosey-poosey, and Turkey-lurkey all went to tell the king the sky was a-falling.

So they went along, and they went along, and they went along, till they met Foxy-woxy, and Foxy-woxy said to Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, Goosey-poosy, and Turkey-lurkey: 'Where are you going, Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, Goosey-poosey, and Turkey-lurkey?' And Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, Goosey-poosey, and Turkey-lurkey said to Foxy-woxy: 'We're going to tell the king the sky's a-falling.' 'Oh! but this is not the way to the king, Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, Goosey-poosey, and Turkey-lurkey,' says Foxy-woxy; 'I know the proper way; shall I show you?' 'Oh, certainly, Foxy-woxy,' said Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, Goosey-poosey, and Turkey-lurkey. So Henny-penny,

## 'I know the proper way: shall I show you?'

So they went along, and they went along, and they went along, till they met Goosey-poosey. 'Where are you going to, Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, and Ducky-daddles?' said Goosey-poosey. 'Oh! we're going to tell the king the sky's a-falling,' said Henny-penny and Cocky-locky and Ducky-daddles. 'May I come with you?' said Goosey-poosey. 'Certainly,' said Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, and Ducky-daddles. So Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, and Goosey-poosey went to tell the king the sky was a-falling.

Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, Goosey-poosey, Turkey-lurkey, and Foxy-woxy all went to tell the king the sky was a-falling.

So they went along, and they went along, and they went along, till they came to a narrow and dark hole. Now this was the door of Foxy-woxy's cave. But Foxy-woxy said to Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, Goosey-poosey, and Turkey-lurkey: 'This is the short way to the king's palace, you'll soon get there if you follow me. I will go first and you come

after, Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, Goosey-poosey, and Turkey-lurkey.' 'Why, of course, certainly, without doubt, why not?' said Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, Goosey-poosey, and Turkey lurky.

So Foxy-woxy went into his cave, and he didn't go very far, but turned around to wait for Henny-penny, Cocky-locky, Ducky-daddles, Goosey-poosey, and Turkey-lurkey. So at last at first Turkey-lurkey went through the dark hole into the cave. He hadn't got far when 'Hrumph', Foxy-woxy snapped off Turkey-lurkey's head and threw his body over his left shoulder. Then Goosey-poosey went in, and 'Hrumph', off went her head and Goosey-poosey was thrown beside Turkey-lurkey. Then Ducky-daddles waddled down, and 'Hrumph', snapped Foxy-woxy, and Ducky-daddle's head was off and Ducky-daddles was thrown alongside Turkey-lurky and Goosey-poosey. Then Cocky-locky strutted down into the cave, and he hadn't gone far when 'Snap, Hrumph!' went Foxy-woxy, and Cocky-locky was thrown alongside of Turkey-lurkey, Goosey-poosey, and Ducky-daddles.

But Foxy-woxy had made two bites at Cocky-locky, and when the first snap only hurt Cocky-locky, but didn't kill him, he called out to Henny-penny. But she turned tail and off she ran home, so she never told the king the sky was a-falling.

#### NOTE

'Jack and the Beanstalk' is number 13 and 'Henny-Penny' number 20 in Jacobs' first anthology, English Fairy Tales, (London, 1890). Mention of 'The Rose-Tree' also occurs in this publication and mention of 'The Old Witch' is found in its successor More English Fairy Tales, (London, 1894). Both these publications were conveniently reprinted in one volume as English Fairy Tales, (The Bodley Head, London, 1968). It is from this reprint that the material in this article derives.



## Teachers as transmitters of children's lore

Friendly adults have often enjoyed sharing their childhood memories with the children in their circle of acquaintance, sometimes with a little embellishment added for good measure!

The following parodies were collected in Melbourne in 1985 by Keryn Johnson, a Teacher Education student at Footscray Institute. Primary school teachers had played a significant part in the transmission of each parody.

ACFN would like to hear from readers about the source of their children's lore: when, if ever, are adults part of the transmission process; and what effect does the publication of children's lore have on its transmission? We hope to devote part of a subsequent issue to these questions.

### Row, Row, Row Your Boat

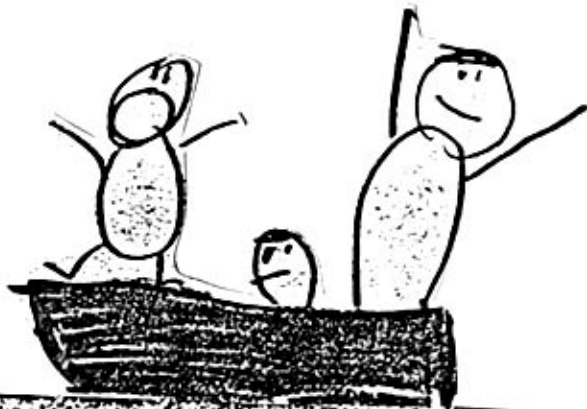
Row, row, row your boat,  
Gently down the stream,  
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,  
Life is but a dream.

Another version I heard of this was from my 6 year old nephew, Stephen, and he told me that his teacher taught it to him:

### Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Row, row, row your boat,  
Gently down the stream,  
And if you see an alligator,  
Don't forget to scream.

(1985, Avondale Heights)

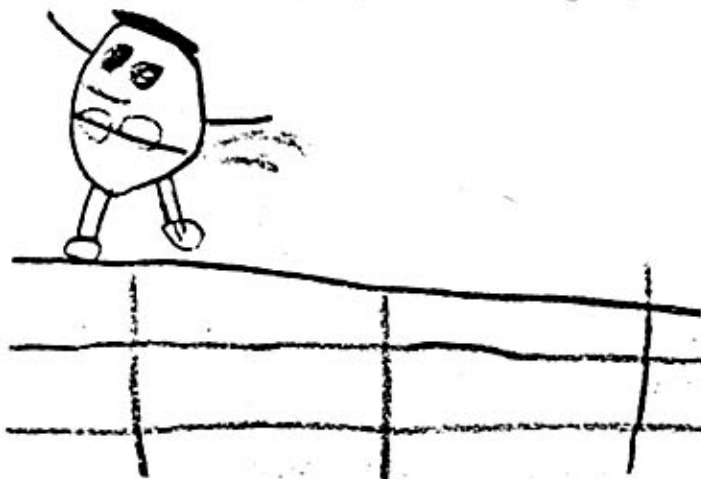


Stephen, also told me another version of Humpty Dumpty that his teacher taught him:

### Humpty Dumpty

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall,  
Eating dry bananas,  
And where do you think he put the skin,  
In his new pyjamas.

(1985, Avondale Heights)



The following nonsense rhyme was told to me by a boy aged 7. He told me that his teacher taught it to him and the rest of the class:

### I'm a Green Pea

Celery's in the salad,  
Meat's in the punch,  
And I'm in the freezer 'till Sunday  
lunch,  
I'm a green pea, freeze, freeze,  
I'm a green pea, freeze, freeze;  
Will you thaw my frozen heart?  
Thaw, thaw, thaw my frozen heart,  
Thaw, thaw, thaw my frozen heart,  
Thaw, thaw, thaw,  
Thaw, thaw, thaw, thaw my frozen heart.  
(1985, Keilor)



Another version of Mary Had a Little Lamb was told to me by my 6 year old nephew, Stephen. His teacher makes similar poems up about different children in the classroom:

#### Mary Had a Little Lamb

Mary had a little lamb,  
Stephen had a pup,  
Glenn had an alligator that ate the  
others up.

She also made the following two verses  
up:

Popeye can swim,  
But I'm not him.

Paddington's a bear,  
And that's not fair.  
(1985, Avondale Heights)

#### Little Jack Horner

Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,  
Eating a Christmas pie;  
He put in his thumb, and took out a  
plum,  
And said, 'What a good boy am I!'

This version of Little Jack Horner was  
told to me by a Grade 2 Primary School  
Teacher. She heard the following version  
from one of her pupils and she then taught  
it to the rest of the class:

#### Little Jack Horner

Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,  
Eating a Christmas pie;  
He put in his thumb, and took out a  
plum,  
And the juice went in his eye.  
(1985, Maidstone)

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## Merry Christmas from Chile!

from Hazel Hall

This item reached the editors after the  
publication of the last edition of ACFN -  
thus explaining the reference to Christmas  
1985!

Dear June and Gwenda,

This is an early Christmas greeting.  
As you can see, we are in the middle of the  
Atacama Desert in Chile. The sketch shows  
one of the streets in San Pedro, a lovely  
little Spanish/Indian Oasis village, full  
of mud brick buildings. I recorded this  
Christmas Carol there, and thought you  
might like a copy. It was not sung by  
children, but all the people in San Pedro  
know and sing it, children included! (The  
onomatopoeia is of course typical of child-  
ren's songs.) Lyrics were provided by the  
locals. I haven't recorded any music or



chants by children, but have noticed minor  
thirds, major thirds, neutral thirds and  
major seconds appearing regularly in the  
snatches of song heard while travelling.  
The following by a little Chilean girl  
(about 3 years old), is typical of what I  
have been hearing in many countries:

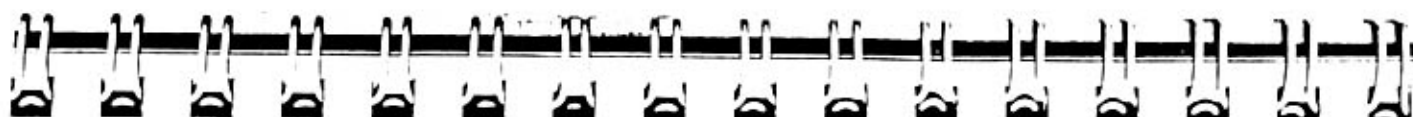


4. 11. '85

Bus, Sanriago to Antofogastro



(third wavering in pitch)



From San Pedro de Atacama - An oasis in the Atacama Desert, CHILE

"THE CHICKEN  
SONG"

CHICHIRICHI COCOROCO (A CHILEAN CHRISTMAS  
CAROL)



Transcribed  
H. Hall 10. 11. '85

2 quena (flutes) in harmony } transcribed

1 guitar

5 female voices

5 male voices

Fco. = Francisco

12 Quirado ✓

CHICHIRICHI, COCOROCO

1. ././ Camina Fco. breve  
././ media././ noche son././  
././ que si no andamos ligero  
cantará cocorocó././
- Refrain ././ Chichirichi, cocorocó././  
././ al Niño Dios lo quiero yo././
2. ././ ya tocan././ las campanillas  
ya lo llaman a rezar././  
con la "suto" y con "la mero"././  
no me pudo "persinar"
3. ././ Vamos a correr pan blanco  
de Belén a la Portal ././  
././ que dice el Sr. Vicario  
se llama casa del pan././  
Chichirichi...
4. ././ Todos los negros contentos  
venimos a festejar././  
././ a un niño tan poderoso  
que nos viene a libertar././

## Growing up in the early 1900's /part 2 by Nancy Malseed

For Part 1 of this recollection of childhood in Victoria's Western District, see ACFN No.9, November 1985.

These were the days before Infant Welfare Centres, Kindergartens, etc. So, with many big families, some children started school at four or four and a half.

On Monday mornings they lined up, when the school bell rang, for the flag raising ceremony. All said solemnly - "I love God and my country. I will honour the Flag. I will serve the King, and cheerfully obey my parents, teachers, and the law." Then they marched into school, and learnt to write from their copybooks - "Honesty is the best policy" and similar proverbs.

Special days at school then were Arbour Day, when trees were planted, and Empire Day. "The 24th of May is Empire Day - if you don't give us a holiday, we'll all run away."

School was from 9 am to 4 pm, and children walked even from two or three miles away. On arrival, teacher would say - "What did you see on your way to school?"

This, no doubt, taught them to be observant, trying to out-do each other. And winning the spelling contest was at least as prestigious as getting into the sports teams.

At playtime, girls went to their playground, and the boys to theirs. The girls, future homemakers, might build pine houses from the pine needles which fell from the large trees. They also played Hopscotch, and many skipping games. One the girls chanted was: "A house to let, apply within - Mary runs out and Rosie runs in". This went on until all the girls had "run in" for their skip, the ends of the rope held by two girls in charge. Hidey, Chasey, Kick the Tin, Oranges and Lemons, were other games. (An agony of indecision to choose between "Strawberries and cream" and "Fruit salad and icecream!" Rare delicacies before refrigeration, and a hard choice, even in imagination.)

It was every girl's dream to be chosen to dance the Maypole. A beautiful sight, with the rainbow-coloured cloth streamers winding this way and that, as they went through the intricate steps. Also dancing, when the boys had to partner the girls. Very bashful and reluctant were the boys. ("It's Sissy".)

The boys played Marbles, Knucklebones (made from sheeps knees and hocks, often gaily painted), Rounders, and of course, Football!

Casterton's Glenelg river, only a trickle in summer, often floods in winter - in the 1920's, nearly into the school ground.

'A house to let, apply within-- Mary runs out and Rosie runs in



One winter day, while the boys were playing football, the ball was kicked into the fast flowing river. The boys all ran along, trying to catch it as it was swept near the bank; but, caught in the current, it swirled away from their grasp. They ran along for half a mile, where there was a suspension bridge, and spread themselves along it, confident that SOMEONE would catch the ball.

No sooner were they on the bridge than it broke, throwing them all in the water. Two boys won bravery awards for saving non-swimmers, but one little boy was drowned. He was seven years old. The whole town mourned.

When school was dismissed at 4 pm, the children made their way home. Some helped in the house - the boys by cutting wood for the big open fires and wood stoves, the girls by helping with other children, or doing the messages for Mum. Some went to piano and violin lessons (which again, the boys thought "sissy", so it was mostly the girls). There might be a Church youth group meeting, or a play with neighbouring children until mealtime.

Radio and TV were not even imagined in those days. At night, families would sing around the piano - or without, if no piano or pianist - the old songs their parents had heard from THEIR parents, who came from "The old country". To many, England, Scotland, Ireland, were "Home". Popular songs of the day were very singable, so these, too, were sung with gusto.

Some families played cards - Coon Can, 500, Crib, Happy Families, Old Maid, etc. Or they played Ludo and Snakes and Ladders. (Strict families thought cards "The Devil's pack".)

Special occasions were when the parents had a musical evening. Guests brought their children, who played in the kitchen or dining room while the adults participated in the music. "Speak, speak, speak to me Thora", the children heard through closed doors, sung by an impassioned singer - and many other favourite songs and recitations of the day. The children came into their own at suppertime and a good time was had by all.

As the girls grew older, they began to sew, often by kerosene lamp, for their "Glory Box". Six of everything was the minimum requirement before a girl married. One girl had a long engagement (years!!) and had 12 hand-worked Fuji silk night-dresses in her "Box".

Father was definitely Head of the House. And "Children should be seen and not heard." Children were not allowed out at night except on rare occasions such as a very good concert party. My interviewees had memories of a family of bellringers, called "The Lightfoots", who came to the Western District every year, and put on an excellent concert. The annual visit of the Blind Entertainers was another highlight. Children were taken by their parents to hear these top line artists. The lucky ones also went to the annual Circus.

Then, the silent pictures - "the flicks"! Every child longed to go on Saturday nights. But alas - until they were older, they had to be content with "swap cards" with pictures of their favourites. "Look, I'll swap you TWO Lilian Gishes for one Bryant Washburn."

In Casterton, the pictures were run by the Town Band. The Band played in front of the Mechanics Institute until the pictures started. Small children, taken by their parents, were enthralled to listen to the Band, then home by 8 pm.

Later, when they were old enough to go, great speculation as to the partner. Almost a notice of engagement to be taken by a boy. Everyone dressed in their best clothes - it was a social occasion.

One boy, aged 15, boarded with the lady who played the piano at the silent pictures, so he didn't miss one show, and studied every movement of the screen stars. By sheer determination, persistence, and faith in his own talent, he found his way to Hollywood, eventually playing in TV shows and films in his long life. But everyone said, "Isn't he MAD. Fancy giving up a good job in the Bank at £3 a week"!!



Turkish girls don't like me. S. (V)  
Some are O.K. others, no way. S. (V)  
Yugoslavia, but she doesn't talk Yugoslavians  
and T. (Vietnamese girls), they're friends - they  
to me. I help them when boys bash them up. I'd be friends  
with Vietnamese and Chinese girls, but not Turkish.

(ESB girl, Grade 5)  
... in Vietnam?  
... fight, swear;  
... fighting



A tangible result of research into children's folklore at the ICD is the recently published report of an ethnographic playground study of an inner-suburban Melbourne school: Play and Friendship in a Multi-Cultural Playground. We print below the speech made at the launching party.

It is always a pleasure to visit this Institute, as its reputation, and that of its staff members, became well known to me during my terms on VPSEC and the TEC Advanced Education Council - and I refer particularly to the unique expertise built up by the Institute in the area of the folk-lore of Australian children. The Australian community can be proud of the knowledge acquired through this interest in the life of children when they are not supervised and directed by adults.

The Human Rights Commission was therefore pleased to be able to select, from the numerous expressions of interest it received for its project, "The School System and Students from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds", the application for



assistance towards research proposed by the Institute into children's play in the multi-cultural playground.

Until this research was undertaken by Heather Russell and her two assistants, we knew very little in Australia about how primary school children were responding to playground life which was multi-cultural and multi-lingual and where the family language of the majority of children was not English. In the case of the primary school studied by the authors, 82% of the children came from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The researchers wished to look at what children actually did in the school playground. They looked at aggression, at conflicts which might arise from inter-ethnic prejudices and tensions, the play traditions of the children from different ethnic backgrounds, and finally when the researcher now known as the "games lady" had won the children's confidence, she interviewed many of these children to discover their views.

**'...it raises many matters on which hard thinking must be done...'**

Research is one of the several functions of the Human Rights Commission, which was established in 1981 to protect and promote the observance of human rights throughout Australia within the limits of Commonwealth power. The Commission has the responsibility for the administration of three pieces of Commonwealth legislation - the Human Rights Commission Act 1981, the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1984. These three Acts specifically empowered the Commission to undertake research that would contribute to the promotion of understanding and acceptance of human rights.

The Commission is therefore proud to be associated with this pioneering research into play and friendships in the multi-cultural playground. It provides the Commission with vital information in our "ethnic prejudice in schools" series and raises many matters on which hard thinking must be done, and specifically indicates where further research should be undertaken.

The book will add to the Commission's, and therefore the community's information on a number of points crucial to the study of ethnic prejudice, especially although not only among second generation people on such topics as the age at which prejudice emerges, the role of the home versus that of the wider social network in the development of prejudice, and the correlation between sex differences and the growth and display of prejudice. The book demonstrates the importance of games, especially folk-lore games, as an acceptable expression of cultural diversity and a common resource for children from different ethnic backgrounds.

The authors make many important findings and I would like to refer to one or two of these. There was a significant difference between boys and girls concerning the children they would include in game playing - two thirds of girls played in mono-cultural groups, whereas two thirds of boys played in multi-cultural groups. Although children's best friends were always the same sex as themselves, girls' best friends generally came from their own ethnic groups whereas boys were more flexible. Do these preferences, I wonder, reflect home or playground influences?



Some extremely valuable information was obtained from interviews with the children. Because in the classroom children chose to sit with friends from their own ethnic groups, teachers did not perceive that there might be antagonism between the various groups. And whereas from observation alone, it could be concluded that there was little prejudice in the playground, interviews with the children themselves revealed a degree of inter-ethnic tension unrecognised by the school. This I believe is one of the major strengths of this study. Many children held antagonistic views towards children from other cultures. Although a widely held view suggests that it is the most recent arrivals in our community, namely the Vietnamese, against whom most prejudice is

series. Three of these studies consider institutional and direct discrimination against students from non-English speaking backgrounds and its effect on the students such as anti-Asian racism in schools in the Wollongong area, and whether some schools reduce students' legitimate employment aspirations on grounds of ethnic background and/or gender. A further three studies are being prepared by students and teachers examining their own institutions and practices and the effects they have, such as the students, staff and Council of the Yipirinya School formed by Aboriginal parents in Alice Springs, the special curriculum and adaptations at the Marian College in Sunshine, and research by high school students in the Geelong area.

## '...prejudice was a source of humiliation and shame for some children...'

shown, this did not appear to be the case in this playground. Vietnamese children had play skills which were much in demand in the playground. However prejudice was a source of humiliation and shame for some children who were excluded from some play activities because of their ethnic background.

The research raises interesting questions of what level, and what kind of interference, are appropriate in children's play life. What steps should the community take regarding overt and covert racism in children's play life? Among several useful recommendations, the author suggests that further work needs to be done to broaden our understanding of prejudice and racial tension in the school community. The Human Rights Commission has done some hard thinking on this subject and has developed a kit for schools entitled "Teaching Human Rights" which looks at problems of racism, sexism, and other areas of infringement of human rights. The Commission is currently supporting six other research projects in its "ethnic prejudice in the schools"

The Commission feels itself fortunate that it has this unique work, "Play and Friendships in a Multi-Cultural Playground", which complements the other six pieces of research work, because it looks at a most important factor in children's school life - playground life - where friendships are made, leaders created and much of the child's physical, social, and educational development take place.

This is a valuable, substantial, eminently readable piece of scholarly work - one with which the Commission is proud to be associated. Complete within itself, it also suggests many further jumping off points for research. The photographs are a delight and the appendices a mine of information on games, rhymes, jokes, and riddles used by children. I hope that you will all obtain your own copies of this unique, pioneering work and read it for yourselves. In officially launching this book this evening, may I offer my warmest congratulations and that of the Human Rights Commission, to the author Heather Russell, together with Gwenda Davey and June Factor who so ably assisted her.

**PLAY AND FRIENDSHIPS IN A MULTI-  
CULTURAL PLAYGROUND**

by Heather Russell, assisted by  
Gwenda Davey and June Factor.

Australian Children's Folklore  
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