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## Interview with Pete Seeger Regarding Sarah Gertrude Knott (FA 459)

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Tape 1 of 2  
Informant: Priscilla Urner  
Interviewer: Hillary Glatt  
Date: March 1, 1995  
Location: McLean, VA  
Transcriber: Andrew Lee  
Sanyo Memo Scriber

Counter #

001HG: Okay, well this is tape number one of a discussion with Priscilla Urner. We're in McLean, Virginia. It's Wednesday, March 1st, 1995 and this is a joint project of the Kentucky Oral History Commission and Western Kentucky University. So I guess first I'd start with asking you some personal background about yourself and where you're from and how you got involved in folk festivals and the folk festival movement.

PU: Well, I mean I've been doing it since I was a kid in elementary school. I went to the New England Conservatory on this special thing when I was in the sixth grade. It was a class for teachers on folk dancing and music and all different kinds of things. I was accepted and I was teaching at church schools. And then from then I--my mother was on a foreign mission board in Boston and we used to have people coming back from foreign countries, visiting at the house off and on, and from that when I went to college I was very much interested in people of all races and nationalities and I became, eventually, president of the Cosmopolitan Club at Boston University and later of the one of all Boston colleges, all the universities in the Boston area. And so I knew foreign students from everywhere and they all taught me their, because I was interested, they taught me their folk dances.

I was a member of the folk dance exhibition group for the International Center in--the International Center? It was another name. On Boylston--on Beacon Street in Boston. So I was doing folk dancing all the time and eventually I was teaching at the--while I was in college I was teaching at the [short pause] Elizabeth Peabody Settlement House, too. And also I, I've forgotten just where I started learning square dances, but I was calling square dances all around Boston and that type of thing and teaching it. And then I became very much interested in, as I say, all the foreign students and their folk dancing and then when my family were in New Hampshire and I had just gotten out of college, I went up to join them and in travelling around the state of New Hampshire as State Recreation Specialist, I was teaching at the university and also State Recreation Specialist under the old extension service business, too. I found all these pockets of international groups all through the state. And

so I finally got together and, got together a state body of people, all representing all kinds of things and petitioned the governor on starting a folk festival for the state of New Hampshire. So I started the New Hampshire Folk Festival back about 1943 and just prior to starting that--

Oh, I know. While I was in New Hampshire, too, I used to be working with the New England Folk Festival and at one of the gatherings of the New England Folk Festival I met Sarah Gertrude. And so I'd been in touch with her. And so-- I've forgotten how it was, but she asked if I would escort some of the New Hampshire people down to the Philadelphia Folk Festival. That was my really beginning of working with Sarah. That would be somewhere in the mid-forties, I can't remember exactly--forty? '43, probably is around there because I, I graduated in '39, immediately was working in Boston area and then about '41 I went to New Hampshire. And I was first in hotel recreation up there and then, yeah. I think that's probably about it [laughs]. You know, I can't keep very good sequence here.

So that gives you my background and then when I got married 050in '49, that was the last folk festival, that spring, that I coordinated up there and I moved down to Arlington, Virginia and eventually was working with Arlington Recreation and started looking around realizing we were beginning to have more people coming in of different nationalities and eventually I started, well, it was in a year or two after that I started the Northern Virginia Folk Festival. And I've just, just last year or so, retired off, after thirty years on the board of organizing that and Sarah used to come--

Actually, remind me, I don't think you would have the program where we honored her. It was just after she passed away. We dedicated our festival right after that. Program dedicated to Sarah. I think that would be nice to have in your, down there. I sent one to her sister, Sarah. But whether--not Sarah.

HG: Gladys?

PU: Gladys. And whether Gladys turned it in I don't know. But that would be, you know the [unclear]. And then from then on, the time that I was in Arlington I was working with Sarah. I worked with the--oh, my husband and I left Arlington because he had a job in Florida for a while so I worked with her at the Petersburg festival and one other down there. And that's when Vyts Beliajus came on. You knew that Vyts passed away--

HG: Oh, he did?

PU: September.

HG: Oh, o.k.

PU: This September. Actually, I didn't hear it myself until I got my *Viltis*. I was so sorry because I had written him at Christmas but hadn't had a Christmas card and I meant to follow up and see if anything had happened further, but they said in that he had passed away in September. But I met Vyts at one of the festivals in St. Petersburg and so he and I--

HG: Was that the National or was that the Florida festival?

PU: That was the National. The National was held in so many different places. Now I was, because I was living in Miami area, I was able to work with her on that. Because of being married I didn't feel I should take money to work in some of the areas, like when it was up in New York. I worked at that time, when it was held in--oh, dear--what part of New York was it held? Not New York City but--well, the National has been held--well, you've got the records of it, but from then on I was either there--all the ones in this area I was with her or I was working on the council that was organizing it. Several times I was secretary of her National Folklife-Folk Festival council. John, and I can't remember John's last name, John? [inaudible] this morning.

HG: Oh. Dildine? Whisman? There were so many.

PU: Whisman is the one from the Appalachian Commission.

HG: Is he? O.k.

PU: That's the one. There we are. Good, if you come up with some of these--no. John passed away--he was about, younger than I was, but he passed away a few years ago and I can't think of his name. He was, at the last one out at Wolf Trap, he was having trouble. Couldn't speak too well. Cancer throat business. John. John. But he and I sort of alternated as secretary of her council there quite a while. Now, there were a lot of young ones came on that council towards the end before it went out of that mode, you know, and Joe Wilson came on. But I don't think they really knew--  
100-some of them were after she didn't get up here much to meetings and I don't think they worked much with her. You'll see names there and I can't think of their--I see faces, but--

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HG: That's o.k.

PU: That's the problem with getting a little older.

HG: That's o.k.

PU: It'll come to you a minute later, you know. But anyway, that gives you as much of my background and I've worked with her for years either getting people to the festival or she and I would sit down going over problems when she was trying to keep it going. I knew her quite well during that period. And the interesting part, my mother was a little older than she, but similar in interests and mother was always following me around at my folk festivals and she and Sarah became good friends at these festivals and things. And so I often was picking up the two of them to take them to things even--she even went with my daughter to--oh, my daughter drove her to some things that she wanted to attend, Sarah wanted. So I probably knew her in a personal way about as well and then at the end when she was staying out at the private school out here, while she was doing the things at Wolf Trap, I was often the person would drive her and bring her and take care of her.

HG: What private school was that?

PU: Madeira.

HG: Oh.

PU: Madeira. We used to have a lot of the people stay at Madeira. And Sarah herself would sometimes stay there and some of the people, sometimes they were staying at one of the hotels, but Madeira several years. And then we would have our after-parties and things there. One or two years I got the Vienna Recreation Department to let us use some of their big hall for one of our after-parties, you know for after the festivals, that kind of thing. So, probably that gives you, you know--I mean I was very close to her during, I would say, not from the '40s but a little bit later and up until the time she died. I was about as close as anyone except Steve because he was down, Steve Cates, towards the end. He would either telephone me or write me when she was bad and sometimes Gladys called me. So actually I guess--and we--she was a little bit interested in Christian Science towards the end at times and I'm a Christian Scientist. So that was another bond in a way.

But she was also very--she used to love to talk with my mother, I mean they were--Mother passed away at ninety-seven. Yeah. Ninety-seven a few years ago. So they were in sort of the

same bailiwick, you know, and stuff. And mother was always following me around on my folk dancing. Even when I went out to visit the Indians in the reservations. I'd turn around and my mother and one of the Indians were dancing in the other room. They couldn't talk to each other but they were dancing! So I mean you know, my family has been interested in everything I've done.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: Now that gives you enough of my background.

HG: O.k. So then let's start talking about the festival. Now when you brought the New Hampshire group to Philadelphia, that was--

PU: That would be fiddlers. The--Llewellen. [short pause] What was his, Llewellen's name? He was the one that used to--he was the fiddler that opened the legislature for New Hampshire. And then there was Will Airs, is another one.

By the way, I've got it here somewhere. This might just interest you. It's just aside but--last summer. Well I used to have, when I was teaching University of New Hampshire, I had what I called the Durham Reelers. It was a folk dance group and we used the name Durham

150Reelers which is a folk dance. And I used to take them all over the state. They were students and faculty, joint, and put on exhibitions when I'd give lectures of how the different foreign people came into New Hampshire. When I'd mention it they'd either sing or do folk dances. Last summer when I went up for my Bos University fifty-fifth reunion, we took a trip through New Hampshire and a couple of the students that went in that group heard I was coming. Thirteen of them got together my last night including--oh dear. The fiddler, young fiddler. His name will come to me. He's one of the ones who is fiddling everywhere now. And he came over. He didn't used to be in my group, but from the time we did an exhibition at the University of Massachusetts he followed us. You may not want this in your--

HG: No, that's o.k.

PU: Yeah. And so we danced, we danced and we sang and they had albums of pictures and stuff. It was very, very interesting but--he gave me a book where, that he has written up on all the old New England, including Will Airs and pictures and stuff and a tape that he's made. I've got it. If I find it I'll--that tape. That's what made me think of Will Airs. Llewellen--I can see that snow-white hair. And then later I

had to bring down, along with those guys--Will Airs is Massachusetts so [unclear] was New Hampshire. But then there was another guy that was a sea-chanteyist and he was in the old sailors home up in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. And I used to go over and pick him up and escort him. And one of my jobs at the Philadelphia Folk Festival was--he was almost always drunk and the mike would be here and he'd be going this way and part of my job was to try to keep him less drunk before he went on to sing his song so the mike would be in front of him [laughter]! This just might interest you.

Oh, one other thing that just came to me from those festivals, too. At one--she always opened the festival with a, like sort of a grand march thing but the opening with the flags being carried with honors. I met the gal from the [short pause] Coast Guard who was the flag bearer at the first Philadelphia festival that I went to. She passed away two years ago. And had been in touch ever since with her and we used to reminisce about Sarah and all the things and she'd visit Sarah when she was up here but that's sort of beside the point but it's just another little point that so many of us that got together at some of those festivals have kept in touch ever since and have worked with Sarah. And Sarah also knew, and to some extent, worked with Elizabeth Burchenal. Have you come across--? Elizabeth was the American representative on the International Folk Council in, and, in London, the--and I'm still a member of it. It's become the International--what's the--? It's like the one here. They've changed it to traditional--

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: It'll come to me. But anyway, and Elizabeth Burchenal was the first one to record on, in all her books. I've got all her books on folk dancing. And she was the head of physical education for women in--was it New York? I

200believe--I think. But I've got all her books and Elizabeth was the one that was--did Ted Shawn's School of the Dance out in the Berkshires. She was the one to go out there and teach at his--he wanted folk dancing. Ted Shawn wanted to in the summer.

And Eddie Nadell. You may have heard of Eddie, but Eddie's passed on. Another one that knew Sarah very well. He was the teacher of folk dancing at Harvard. And--Harvard International Center. And Eddie and I and--and another person that knew her. Philadelphia. She's the--been teaching the folk dancing at the International Center there and she started the big Chi--big Italian folk arts program, the United States--oh dear, come to me in a minute, but

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anyway. We were the repre--Elizabeth Burchenal was too ill to go to the International Folk Festival in Venice, Italy and we represented her at the International Congress and so forth over there.

HG: What year? Around what year, you said?

PU: That would be about '46. No, wait a minute. '49. '49. '49. Venice, Italy. And I've been to some of the meetings in New York at the university and some--I keep in touch with what they're doing. I'm still a member of that. But you've probably come across that in your work.

HG: I've come across--is it the same organization that Maude Karpeles was--?

PU: Yes. That Maude Karpe--I knew Maude when she, yeah, because--

HG: Oh, you did?

PU: --she was still alive when I first went there and--

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: You know all that much. When you say the names they're still coming to me.

HG: Sure.

PU: Because it's so long ago [laughs]. You're not thinking of those names for a while, you know.

HG: Sure, sure. Of course, of course.

PU: But anyway.

HG: So what was at the festivals in the '40s? What was--?

PU: They were all--well--oh, I should mention another thing, too. We used to find ways to either raise the money or get sponsors to help get these people here. Particularly when they were in this area, we used to get restaurants who would feed them. I used to find churches that would let them sleep in sleeping bags in their places. Rec departments that would let them stay there, use the bathrooms, that kind of thing. And--the lady who started the International Children's Day, you know, at Wolf Trap. She and I used to work with--she got her ideas in working with Sarah on--she was one of the wealthy people from Washington who helped in the early days of getting sponsorship and that type of



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thing. But that was another thing that we used to do. Now down in Philadelphia the Brethren Church have a place there where young people stay and we used to--they were wonderful.

They would, for practically nothing, they would let some people stay there. In fact I stayed there a couple of times even though I'm not a Brethren but when you were working with this type of thing, you know. And I had very little money to work with

250so this travelling and stuff around wasn't easy or, you know, staying places. And I would drive most of the time.

But we would have the American Indians and she used to, as you can tell from the programs, most of the times she tried to work it through the early development and up through to the present. Other times she would have it another theme. Sometimes it was like wedding themes and so forth. But you'll see this in some of the programs. But she would, herself, she had so many of these contacts and with these people in California, these professors, and in Colorado and all, and they would send to her, recommend to her, or she would go there and find them. You know, check on them herself. But we would have the Acadian fiddlers and there would be--well, John Jackson. I'm sure you've heard of John Jackson.

HG: Certainly.

PU: He always comes to our festival here and participate. But John was one of the early ones, too. Actually, Chuck Perdue helped find him and at one of the early festivals he came to his mind. But anyway, she would have these Kentucky junket-type things. That's where you--the old New England style dancing in the kitchen with fiddles on the--oh. I'm trying to think. It would--it's hard for me to remember because I've been to so many festivals since. But it would be quite an array at the National ones that were from different parts. Particularly the Swedish, the German. Russian came in towards later. I don't remember her having so much in the Russian. I think the Ukrainian, the Russian was more that I had later. You know I'm trying to mix--think back. But I know she was strong on the American Indian and the early American. The clogging, the various types of clogging, she would have the various types of square dancing and then--oh, dear, the Colorado square dancer. And I went out to his classes out there myself. Hmm. And then she would have the dances, the Brigham Young people. And then from the California Folk Federation. So that--the early programs, I think you can tell them the best from when you look at the programs. As I say my husband, back--what'd he say? '37 when the festival was here in Washington he was

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still a student and he was one of the volunteers helping her so he got to meet her at that time. So our family has had an interest all the way through. That's about the best I can--I'm trying to think of things concerning these festivals, you know. The biggest thing was getting these newspapers, like in Philadelphia. You've heard that the newspaper there is the big one that underwrote the festival there. And then we would go to the music academy later for the parties and the big dances and stuff. That all should be showing. Hmm.

300I know another job I had was, at these festivals, was to keep the darn American Indians from making their bells jingle too much backstage, you know, 'til they were on. I used to help her with all these kind of things. My name was very seldom in the program. That's one thing that's interesting about Sarah. Sarah very seldom put anybody else's name unless she had to. She was an odd gal. I don't mean it--this is in a way--there was Helen, not Steltson. What was Helen's name, last name? Helen got in there one year as assistant director and I was the other assistant director but I wasn't listed. And this used to make a few people [searches for word] uppity, but I knew the worth of what she was doing so I never let it bother me. But there was very seldom that you'll find my name as recognition yet I was always in there either listening to her when she was almost crying in her apartment up in Northwest because of the financial problems we were having and--yeah. I'd sit on the bed with her and try to figure, you know, these things out with her.

But she was such a staunch character and had done so much and plugged along so long without hardly any help. These men that did the most for her was Wy--Whisman and there was another guy that passed away not too long ago. What was he with? They represented top-notch government. They did practically the most to help her and they got that Council going and they--they're the ones that eventually--well we all worked on it. Got the National Park Service back there. That was the--when that happened at last it was going. Of course it's still a part of it. So that was the luckiest thing. She was--she had a myriad, myriad [repeats for emphasis] of contacts and she was always fishing for anything extra she could get.

Sister--the head of Mary--Mount--the Catholic school on Glebe Road [Mount Vernon]. The college, Mary--not Mary Washington. Where's [unclear]. He's a couple years younger than I am. I'd say that's why he can remember names a little better than I can at this point. But yeah, you've probably--it's on Glebe Road, the Catholic girl's college. It started a school and now it's a college. But anyway, the

head sister at that time, she's no longer there. I can remember her sitting in the green room with us. She became a friend of Sarah because she was so interested in what she was doing and for a while she was on my Northern Virginia board, too. Mary--Mother--I keep thinking of Mother Teresa.

HG: That's o.k. Don't worry about it.

350PU: Well anyway, these are names, you know, you can pin them down better.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: But as I say, there were very few people that she--that was the one thing about Sarah. Every so often it used to gripe me a little bit in the gut, you know that--there were so many people that were doing so much and they were never printed. Their names weren't printed. So that's why I'm trying to think of any of these that might not be--that council that we were on, John, and you'll find his name 'cause I'm sure the council names are there. I just couldn't--mine are up in the attic somewhere and I haven't had occasion. Plus, when I was with Arlington Recreation I and, when I first retired I thought they were going to keep those files together and I put a lot of my National files in there. And a sports guy that came along and decided that section we had was, special events and all, wasn't so important. He dumped our drawers. And somebody else came in and found they were gone. They couldn't do a thing with it. I mean I had left it to help with our--a lot of the stuff was tied into ours, too. So that's why I don't have some of my stuff. I thought it was going to be a better place to keep it than at home here, you know. That's why Sarah decided--we were talking about some of these things earlier and that's why she decided she wanted hers to go to a university somewhere where they might amount to something. O.k. Go ahead. I wander from the subject but I try to give you what I can.

HG: No. That's o.k. That's a lot of the times how you get more information.

PU: Yeah, but I'm, you know.

HG: So you actually started your festival before you'd ever been to a National Folk Festival? You did--how did you know what a folk festival was when you started the New Hampshire one?

PU: Hmm.

HG: Had you heard of the National?

PU: Oh, I'd heard of it. Yes. And I was just interested in bringing our people together somehow. I'd always been interested in bringing people together of different na--in fact, when I graduated college, I wanted to go into the Fletchers School of Law and Diplomacy and it was '39. My family and they'd lost money and, you know, all this kind of thing. So I went to B.U. where I got a scholarship and just everything I was doing was bringing people together. That's why I became the head of the Cosmopolitan Club. And I was putting on programs all the time, even when--and I was president of the German Club and I taught the German dances and we were putting them on. So our first festival wouldn't be quite like Sarah's but it would be on a small scale. Oh, I tell you. Other people that I knew very well and somebody else that knew her. Have you talked with Rosenberg? Dave  
400Rosenberg.

HG: I haven't although I've heard the name.

PU: Dave would be another person and he's right here in Washington. Dave was the one that started the--and I've been to his festivals. He started the Washington--the [pause]--

HG: The one that's at Glen Echo?

PU: The Washington Folk Dance Festival.

HG: Oh, o.k.

PU: His was called the Washington Folk Dance Festival. And then there was the guy in New York. I'd been up to things that he did. He and his wife, and they did the folk dance records that have been recorded. We've used them for years. And they started the folk dance camp up in Maine. Oh, dear. I'm sure you've got the name somewhere. You put that down. But anyway, they would come when I had my folk festival, too, up in New Hampshire. But I just barely started it before I met Sarah. And then I went--doing it a little bit more like she did. And I know she was working on that "how-to put on folk festivals" and stuff and we talked together about it because I knew some of the problems, too, of, you know, trying to get people. And I used some of her ideas of putting people in places to stay, you know, and all that kind of thing.

HG: I was going to say. What kind of things did you change when you, after you met her and you saw your first National?

PU: Well, I didn't--it was, it was--there aren't an awful lot of

things--when you do a folk festival there aren't an awful lot of things to change. I mean a folk festival is a folk festival. You put the program on. You try to have opportunities for people to participate. And I did a variety of different things. I mean, I would have Filipinos come and, you know, do things afterwards. Then something else we started, like with our New Hampshire festival, in between--because we decided to have our festival every other year because we felt that asking over a thousand participants in northern Virginia area--to give free of their time to so much because there was a lot to put it on with the food and the crafts and so forth. See, she didn't have all that. I did that even with my New Hampshire. I had the foods and the crafts and everything had to be demonstrated as well as having it there. They're not doing as much of that in the Northern Virginia right now since I've left, but anyway.

Things are becoming a little too much on the commercial to 450suit me a bit. All festivals are going that way, but--all--that's like with Sarah at the National was all volunteer. Nobody was paid. Except a few of the soloists that had difficulty, she would try to get money to help on their transportation or sponsor that type of thing. With my Northern Virginia I had none of that. We had none except the rec department gave a certain amount of money because it was one of my special events, before I retired. And then I still stayed with it. Because I retired '76; that's a long time ago. And the festival is still going on. But, I started doing things in between. We would have like workshops and things where we would specialize in, like we had a, well, a Filipino night. And we had it at a certain location. It'd only be for three hours in an evening and you could choose dancing, food, or crafts and it'd all be there, instructional. And then if you wanted to, you could go from one to the other. So we started--we wanted to be educational, you know, that type of thing.

Oh, now one other thing that Sarah was doing, too, was having these conferences at the festival. You've probably run across some of that. And I used to help with that. And I--

HG: Tell me a little more about that.

PU: Yeah. These would be times where she would bring in people who were leaders or specialists in their field and--I remember we did them down in Florida, too, but I can remember the Wolf Trap a little closer. What they call the backstage area, we would have these conferences and they'd be discussions on various phases on folklore and collecting folklore and finding the real thing and--what was the real

folklore? And why--? We were sticking to things--when you said "folk," what did you mean by "folk"? And it was the idea, you know it originated with the peasants and kept--it was kept alive. It wasn't the idea of going back as we're doing so much now, trying to get the idea of teaching and keeping it alive with the young people. That type of thing. And I can't remember all the--Vyts Beliajus would lead a discussion. Sometimes she'd have me lead a discussion. Chuck would lead it. Perdue. Those would be some of the later ones. Vyts Beliajus led one I remember down in St. Petersburg and also the lady that used to do the Florida festival--

500HG: Thelma Boltin.

PU: Thelma Boltin. Of course Thelma, I got to know her too, through all of this but. Thelma and so forth. And it would be open. We'd often have teachers, professors in the areas would come in. Some of the leaders of the groups that were there would be attending it. Now I used to do--because I had worked with her on some of those, I used to do some of those kind of things, too, in this area. I've even got the--because I had taught at University of Maryland, I got them to do something jointly with me over there as well as in this area. We did quite a bit of that kind of thing. So she really stimulated me and she did stimulate others. She was called "the mother of folk festivals" by a lot of us because she was really the first person that on a wide scale--

Now, Elizabeth Burchenal was the first one to try to record and teach the folk dances. She got together with some of them. That's why--but she was, again, older than Sarah. And Sarah knew her. But Sarah would be the first that I know of that, on her own, spent her own time and went around the country and tried to find these people and dig them out. Now, when I started the Northern Virginia one I did that same thing. You--now this person wouldn't know Sarah so I guess it wouldn't have mattered, but there's a girl that was later taken by the folk festival on the Mall. They stole her from me. I had her as my assistant and I would send her out to find these--the fiddlers and stuff that we had right here in northern Virginia and some of the groups because I had other jo--I was doing public relations and other things so I couldn't always go out and do the research but she was knowledgeable enough. I'd send her out to see and let me know and then bring them in to me, you know, to add to our festival. And another thing of my relation with Sarah, because of having met this American Indian guy at her festival, that's how I got to have him on my board and working with us on the groups. And some of the fiddlers

550from this area, too, were ones that I met at National and we had them in ours and then they were working with us.

I tell you, there's one of the festiv--guys that was in her festival, he's still playing around here. He goes to Florida and he's probably not back from Florida yet, he and his wife. Because he's retired. He was a member of what they call the Hill--Over the Hill Gang. And you probably have heard of them. That's the name Steve--Joe Hickerson would know the name for you, too. Over the Hill Gang. And he's, he's still alive. Now he might be able to say something about Sarah. But he used to play with a guy that played the [pause] musical saw. And--what was his name? You'd remember it, but he's passed away now. But he was with that group and they used to be called the Over the Hill Gang. And he was probably one of the younger ones. It'll come to me. But anyway, he lives right here in Arlington but he would be in Florida right now. Because I never can get in touch with him for our fest--our--by the way, our festival is going to be May 1st and 2nd this year in northern Virginia. I don't know if you'd heard the dates yet or not. And, and--have you run into Mary Cliff at all?

HG: No, I haven't. Did she know Sarah at all, or--?

PU: No. I don't believe--

HG: No. I didn't think so.

PU: She may have known her slightly, but not really know her. But she is the president of our Northern Virginia Folk Festival right now. So I thought it'd be of interest to you.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: But she would remember some of these names and might think of some of the other names in the early days that might have known Sarah because she's so currently working with folklore all the time and she's also been president of the Washington Folklore--

END SIDE A

SIDE B

001PU: --of the names. I'm sorry that I'm--

HG: That's o.k. Don't worry. I'd like to talk to you more about Sarah, the person--

PU: Yeah, that's what I thought.

HG: --and what she was like. So let's--

PU: Well, that was the one thing that stands out. But Sarah was a, a person that--it was amazing. She had a marvelous mind for remembering the names and, and she knew her folklore. That's one thing. Sarah knew the music. She could tell it when she heard it. That type of thing. Of course she had-- I guess you know she'd majored in arts and music and, well, not exac--it wasn't called administration at the time but it was organization of that type programs and stuff. She never married, never had a real male interest that I know of. I mean I'm trying to think of these things. She lived, she liked good things. She, in her travels, she had some beautiful things that she had collected, mementos and things. I don't know whether they went to the library. Pottery and the different things, what happened to those things. I wonder if Steve would know? She used to have in her apartment beautiful, you know, things that people of these different folk groups all, would always give her some token of something. A piece of a garment or same as I've got costumes and stuff, she, she had some of this kind of thing, although not to the extent that some of these other people had, you know, Vyts and so forth because they did more actually--she was the organizer and that was more--I was a teacher of folk dancing from way back but I was an organizer because my interest was--I wanted peace in the world. I wanted people to share their heritage, appreciate one another so that I was the idea--that's how I came to be doing folk festivals, too. Hers was to keep alive what was being lost and to bring it together and, and show, show it off so to get people to appreciate it and educate. In the early days she used to arrange for the schools to, you know, to close and come in. Now that's something that Steve has done a lot down there, this Steve Cates. He's tied in with the schools. In the early days of my festival we did until the school people--oh, they were having cuts and budgets and stuff and they couldn't do things with me that they were doing. So that was something that I picked up from her. I believe, a lot of--well, she star--, helped start with the people that are doing the festival along the Texas border. What's that called the--? Hmm.

HG: I don't know. I've never heard of that one.

PU: This--then there's the one of the arches. Where, where are the, the--

HG: St. Louis?



PU: St. Louis. Yes. That one. And then in California, she--I mean, a lot of the people that are doing these festivals--there's a festival along the border in Texas. Ahh. Mary Cliff might know.

HG: I can find that out. That's o.k.

PU: Yeah. But I meant a lot of these get started because these people knew her, would start--come to the festival and they got these ideas to go back. A lot of the festivals throughout the country came from, stemmed from her. Really and truly. There was the big one that was held out on the--Seattle? Yeah, Seattle. Out there.

HG: Northwest Folklife.

PU: Yeah. Those people came in and they would be working with us on the festival here and then they'd go back with these ideas. I mean, it was a combination. They may have really got a lot of their ideas but a lot of it stemmed, the nucleus from Sarah. She was the true mother of festivals in this country. There were--[long pause] Oh. Not Marion. Marjorie--the gal who used to be the head of the original--head of the Folk--the California Folk Federation. She would be another person, but she passed away I think now, too. But a lot of these people were in touch and they--of course the person who started so much of the folk dancing at--in, in Utah there. Brigham Young. All these, a lot of these people were at these festivals or at these discussion groups. The, the people out at Northwest, they would be in these discussion groups when we'd be talking about festivals. So that's why--and, of course Vyts did on his own, because he did when he came--you, you knew of Vyts Beliajus. And so--

HG: I've seen his name all over the place in her files and things like that.

PU: Yeah, well he came to [short pause] Milwaukee area. By the way, all his papers and stuff went--you might want to know it for your department out there. It's written--his stuff has all been sent with the Phil--the Milwaukee festival people. And that's the address we now use rather than his home address. What did I do with that last *Viltis*? Hmm. I noticed it was there because I, I called and gave it to Mary, too, for contacts because publicity for our festival used to go into *Viltis*, too. In fact, he wrote me not too long--he must have written me just before he passed away. He wanted something about my hundred year old dollhouse in here.

HG: So we were talking about people who learned from Sarah and--

PU: And then there's the lady that did the Finnish and the Norwegian and the Swedish festivals up in--Bjorn? What was her name? When, when you see--you say you saw my letters concerning nominating her for that medal. I think I must have made those names in there. And I had letters enclosed from them along with it. I was hunting for those but I think I've got them up in the attic. I mean, I wrote to all these different people to get their letters to go with it. And some of them should be down there with, you know--or--

HG: They may be. I just--when I saw your name the first time I, like, wrote it down. So--

PU: Yeah, that was--

HG: I didn't look too closely.

PU: Closely. But, in connection with that--and Udall would have been one of the ones that sponsored her--tried to sponsor her for that, too.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: He was one of the ones--tried to get--he or she? Mrs. Udall? I think it was he.

HG: I think he did finally pass away.

PU: Oh yes. I think he did. Yeah.

HG: He was, yeah, very sick for a long time. But she might still be around.

PU: It so hard--you know. It's awful hard when you haven't been thinking of something for a long time and the names are on the fringe and I can't point them out.

HG: That's o.k.

PU: But thinking of Sarah herself--

HG: Yeah. I was going to say, lets talk some more about her.

PU: I'm trying to--as I say, she went through tremendous stress and how she ever managed to keep that festival going, I don't know. At times. They say there was this time when we thought it was completely on the rocks. We weren't going to

be able to do it again. And then--

HG: About, about when was that?

PU: This would be when it was at Constitution Hall. Whatever those years are. I can't remember the years.

HG: Oh. So--

PU: D-A-R, period. And that's when we were having troubles with the labor unions. And we had quite a trouble backstage because we had to pay so much, you know, for labor union help and stuff. It was, it was--that was the period that she was having real troubles because up until 100then when we did it at Carter Barron and all, we didn't have as much problem on the, the labor union business. And I know Joe Blunden and there were others that kicked in. I couldn't afford it at the time, but it was something like three hundred apiece. I think Joe was over there in her room, too. There was a Helen and you'll--her name should be somewhere. Helen? Stinson comes to me but that's in connection with another thing that I was working with. She was very close to her and I don't know if she's still alive or around, but she lived in the Washington area, here. And actually, she was closer to Mary--Helen, to Sarah, before I came on board. She had been working with her and then I--sort of when I came on board, I don't know if I was closer than the others or just what, but--I know I was very close because she was constantly talking to me and, as I say, when she couldn't drive or get to something, she paid for the tickets to some concerts and things she wanted to go to and I couldn't go my daughter drove her. That kind of--I mean, so I was like a--more than just a festival friend.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: But--I, I admired her greatly because--and she--the other thing is she--the thing that I don't like about the festivals today, it bothers me. Sarah always dressed beautifully as the hostess at the--she acted like the hostess and the, the announcer. Very few other people were allowed to announce and she did it. But she always dressed in either a partial folk costume type of thing or an evening gown type of thing. And sometimes I was helping her fix those clothes, too, I remember [laughs]. Even to sewing stuff and helping her with things. But I thought it was so gracious. It made--it gave those festivals a wonderful feeling. I mean, to me it's what we're losing in a lot of things. Festivals today, it's--all the announcers are in je--blue jeans and stuff, which, it's down to earth but it doesn't give it the air. You know what I mean?

I think festivals--when you're talking of folklore and representing the whole country and these people from all countries, that, the way she did it, and her, her--even though at times she could be acerbic [laughs]. But the graciousness that she projected as the hostess for the festival, so to speak, or the announcer and so forth, did a lot to build that festival up and give it the recognition that it's gotten. And frankly, up until, I would--'til, this'll be the first festival without me on the mike. I did the same way. Not in evening clothes, but I have costumes from many lands in my travels. I always dressed in a costume, you know, of--because of my own background. I mean, we've got English, Scottish, Swiss and so forth. And also when I came back from China, I brought certain area of China, and one year I wore that. And I told them about it and why I was wearing it. But I feel that that type of thing lends color to it. And when the gal whose husband was head of the Scottish clans and she was the Scottish dance teacher here, she'd wear her dress as--when she was the announcer. We've--because we set ours up with a  
 150 organization representing all the groups in the county and ethnic groups and stuff. So it--we had a president and so forth for Northern Virginia. But I think that was one of the things that also helped to build up the reputation of the festival because she made it, something--it's like the president. When he, if he--if he doesn't dress up and, for the occasions. It doesn't give it the reputation, the style, whatever you want to call it. I can't think of the word I want to say, again. But you know what I mean, I think.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: She--and that's one of the things that I think gave it the reputation that it had. It never--one of the other problems she always had, and we had, was--is getting the right kind of publicity. Now she did, when she had the *Philadelphia--Inquirer*? No, not *Inquirer*. *Philadelphia--* hmmm. Well, you've got it there. The paper that wrote up there. They were wonderful. They gave all kinds of support. And *The Washington Post*, when they did it in the early days. And then, they would give a lot of write-up about the programs and all. But in the latter years it's been awfully hard to get that kind of publicity. I was able to get it in some of our local papers for awhile, but then there's the--actually, our folk festivals--the Washington Folk Festival dropped, by the way, with Rosenberg because the area in Washington was getting to be so much of a crime situation, people didn't want to go in. We used to come from all over the suburbs to the folk dance festival and stuff there. They do go out to

Glen Echo to that festival. But, that's why Dave gave it up. And you know his background.

Oh! Dave works for the Navy. He is the navy person that when any of the boats are going to foreign countries, he goes as the folk person. I've forgotten his full title right now. He's got a terrific title, but he is the one that briefs the boys on the folklore, the manners, the foods, the eating, so they're not going to be bad Americans. And he's been doing that for years and he gives lectures and all at the Navy. He's in the Navy personnel department on this, and he's been doing it for years. I don't think--the last I talked with Dave was about a year or so ago. I don't think he had retired. He's in his seventies, but they keep him on board for this because it wasn't that strenuous, even though he's had some heart attacks and all. And he met his wife because she was one of the people in his group in--because he taught folk dancing, too, in the, Washington. And then he later married her. Same as Ralph Page did somebody in his group up there. That's another person you've probably have heard of. Ralph Page. Another good old friend of mine. He and I--I got him to help when I was doing New Hampshire festival and stuff like that. But I think I, I think I met him through Sarah down at Nationals, too.

Something else about Sarah I was going to say and it's gone from me at the moment, but see if you can ask any other questions about her personally that you--that I could might--

HG: I know she never married and--she had her sister Gladys who's gone.

PU: Oh, yes. That's right. Well, I, I used to be in touch with Gladys and then I'd realize--and then, Steve  
200Cates told me Gladys was gone. That's why I'm saying Steve would be one of the best ones on there, if you can get hold of him, on the end of the time. Oh, I know. I was going to say she loved nice things. But, when she was not at home with her sister, she lived on a shoestring. She had like a one room apartment type thing, went out to eat all the time because she--I don't think she--I don't know if she ever learned to cook or not [laughs]. I don't ever remember her cooking! It was usually like just a bedroom, and then she [phone rings] had a desk stacked up like this with all her-- [tape is paused]

--long in this. The two mothers. Not the grand--the fathers died in their seventies. And--

HG: So we were talking about the way Sarah lived.

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PU: Yeah. She--I think she went out to eat all the time, as I recall, and I--and sometimes I'd be bringing sandwiches in. We'd eat sitting in the room, you know, and stuff while we were talking. But she--all her money and all that she had of whatever she owned and stuff was put into, putting on folk festivals, the National Folk Festival. They, they--the country owes a lot to her. That's why we tried to get that medal for her but--at that time, that was the time that the guy, the submarine guy, the big guy that, the nuclear sub guy got the medal.

HG: Oh.

PU: You know who I mean? The competition was--

HG: Kind of stiff competition.

PU: I mean, that, as I recall, that was the same year and everybody was interested in--some people were fighting agin' and for that particular medal and getting her in there for a medal of honor was just no hope [laughs]. It ranked low.

HG: How did she pay her rent? Where did--

PU: I don't--I've often wondered where. And I don't know how, whether she got any money out of the festival itself because it was always on such a shoestring. I think in the years after we got it with the Park Service, it may have been some small stipend for her. That is something--

HG: But for the forty years before that?

PU: I think--I don't know whether she and Sarah--now whether Steve knows on that or not, because he lived down there closer. Whether they--I always--that was the one thing I could never get her to talk about. But where--what her--I know she lived--she spent very little. Everything went for any travel for what she was looking for. Or--and I know where she stayed, they weren't real hotels or anything. They were places where you had like a room, you know. The kind that you could, you might get on a week or a month basis. That kind of thing. Because they were up in northwest Washington as a rule. And she had to be where she could get the streetcar or buses because she never, as far as I know, she never drove. Unless she drove earlier and I don't know about that.

HG: Did she ever talk about her family much with you?

PU: Just about sister--

HG: Or her growing up or anything like that?

PU: Nothing. Just about sister Sarah.

HG: Sister Gladys.

PU: Gladys, yes.

HG: That's o.k.; oh, it's an easy--

250PU: Yeah, Gladys. Gladys backed her to the hilt. And Gladys and I were back and forth on the phone. Gladys was almost in tears when we were trying to get that award for her sister. And, you know, she felt very upset about it. Gladys, I met Gladys a few times. Gladys came to festivals as a rule but, I don't think she came to them towards the end as I remember, but I met her at several of the festivals. She was very much like Sarah but she was not--I don't remember what Sarah was doing. I mean everything--I mean what Gladys was doing. You know, what her background was or what she did.

HG: Did she--she stayed in Kentucky though. She stayed in Princeton, the--

PU: Yes.

HG: Mm-hmm

PU: Yes, they had their home there. And she--in between anything else she was doing, Sarah seemed to go back there to stay. But I've often wondered how she got along. Now the newspapers, when they were underwriting it, may have given her something. But from the financial end, except that the period that we knew we had practically nothing there to run it, I never knew on that. It was almost as if--taboo. There was that sort of feeling about it, you know. You had that type of a feeling. Pardon me just a minute.

HG: Sure.

PU: That's my husband. [tape is paused]

HG: So the money, the budget. That was sort of--

PU: The money, that sort of--except that, as I say, we had a treasurer--when we had this council we had a treasurer there. And I was, I remember we worked on the budget then, but I can't remember whether anything went to her or not.

HG: Can you tell me about Major Pickering? Did you know him very well?

PU: No. I knew of him and I think I met him but that's about it. Now he, as far as I know, was the one big backer that she had for a long time. Now what the relationship beyond that, I don't know. Yeah, I hadn't thought of his name for a long time.

HG: I see his name, you know, business, manager kind of titles.

PU: That was back in the days of the Philadelphia folk festival.

HG: You mean when they held it in Phil--?

PU: In Philadelphia. Yeah. Not the Philadelphia Folk Festival. I'm speaking of it being there as the--

HG: Right, right.

PU: Yeah. And I think he was the one that got the news--big newspaper there to, to do the underwriting. And he would do a lot of the connections. Now that would be when I first went there that, as far as I recall, he was still alive and doing it, but I was doing directly with her because that was, you know, I'd just met her and so forth. And I was like a volunteer bringing these people down and keeping them quiet backstage and that kind of thing. I didn't get to know her in a way of--or the other--and I helped with some of the parties and running the dances those nights or, things like that. But, I wouldn't

300know that type of thing. But he was, and I don't know whether there was a relationship between them. I have no idea. No idea. Just I know, for a long time, he was the person that worked with her. And then she had another--towards her latter years, there was a man [Leo Bernache]--who was the man that came to our church for a while? Do you remember their name? And then he went up to New York to be a concert manager. I think they're still alive. Their son was killed on the Beltway. Hmm.

DU: Was that the guy was--?

PU: Lived out in Vienna.

DU: Yeah, you, you, you--

PU: Not Joe Wilson.

DU: You, you, you knew him. You knew the name.



HG: I knew the name?

DU: The guy was executive director of the--

PU: Folk fes--the folk festival here.

DU: You told me his name today.

PU: Before Joe Wilson.

HG: You don't mean--who do you mean? Oh, darn.

PU: What names have you got? Days. He would be another manager person. The last I knew of, he and his wife, and as far as--

DU: Yeah. He, he was in charge when they had the performances out at Wolf Trap.

PU: Wolf Trap. And worked for--

HG: Are you talking about John Dildine? No? No.

PU: No, no, no.

HG: O.k. Don't, don't worry about it, we'll--

PU: John Dildine was somebody we knew. And then, of course, from the Smithsonian--who was former director of Smithsonian? [short pause]

HG: Of Smithsonian Folklife? Or of--?

PU: Smithsonian.

HG: The Smithsonian.

DU: Linda Bergwright was secretary.

PU: Yeah. What was his name? She knew him and they--

DU: Yeah. Well he, he's retired or dead now.

PU: Yeah. Oh, he's dead. He'd retired, yeah. But another one that knew her and used to get--they were trying to do something, when they were trying to get the--we didn't know the Smithsonian or the Park Service was going to be the sponsor.

HG: This was the late '60s?

PU: Somewhere around there.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: Yeah. And I was just going to say, he--I don't know whether you can put it on again, but he--

HG: Yeah, I did. It's o.k.

PU: He's another person that would have known her, you know, a little--maybe a different way. And also worked with this--

DU: [unclear] just came back, and used to work the folk festival.

PU: No, I don't think, I don't think she would have known him.

HG: That's o.k. Let's, let's keep talking about Sarah.

PU: I was going to say, he might be a--he or his wife might be able to give you some personal--because some of the people worked with her in the business managership would know another angle, you know. And particularly that side of how things were handled for her finances.

DU: [unclear] Fernstein. It just came back.

PU: Oh! Well, yeah, but--I know who you mean, but she wouldn't--I've, I've mentioned about her. But it--she wouldn't have known him, I don't think.

DU: O.k.

PU: That was before her. Oh.

350HG: That's o.k.

DU: The guy and his wife lived out at--

PU: They lived out at, on the road into--

DU: On the, on the Vienna side.

PU: Yeah. They lived on Beulah Road.

HG: O.k. Now you said that she confided in you about the problems, though, and how she was afraid she wasn't going to have the money and--

PU: Yeah, that was the period, there's a period there and, as I say, that the backing of the festival. That's before we

got--and that's when--what led, finally,--and I think the Smithsonian guy, too, helped on finding these, like the Appalachian Commission guy and these others because--she had known the Appalachian Commission guy because he had also helped with finding some of the people down there and that kind of thing, or recommending places for her to look through the years, or she'd contact him when she needed permission to go into some of these places. That kind of thing. That's why--Whisman. Whisman.

HG: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

PU: When you mentioned him, there should be along with his name, this John somebody and this other guy, but, it's the darndest--name after name is dead [laughs]. It's lucky you're checking on this before it's any later--

HG: Well!

PU: --and people like me getting fuzzy! [laughs]

HG: So--

PU: But the finan--this other guy, and they went as a concert director--he, he sort of had fights with her, towards the end. That's why he left.

HG: Do you mean Leo Bernache?

PU: Leo Bernache.

HG: He's dead.

PU: That's it. That's the guy. Now Leo, and his--I don't know whether Leo's gone or not but they, he went as a concert master up to New York and is--should have some [unclear] But they might be able to give you that type of information or his wife might because she worked very closely, too. And, I'm trying to think of--now Joe Wilson didn't. You see, he's come in afterwards. He was the one that we--the Park Service all helped bring in. But I was trying to think of somebody that might possibly be alive or help you to know how, you know, she financed herself.

HG: Mm-hmm. You were with the festival for so long. I mean, how--did you feel that it changed over the years? Or, you know, did Sarah's philosophy change about how she wanted the festival?

PU: Her philosophy didn't. She was being pushed by some of the others.

DU: That name was Leo Bernache.

PU: Yeah, she just thought of it, too. Yes. And asked me and I said that's the one we wanted. I knew you'd pull a name out [laughs]. Yeah. I said it's somebody she--they, they had disagreements on whatever was being done. Now whether that was on what she was getting, I haven't any idea because, as I say, it seemed like that was taboo and I just never pushed it. I thought--she was the kind, as I

400say, could--not exactly. She could be acerbic. She could be. Boy, she could bawl somebody out and she could get into a terrible temper. Too, but she could be very nice, but very self-centered on one thing. That was clear. One thing. Anything had to do with that festival. That was it. That's about the best way to--

DU: It's all leaders. They get tunnel vision.

PU: Yeah. Well, tunnel vision. She so definitely had. But I'm trying to think of anything else about her in her personality, as such. She could--the thing is that, also, she could put herself on a level with--when she was trying to find these people, you know; it's not easy with folky people. She could get down to the level of being with them so that they would open up to her with all this and share with her. Information that they never shared with anybody else, you know. Because she could make them realize that what they had--that's the important thing; she could make them realize that what they had was a valuable contribution. And I know that's the same thing I had to do in the years that I've worked. To make these people realize that. And once you get them to that point, then they open up to you.

And you people, if your collecting folklore, you know that's the same thing today. Although there aren't many of the originals left around. To, you know, to find. That type of thing. That would be another side of her that I can think of. I wasn't with her when she was out collecting but I know I could see her when she was with these different ones. But, she could be a Tartar. Rather than acerbic I should say a Tartar. She could be a Tartar. To work with, too. I mean, things had to be exactly her way. But towards the end, on the festival, she was being pushed with bringing in some of the people that she did not think were as folky as they should be. I mean--

DU: Real.

PU: Real. Real folk.

HG: Who, who, who was pushing her?

PU: Some of these younger members that are coming in on, that were coming in on that board. And I can't remember--

HG: Now what do you mean they--that the people were more commercial? Or that they weren't as, as folk.

PU: Well. To what seemed to be her idea on it was that they were pushing more for--they wanted money. They weren't interested in sharing and their heritage, in other words. That, that's the thing was being--coming. And she  
450 was being pushed just as our festival is, too. Paying people which she felt, at a festival, should be different from the kind of concerts. Concerts is one thing; a festival is different. And--at least that was--and that's sort of, I guess I get the same idea, too. Our festival is still on that basis. Although a lot of our--because one of the things you run into, when you do that, you have to cut back on the number of groups. You can still have small--singles and quartets. But large groups it's impossible to figure any money to, to compensate. You can try to find travel for them and stuff like that but, to pay a group--supposing there's a group of forty dancers, or fifty dancers, you could have to pay a tremendous amount.

Oh. I know another--I don't know there's anybody left with the, the Polish dance group from--Is it Milwaukee? Minnesota?

HG: I think it's Milwaukee.

DU: It was a college out there. [unclear]?

PU: Yeah, but the, the name of the group. I was wondering if the leader of--that group leader knew her, too. And they've got, they've got Eddie Nadell's stuff. Eddie gave all his papers to that group. File. Have you come across Eddie Nadell's name at all?

HG: I don't know. I've come across so many names at this point I'm a little confused.

PU: I don't think Eddie worked with her so much. He worked with Elizabeth Burchenal. Same as I did. I think that was more with Elizabeth.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: And he's the one that taught at Harvard and he did a lot of going around and finding folk dancers and stuff and I think all his stuff has gone to that folk dance group, the, the

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Polish dancers from Milwaukee. I think they've got all his stuff. This might be just for your own interest and, whether you've--trying to find anything else on folklore and stuff. And Eddie and I went to that international festival in Venice. O.k.

HG: But, so talking about paying versus not paying the performers. We were talking--

PU: That's one of the things that was coming more and more and it was bothering her. And I believe at Wolf Trap--some of the people were finally getting paid so at the last of the Folk--

DU: Plus the fact they were stage performers. They weren't folky.

PU: Yeah, they were, they were more--oh, that was the other thing. Some of the dance groups were being so utterly 500choreographed. And she, she wanted it, a nice presentation. But she did not want what you would call, like the Russians are bringing their groups now from the other countries, highly--to her there was this big change coming. And Dave Rosenberg will speak of this, this--the big change. Vyts and I were talking about it. This is the big change that's come and because the folky--folk people are now saying they're worth their salary when they play. Which has an angle. But it does make the big change for festivals. Because that was the whole basis for them; you were sharing your heritage and trying to get others to appreciate it and, and so it was a form of education. And it was bothering her a lot. And she saw it happening everywhere. Not, not--in fact, if she saw what's happening today, she would be terribly upset. I mean, she--because being called festivals. To her a festival and a concert were two different things. And it's like what they call the--I think it's the Philadelphia Festival now that's all like a paid group out in western Pennsylvania. Not the Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Festival. Pittsburgh. Out that way, that one. And then of course a lot of them around here. She did like the idea when they had the big contests. You know, the fiddle contests and stuff like that. That's different and she used to go to all those things and help got some of those things going, too, in different parts of the country. And--

DU: The other thing she told me out at Wolf Trap was she was losing the balance.

PU: Yeah.

DU: By bringing in a bunch of popular people she couldn't get some of the others that weren't so popular but were more folk, authentic to her.

PU: Yeah, yeah. That's what I mentioned that some of these people that are playing today, and I can't think of their names, but they're, they're--they get their names on records and all kinds of--not the--

DU: Like Prine.

PU: Oh! I know somebody else that knew her, the labor singer. Have you come across him? He does records and all, lives in Bethesda? Hmm.

DU: He just got an award at, down at Kennedy.

PU: Did he get it?

550DU: Yeah. National award.

HG: You mean one of the Seegers, or--?

PU: No, no, no, no, no. He does his own. He was the labor singer. And he's recorded labor songs and he's got his own recordings and stuff. I mean, he used to sing at National Festival and he's right here and he, he used to be--lead some of these discussions when we'd go to University of Maryland and places, too. And he was on my programs, too. I, I want to give you that other program and maybe I'll find one that he's on. I want to find the one where we honored her. After she died we dedicated our festival to her; I've got the programs in the other room and I got to look through them. Labor--

DU: What about Stallburg? Would he know her?

PU: No. Sam and Sarah Stallburg. No. They're great ones taking people to all countries on travel now, too, and folk dances and that stuff, but they didn't know Sarah. Well, they, they knew of her and they advertise all the time now in Vyts's magazine, *Viltis*. But--and they knew of her through me.

HG: So what you're saying, though, is that she, she actually didn't like the highly choreographed--

PU: Highly--

HG: --folk dancing?

PU: Folk--folk dancing. She preferred what was--as they did it for themselves, more. Now she--but she did want it well presented on the stage. That's the difference. You know what I mean? She wanted them to come in together, have an entrance and an exit, that type of thing. Wanted them to look nice on the platform and stuff, but she didn't want a lot of the choreo--

END SIDE B



Tape 2 of 2  
Informants: Priscilla Urner, Don Urner  
Interviewer: Hillary Glatt  
Date: March 1, 1995  
Location: McLean, VA  
Transcriber: Andrew Lee  
Sanyo Memo Scriber

Counter #

001HG: This is tape two, talking to Priscilla Urner and her husband, Don, also has started joining in the conversation, which is fine. It's March 1st, 1995. We're in McLean, Virginia, talking about Sarah Gertrude Knott. And this is a joint project of the Kentucky Oral History Commission and Western Kentucky University. So we were talking about the dancing.

PU: Yeah. Well, the thing is that she felt--so much of it now with the later generations, you know, and they were choreographing it more and a lot of them were adding some steps of their own to make it, you know, prettier. More bombastic. And maybe it was a quieter dance. This is something that we had a problem at our festival. When we would get the Scandinavian dancers, their dances tend to be a quieter dance, you know. And the fiddle and all. And I had troubles with programmers just as she did. That they, and the English country dancing and some of that, was a quieter type dancing. It wasn't so spectacular to look at. And some of the people were coming up with those kinds of things that they wanted more of the spectacular. So, and as I say, this was the early days that she still had some of the guys that have become commercial, real commercial. I mean they're doing it for money and stuff now. And there making up all of their own songs galore, you know and stuff. And she did have a few of them on the thing because these people on the board felt they would draw some of the younger crowd, you know. Certain ones. So--and because--she would work with them very carefully, what they were going to present, although sometimes they made her mad. They didn't do what she, they had promised to be on the program.

HG: I was about to ask you that. Did she ever--? Yeah. Did she tell people what she wanted them to perform and she decide, make those decisions?

PU: Well. With the--if it was a matter of, if they could do it for many of their songs of the past, but she was getting to the point that she wanted them to not do some of these ones that they wanted to do that they'd made up themselves. That kind of thing. She, because she was trying to present something else that was being saved. She wanted the originals. And, and she wanted it in the original style.

That's one thing with Joe--John Jackson. Most of his is-- he's doing a few of the other, but he's, he's the real old style.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: And, do you know the fiddler, Don, that's still here? He played--I get him all the time at our folk festival. He lives in Arlington and he's one of the last of the Over The Hill Gang. They used to record, the Over Hill Gang.

DU: Would it be in the--?

PU: Speedy! Speedy Tolliver!

DU: Yeah.

PU: Speedy Tolliver. Have you got that name?

HG: I've got it right here.

PU: Oh yeah.

DU: Well he does dancing, too.

PU: Not much. Not--he used to do some clogging when he was younger, put it along with the rest of what they were doing, the foursome.

DU: He and his wife. And then they brought in this troupe.

HG: Now, he performed on the--?

PU: No, no, no. You're thinking of somebody else.

DU: O.k.

PU: No. Speedy Tolliver is a strict fiddler. Old time fiddler. And he's one of the last of the Over The Hill Gang. But he's now playing with some others with the senior citizens in Arlington. And he's in the phone book in Oliver--in Arlington. But he's in Florida right now, as far as I know.

HG: O.k.

PU: They go down there every year.

HG: But he performed on the festival?

PU: Oh, yes. In the--and he, he along with Will Air. And he knew some of the--he might, if you could get hold of him,

might be able to tell you a little bit more about Sarah.

HG: So now you never performed with any of the dance troupes or anything that--

PU: No.

HG: --you brought? You didn't do that? You just organized.

PU: I was, I was sort of like Sarah myself, you know. Because, as I said, my early interests was to bring people together to share their heritage. So I was, and as I went  
050around New Hampshire I would find that--like northern New Hampshire, we had the Russians and I'd have tea with a Russian priest and he'd talk about his community. I'd go to Concord--or Manchester, and I'd find it was the German turnverein and this kind of thing. And that's when I wanted, I said, 'Hey, what about your background?' and stuff. Because that was the time when everybody was a mick and a spic and all those bad names and I wanted to try to overcome that. And that's when I started New Hampshire Festival, to bring them together.

DU: Did you tell about the Durham Reelers?

PU: Yeah.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: I had my own--and I taught, I've taught folk dancing from just about every country. I've learned the different ones, the sword--I used to have my own English sword dance team and, at the university, with the mixture of faculty and students and then I taught some at the University of Maryland and this, and this kind of thing, you know.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: But basically, see I was a recreation professional.

HG: Let's talk about recreation, and the use of folk music and folk dance in recreation. Because Sarah was interested in that, too, wasn't she? Did you guys ever talk about that?

PU: Oh, yes, yes, yes. She, she knew that I was in recreation. That was--actually I majored in languages in college to go into that, but I graduated in '39. And as I say, the war started that summer. And so that's when I went to live, live at the Elizabeth Peabody Settlement House because my family moved to New Hampshire. And I was doing all kinds of odd jobs around, and calling square dances, and teaching at

the Settlement House and stuff. Until I went up and got this interview, job, as social director at the Eastern Slope Inn, a big place where we used to have millionaires and all up New Hampshire at the time. And, even got mail addressed 'Ms. Priscilla New Hampshire' after a while, I became so well known at that hotel with all those people it had.

And then the National Recreation, in--there was a member of their board in Concord, New Hampshire. She heard about what I was doing and the kind of thing I was doing. Because I was doing my own ideas. I wanted people to know the local--the best fishing holes if they were fishermen. If I took them hiking, I told them about the geological formations of the mountains when I took them climbing, mountain climbing and stuff. I mean, so she heard of what I was doing with people. And, so National Recreation called me to New York and at that time they wanted to restart recreation at the University of New Hampshire--I mean the, to work out at the communities and all. And this would be in '41. '40, '41. I think I went up there '41. And Univ--this was right after what they called the W.P.A. days. Work Progress Administration. That's, that's all they had in the files and nothing done in New Hampshire since then. I went in as a three-way job. I was half time recreation specialist for the state under the state, under state extension, cooperative extension. Quarter time teaching in the phys. ed. department for women where I taught folk dancing and recreation community organization. And quarter time advisor for campus recreation on the university staff through the dean of men and women. And that's how my going around the state for the extension service, I came, I found all these things. And then I talked to our head of our extension service and it turned out he'd been somebody who was very fond of the Welsh Eisteddfod. You've heard of the Wel--in Wales? That's the big music festival, it's held in Wales every year where they bring in the music and the dance and so forth from all around. And, the minute I mentioned that he said 'Oh, boy!' the idea. So he and I went to the governor again to start the festival up there.

100But I, that's how I happened to get into recreation. I've, I had never taken the courses and yet I've taught at Indiana University. I've had forty-eight states getting their doctorates and masters under me [laughs]. A lot of the people that are retiring from the field were my students, you know. And I also started the music recreation classes at the University Of Indiana. And, because I started going to the national conferences on recreation, from New Hampshire, because there were only, there were only three women. One in Vermont and one in Idaho and myself that were state recreation specialists. All the rest, anybody else

was a man. The rest were crafts or playground leaders, you know. This was the early days. So I'd meet these people and that's how I got to know a lot. I'd talk with these men and we'd talk together and we'd talk about damming up streams and, to make swimming pools. And we'd talk about taking old churches that were--no longer had people and making them into community centers. And I'd go back and do all--you know, I got ideas and that's how I started New Hampshire. I did all kinds of things.

HG: So it was a W.P.A. position?

PU: No, no. This is after the W.--no. This is years--as I said it was a three-way--I was paid by the university and the federal government; it was a combination.

HG: Oh that's true because the W.P.A. was over by then.

PU: Yeah, they over.

HG: Once the war started.

PU: And I used to do all kinds of publications and stuff, printing. And I started, because I was so interested in folk dancing anyway from my days earlier, college and everything else, and I used to be on the demonstration team from the International Institute in Boston, there and all. We used to go all over the city of Boston putting on folk dances and stuff. And, as I say, foreign students taught me their dances and--when I went to the Philippines, the University of the Philippines put on a special program for me. And Madam--the lady who wrote the book on folk dances for the Philippines, she was the teacher there. We had a special reception and the students invited me home to their areas and stuff, and different countries I've gone, because of my work with the foreign students and then I danced because I knew their dances at one of the exhibitions at the University of Manilla. No, the University of the Philippines. I danced with them. We put on these Philippine dances. I knew them and stuff.

So, I mean, I've been into all this but I didn't teach it. I went into the organization of--because I knew this. Like when I'd go around the state in New Hampshire, and this is the kind of thing that Mary--that Sarah did too. She knew enough about some of this background, but--I went into this little Armenian store, to get something, and I was talking to the ladies and I said, 'Hey, do you remember--do you know how to do such and such a dance that used to be--?' 'Do you know that dance?' And, do you know what they'd do? They'd close up the store, pull up their long skirts, and we'd go

out back and I'd dance with them. Well that's how I, they came to our festival. They said our young people, they don't want to do anything of the past and Sarah did the same thing in her way. And so at our first New Hampshire festival, when they, these older people danced, the young people said, 'Hey, people seem to like this. Maybe this is something in it. We, we--the old fuddy-duddys got something to show us.' So they went back and learned some to--and I did this with all kinds of groups.

And this is the other that she did. I mean, she knew enough about some of these dances or festi--their, their ways that they celebrated. I don't know how, but she'd done some reading or studying and she'd done some visiting. Now I don't know that she did foreign travel that much. I think 150hers was mostly in this country and then she'd get word of mouth from one person to another on the foreign background. But she knew enough about the English and the Germans and the Scandinavians and the early American and the Acadians, and this type of thing from her study of history. She was also a person that did a lot of study of history. And that's what she wanted, to show what was alive of that, then gradually, like the rest of us--like, in our festival we found Afghanistan going--Arlington, you know everything coming in.

HG: Right.

PU: Well she did the same thing with the National Festival. It started to grow each year, each time it would have more and more of some of these international groups that were getting stronger and stronger in the country. Does this help you?

HG: Yeah. No, this is all very interesting.

PU: I keep rambling.

HG: That's o.k.; that's fine. Did Sarah use stage sets and things when, in the early days? I seem to remember somebody mentioning--

PU: Most of the time--well, occasionally. Occasionally. Certain things for a background of nationalities would be a little bit. But not much of anything. One of the things that she did have was the flags of different countries. We, when we would be able to, she'd get--and I did the same type of thing because I had always done that, too. Try to have a background of flags of the different countries. Then other times it would be just of the, the various--American would be all up front and she'd open up with the military band of the local area. Sometimes it would be a marine band and, as

I said, the color guard coming up and so on. So those flags would be there or at the sides. But, as I recall, most of the time it was a very simple stage so that you would see the costumes and you would concentrate on the dances. If anything it was flags of countries.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: I can remember just very occasional something very sketchy, something for a background. I think that was mostly when it would be like when they were showing how they celebrated a wedding or that type, or the Hungarian festival or something. Every so often there would be a group that would do a, that type of thing. And we did some of that, too, in ours. I had done some of that.

HG: Mm-hmm. Oh, the amount of time that the performers each spent on stage. When I'm looking at the programs, it's like ten, fifteen minutes. What did you think of, I mean did she--why did she move it at that pace? Do you, did she-

PU: Well, it was to get on as many of the different groups as she could and the people. And that's always been a problem. That's what's happening today, too. People get a half hour or an hour to perform. So you see much less. When it's a festival now, it's, that was the other thing that was bothering her. She was being pushed to more of this and she felt that you weren't getting the idea of a festival, of the conglomeration that we, that America was.

HG: So that's what she was trying to show?

DU: They lost discipline. They didn't listen to her.

PU: Well, yes, I've spoken to her that they were changing. They weren't, they weren't doing what they promised. That type of thing. She, oooh, would she get fiery mad when they said they were going to present something and they'd change it after she'd gone through the run-down. You know, the practice and stuff.

200HG: These were, these were groups that she brought in? Or groups that she--

PU: Oh, no. She brought them all. All of them had to be approved by her and brought in.

HG: Mm-hmm. [pause] Now my memory is slipping.

PU: And I was trying to think when the Hawaiian groups were

brought in, they were one of the ones we had the hardest job. It seems to me we got airlines or some transportation groups to help sponsor some of their transportation. And then there was this rich lady and--Baird. Baird? Something like, began with a 'b.' That used to help us to find place to put them, because they would be one of the most expensive ones. And, of course, the ones from the west coast when it was here. I was with her, most of the time I was with her it was up and down somewhere on the eastern coast.

HG: Did you go to Texas for the big one in Texas?

PU: No. No. That, that I didn't get to. But, as I say, that was where some of the--started for what they call this one, The Border Festival, or so forth that's going on now.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: I think that's what it's called.

HG: Did you go to the one in Oklahoma?

PU: No. I only went to the ones that were near. As I say, I could, when I was from New Hampshire I came down to Philadelphia and to Washington. And then later when I lived here I was, all the ones in Washington. And we were later living in Florida and I helped with that. But, I never felt it was quite fair to take money and stuff from my family to go to it. I would help with all the organi--, you know, contact the groups and the letters and all that stuff that we were doing to get them here. And one other job in the earlier days that I had, a lot of it was trying to find, as I say, places for people to sleep and ways to feed them and that kind of thing.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: Transportation after they got here. That kind of thing. We used to get a, loads and loads of volunteer help. And, again, not all of them got the recognition they should have and some of them wouldn't come back. She didn't give them enough recognition. That was one of the problems with Sarah. Remember, you used to get cross because my name wasn't on the program and there was one time that I know for sure it was on, but--Helen got on a couple of times, but Helen finally gave up. She said I've had enough of it. I mean, this--she, she'd work people an awful lot. She, she drained people for a lot, for her support. [Laughing] Got out of them all she could, so to speak. And I knew she was doing it to me, but I loved what she was doing and I wanted to do it here.



DU: [unclear]--these leaders. Ignored the followers.

PU: Yeah.

DU: It's like Roosevelt. And he was president.

PU: Yeah. [laughs] But I meant, this, this is one of the things--but that was because of her tunnel vision. That was the, she was doing it to herself. As I said. She lived in a tiny room and didn't do very much that I know of except for the festival.

HG: I was going to ask you, do you know if she had hobbies? Or if she did anything outside of the festival, and sleep?

PU: I never knew her to do--well, she enjoyed a musical concert or something like that, like a symphony or things like that once in a while. And, as I say, my daughter took  
250her once or twice and--it was Heidi, I guess, went, took her, that drove her.

DU: Over around, over to Madeira.

PU: Well, I drove her mostly there. Back and forth to that. When she, that was where she was staying at night. But Heidi, there was actually once or twice that she took her to concerts that she wanted to go and--she wanted to--Later, she didn't want to go alone. That was it. When she was older and I couldn't go or something and she had a ticket and Heidi was good enough to take her and drive her. But--

DU: I remember that you didn't get on the Philadelphia bulletin. I thought that was crazy.

PU: I know. I did an awful lot in bringing people down and escorting them and taking care of them backstage and, you know. You, you put a lot of your--a lot of people paid their own expenses to come and help with this and names wouldn't be there. They wouldn't even, the group that they represented wasn't always given much. And I, I don't think I ever brought it up to her because somehow--even though I loved her and worked with her, I was a little scared of her. I think everybody was a little scared of Sarah. I don't know how to put it. That isn't exactly the word but she could be so snappy about something and you, if you were in the middle of working with her, you didn't want that attitude there, you know what I mean? So you kept things on a quieter level. You didn't--

DU: You knew she wasn't rational.

PU: Oh yeah. Yeah. She--

DU: You couldn't, you couldn't--you get her all upset, why, she'd quit and then there was no replacement for her.

PU: Yeah, yeah. And that's, I mean that's the main thing that I can think of. But she was just--she lived, ate, and slept, and everything else for the festival. After she got it going. She realized there was nobody else and the other main thing is that she was like the mother of festivals. I would say a good many, and even some of the music festivals, have stemmed, you know, they've gone their own way in a different way, but I don't think they would be there today if it hadn't been that she'd stimulated this interest in folk music. She should have gotten that medal of honor for that reason.

HG: Did she ever talk about other festivals, like when Newport started in the '60s? Did she talk about that? What she thought of it.

PU: Well, yeah, she followed it. And some of the same people that performed there performed at ours in their early days. Before they got going with it.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: Yeah. That's why I can't think of those names. I mean, I'm not one of the, you know, following the popular thing so much. And, I'm more towards [laughs] ballet and opera now, too. And folk. I mean, those are my loves more. So that I haven't kept up with the, what I call the "yuppie" ones now [laughs]. You know what I mean.

HG: Yeah, I know what you mean.

PU: Yeah. So that the names, I know what they are but I can't pull them out.

HG: Audience wise. I understand that the audience kind of wasn't there in the late '60s.

PU: Late, late--yeah.

300HG: Did Sarah talk about the fact that while folk music had become so big in the country that somehow her festival wasn't drawing a crowd.

PU: Yes. She, she, she felt it was the publicity. It was the

hard thing to get the publicity for it. And that's, if you talk to all festivals, they'll say that's the thing. Even with ours here. And the other thing is, now there are so many and even that was happening then. When I started the Northern Virginia festival, there was no Smithsonian Festival on the Mall. There was no Washington Folk Festival. The Folk Dance Festival had dropped; Dave had given it up. There was hardly--

DU: That's the District.

PU: Yeah, yeah. I told her about that. There was hardly any of this business of all the Mall showing folk dances and people like that. There was none of that. And so we had larger crowds at our Northern Virginia Folk Festival. We were the only one. People came from all around. In fact, it started, I started it as Arlington. Arlington, the very first year. And then people in Fairfax said, came and said, 'Why can't we be a part of this?' and then the next year I made it the Northern Virginia. And I held it each year until we had to move to Florida and then I left one of my assistants to run it the next year and we changed it to Northern Virginia. So, I mean, that's--

HG: So, yeah. So she thought it was just the publicity? She didn't think that what they were doing--

PU: She feels that--well, there was, there was a multiplicity of other groups doing things. And, then it was harder to get the backing and the big publicity. When, when she was at Wolf Trap, it built up--

HG: Excuse me.

PU: It built up more when we had the, the Park Service. Because that's why the International Children's Day, I imagine you're familiar with that, they get such publicity. Because they're part of Wolf Trap now. And so she had built up better publicity and better attendance of those last few that are there.

HG: Mm-hmm. Andy Wallace and I were talking--

PU: Oh, Andy's another one. Yeah, sure!

HG: And I talked to him for quite a while and he thought I should talk to you about the transition years because you knew Sarah so well. He, the only thing he could say to me was that he knew it was painful for her.

PU: Yes.

HG: But I was wondering if you, if she talked to you about it and--

PU: What I'm telling you was what she was worried about. Yes. It was that idea that people were, they'd found out that people liked folk music so they were all in it to get as much out of it as they could. Rather than, what she felt, sharing it with others in a different way. They were out to get money. And she was not against them earning it when they earned it on the side in concerts and all, but she felt it was not the thing at a festival.

DU: She said the same thing to me. One of my jobs was to sit with her.

PU: Yeah.

350DU: She didn't want to be alone.

PU: This was in those latter years.

DU: And Priscilla was back at the green room. So she would tell me she hated the transition but she couldn't argue with the board because they were out chasing the money and she couldn't get the money.

PU: Yeah.

HG: So that they were, they were more able to raise the money and keep the festival going.

DU: But to raise the money, you have to change the program.

PU: Yeah, yeah.

DU: And she didn't like the program change.

HG: How did she feel about retiring?

PU: Well, it was a matter physically. She just couldn't. The travel, physical. And also Gladys wasn't feeling as good towards the end and she felt that they ought to be more together. But that's why I'm saying Steve Cates--she did things with Steve down there and he did some things with her that she was trying to do and he worked with her on when she was trying to get it into your university, the papers and stuff. So, as I say, Steve and I have sort of lost contact because he's doing so much more and he's a lot younger. And then going ahead with what he's doing about taking these

groups to Europe and the big festival. Have, has anybody else mentioned his name at all?

HG: Andy.

PU: Andy, yeah. And, as I say, he would call me after he'd seen her at the hospital or nursing home or whatever it is. I've forgotten at the end there. But, so he, he can give you that kind of thing. And any later ideas that she had, but she wasn't happy about letting it go but physically she was just done out, so to speak. That's why Don, she, at the end it was the other people that were doing the announcing more and stuff on the stage, you know. Nickerson--Hickerson was doing some and, I can't remember that Chuck did some or not, but--some of these other ones on the board were doing it.

And, again, she did not like their presentation of the way they dressed. Because I told you, the announcers and all. She, she felt that it was downgrading the festival. I told her how Sarah always so gracious in her dress and all. She felt that that's what gave it, in the early days, the press and the publicity and all that it did. Because she made it as special, she made it special. In the way that she hosted it and so forth.

DU: Yeah. She wanted to dress like a lady. She didn't like these jeans on the stage.

PU: Yeah. Course it was, it's all a part of--all of us that were older, we liked--

DU: [laughs]

PU: People dressing differently. You know, that kind of 400thing. And, it's like Mary Cliff. Always gets me. We were on t.v. so much the last few years because she's been on our Northern Virginia board, even before she became president. And all the stat--The radio and t.v. wanted to interview us about the Northern Virginia Festival. Here I would wear either my beautiful--what's my dress? Not Hawaiian. Hmm.

DU: Japanese?

PU: Well, one of my beautiful costume-type things. And she would come in in just flat tights and a sweater or, you know, this kind of thing. We were both there together talking about the same festival, you know. It was so odd. But I just, I, I had to dress like I did when I was announcer, when I went on t.v. I might have flowers in my hair that went with the costume I was wearing. You know, that kind of thing. But, so that it's, that's bothered me a

little bit about our festival and about some of the people that have been with us in the early days.

Sam and Sarah Stallburg that I mentioned there. Because they teach the Arlington folk dance group that meets at Key School and they take groups travelling to all the festivals in Europe, now. Because she has her own travel business. But they've been doing a lot with folk dancing, but I wish you could see their room of folk--closet. It's as big as that kitchen and this and more. Racks and racks because they've travelled to Europe for years and particularly Yugoslavia. [pause] What would you say?

DU: All of eastern Europe.

PU: Austria, Austri--all eastern Europe costumes.

DU: The Balkans.

PU: And they've brought back the real things.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: That people have given them and stuff. Balkans particularly. Oh, gorgeous!

DU: It might interest you, they say that those people are selling out their heritage.

PU: Yeah.

DU: And their, the costumes that they have will never be reproduced.

PU: Oh, no. I know. They've got these original--they always dress in their costumes whether they're teaching their dancing or at our festival when he, Sam would announce and stuff. So that there's--and I sort of educated them. I helped them when I found they liked to teach folk dancing, I got them started teaching way back in Arlington. They've sort of grown and grown to the point now with the travel.

There's a lot of people that I've started and it's interesting. Every so often I run into some of those fellows, particularly, that were in my class at Indiana that were getting graduate degrees and they, because I taught 450folk dancing and music along with what I was teaching of recreation, I gave them, I, this whole bailiwick of it. They went out and did a lot. One of my boys worked with the Philadelph--, the Pitts--, he became recreation director in

the Pittsburgh area. He did a lot with the folk festival there. I mean, I've sowed the seeds, too, for a lot that's gone on, I know. And things that are still going on in New Hampshire. I hear from things going on up in that way and up through Maine and stuff. Actually, Ralph--the Maine folk dance camp that Ralph Case--Ralph Page started, before he ever met his wife way back in Boston when we used to dance and he called the dances at the Y.W.C.A. in Boston. We talked about doing a folk dance hotel because I was coming down from the hotel where I was doing it and come down to his dances still in Boston that I used to come to. And he said, 'Look, with your expertise on hotels' because I used to manage hotels in between the big seasons, managed small ones. We'd talk about doing it. And then he got married and the folk dance camp so I'm saying, in a way, I've done a lot, from all these other things that are--Ralph Page camp is what I should say and stuff. But, and helped sow the seeds for a lot of things and worked with the New England Folk Festival for years and stuff and begun--I don't know; it's hard to say how much more.

But Sarah and I, through those transition years, as I say, it was the money and the way it was going, the direction it was going, that bothered her. That's most that I'd say and about her--she was becoming more testy because of it. Got a little harder for people to deal with, I'd say. Probably--who was it you just said? Suggested you talk with me?

HG: Andy

PU: Andy, yeah. Andy knew it. I mean they'd all blow up about her. But Andy might have remembered some of the people. I don't know if he knew any of the people on that committee.

HG: He gave me a lot, a lot of names and stuff.

PU: Names. Yeah, yeah. So you got a lot of those. Yeah, he would've known Leo Bernache, too. He would work very closely with Leo and also with Pete Seeger. Pete Seeger is another one that knew her but, of course, he's gone, too. But--

HG: No. Pete Seeger's still alive.

500PU: That's right. Pete is. Pete's another person, you might even ask him some time if he has anything to say. She showcased Pete even when they were--the government was after him, you know. She had him on. She was, she was a Tartar that week. She felt it was real.

HG: Now, Andy Wallace mentioned in '67 or '68, really at the

height of the Vietnam war, that she asked Pete not to perform because there was a protest. Do you remember that? In Syracuse?

PU: Yeah, there was something. Yes. The Syracuse festival, yes. I remember. There was something that she felt might affect the folk festival adversely. She didn't, not that she wouldn't have liked to have had him. She felt, and she stuck with him when it was the earlier time. It was something else.

HG: McCarthy era?

PU: McCarthy, yeah. She did it then. But she felt this was getting too much. Yeah, I agree with him on that.

HG: Hmm. Most people I've talked to have said that Sarah wasn't very political.

PU: No, no.

HG: In that sense. That--what do you, I mean, what do you think her overall goal was with the festival, really? Do you think that she had a purpose to the festival? Or she did it just because she, I mean--

PU: Well, her purpose was just as I said. It was to make people to share their heritage. And she felt it should be educational, too. I think you'll find that in some of her programs that, similar to what I said. The guy that used to be the head of the National Crafts Council said the same thing. Sharing heritage and learning to appreciate one another's background, that there wouldn't be the same--she wasn't from the angle of peace, as I was. I was from the idea of people--that if you understood each other, you might not fight so much. You know. You knew, you learned to appreciate the good and the, and why we're different and stuff. But hers was the, and her main idea was to showcase the stuff before it was lost. She felt that it was really--it was, even then, it was fading fast. And to inspire people to pass it on. That was her big, big kick.

550DU: She always gave a background when she was announcer.

PU: Oh, she gave beautiful announcements. Yeah.

DU: Priscilla says her background was always the history and the authenticity.

PU: They don't do as much as that now. It's more on the frets and what the, you know, that type of thing that they give



now. Which is interesting to people that are trying to pick it up on their own. But it isn't giving the feeling of, 'This is our country.' And 'This is what it--made this country.' All the contributions. I used to be after her to do more, but she, we--occasionally there would be a craft demonstration or an exhibit. A little bit of this and that. But to her the music and dance was the thing. Her love. To me, I wanted to give the--that's why I added the food and music. There would be occasional something on food and stuff, but it wasn't--we've done it. We'd get all groups to share and do it.

HG: Well I'd just ask you if you had any final thoughts or anything you'd like to sum up with about Sarah before we end this.

PU: Well, the only thing is I wanted to see if I can find this Labor Day guy. Labor guy. And what did I put down here? Tape. Oh. Who was the fiddler that came to us up in New Hampshire? Dudley Laufman.

HG: O.k.

PU: Have you heard his name?

HG: No.

PU: He's one of the young fiddlers today but he used to be at the National Festival way back when he was just a young student doing it. He's been at Wolf Trap. And he used to actually bring a group from New Hampshire to dance at--

END SIDE A

SIDE B

001PU: --and he had them on there. But I was going to see if I had that tape and if I can think of that--it began with a 'g.' The labor guy, wasn't it? Gifford? And my program that we honored Sarah. It'd be nice to have it in the thing down there. It's just that we, I think we put her picture and we were dedicating this to her.

DU: Did you give that to Gunser or you still got it?

PU: Oh, I've got, I think I've got a program in the other room on that.

[TAPE IS PAUSED]

HG: You first met Sarah in, like, 1937. Right? When it was here?

DU: Yeah. *Washington Post*.

HG: Mm-hmm. What were you doing at that time? Why were you, how did you get involved in the festival?

DU: *The Post* went around to all the local colleges and asked for volunteers. And I thought there was a, I got somewhat interested from the idea of the Appalachian literature. The, you know, all the Scotch and English. And Irish that came along the Appalachians and Pennsylvania.

HG: Mm-hmm.

DU: And the text of the music, the text of the songs was interesting to me. Because, like I said, my family, two branches of my family come over here in 1700. And so, and then, the family lived down in New Market and so they'd kept some of that Appalachian stuff alive.

HG: Mm-hmm.

PU: Sarah was just like me. She had stuff piled up all around. You'd go into even that one room that she'd have, you'd wonder, 'How could you find anything?'

HG: [laughs]

PU: Sometimes I had to put, even what she had, I used to have to try to see if I could get it in order so we could find, to put it together for the program.

HG: [laughs]

DU: But you were talking about [unclear]. When I talked with her last, at Wolf Trap. She was very depressed and pessimistic because she'd saved no money. And she was losing energy. She was losing the fight--[long pause, begins to cry]

HG: Are you o.k.?

DU: It happens to a lot of people who are pioneers and they give and they don't have a way out. [long pause] It's very tragic. In a lot of fields. [long pause] They contribute to their field. But personally it's a mistake. And it's a tragedy. In the Greek sense of the word. [long pause] So. She stayed with me, because she didn't want the other

people to know how bad she felt. She knew I wasn't going to talk to anybody except Priscilla. But the last times she was in Wolf Trap, she was in what Thoreau would call 'quiet desperation.' And didn't know how, how to solve

050it. [long pause] And the thing that brought my attention [unclear]--reading a book on Roosevelt. Now the last two years he was going downhill. And he wanted to quit. But he had these goals that he wanted and the Democratic party wanted to keep him going. And Churchill wanted to keep him going. And he couldn't stop. So it just keeps going downhill. He never had a retirement. She didn't either.

HG: How did you meet Priscilla?

DU: I went up to University of New Hampshire in '48. And she was playing hostess for all the new faculty. I decided to marry her. And so I knew--she was so career-minded. I knew it was going to take a while. So I joined her dance troupe just to be near her. And next, next year she was debating whether to go to Indiana and teach recreation or to join with me and I got her to come down here. But to keep them happy she commuted for a year or two. Teaching classes at Indiana. Then after we got established down here she started with the recreation department and she built up the half a dozen activities around here. And she did some work in, recreation work for the District and the Prince Georges county. And she started the folk festival. And half a dozen other things.

HG: Mm-hmm. So did you work on the festivals, too? I mean, you got--

DU: Oh yeah. I've been her go-fer since '48.

HG: [laughs]

DU: Somebody's got to do the dirty work.

HG: So you did this for Sarah's festival and also for Priscilla's festival?

DU: Yeah. I thought they were interesting. I don't have talent in those fields. I've got other careers but [pause] she needed help so I helped her.

HG: O.k. Thanks a lot.

END OF INTERVIEW