

Memories of Pat Shaw

Pat Shaw came to Kentucky with his portly posture, big accordion, and ailing back in September 1974. As I drove him around the eastern Kentucky hills in my old Ford station wagon, we put the seats down so he could lie on his back as we travelled from school to school.

Berea College's Recreation Extension Office had obtained a grant from the Kentucky Arts Council to have Pat help us enhance traditional songs, music, and dance in a region once their stronghold. We ended the two week tour at the Mountain Folk Festival, Adult Section held at Levi Jackson State Park near London, Kentucky. We were often on a trail blazed by Cecil Sharp fifty-eight years earlier before radio, television, and school consolidations took their toll on the life of small isolated communities.

It was great fun to travel with Pat. His creative mind was always at work. We played Pinky Stinky, thinking up pairs of rhyming words and then giving each other clever, cryptic definitions from which to guess the rhyming pair. I don't recall any of the word pairs but will always remember how much fun Pat was.

The weekend at Levi Jackson was special and Pat shared his many talents with us without stint. I taped many of the sessions he led and made copies for the Christmas School store so that others could hear Pat at his congenial best. At camp, he was the first one up in the mornings and gave his goat song/chant to awaken the camp. He was superb at leading the singing session, coached us in a traditional morris dance, and led country dances, some of his own composition although that was a surprise to conservative traditionalists who expected only "authentic" material.

At the end of the camp, I "commissioned" Pat to compose a dance for us but with the stipulation that it must be able to accommodate the two pillars which were a factor to dance around in the lodge's main hall. The following summer Pat tried out his Levi Jackson Rag on the Berea College Country Dancers at Princes Street Garden in Edinburgh during the troupe's tour of England and Scotland. He made a few minor adjustments to the dance and then presented me with a sheet of the music and dance instructions. It is great to find the dance and tune recently nominated for the "top ten" country dances.

The Berea College Country Dancers went to England to participate in the 1975 Tyne and Wear Folkmoot. After Folkmoot, Pat had arranged a tour for us to

Scotland. The tour had its phenomenal abdominal aspects. Pat prepared a haggis repast at Gladstone's End on the Royal Mile. He recited Browning's Ode to a Haggis and then plunged a knife into the "delicacy," bloated with steam. Lewis Lamb, upon taking a sample bite, asked me what I thought of it. I, having grown up in Pennsylvania Dutch country, commented that I would have liked it better with the ketchup which had been applied to our "scrapple" when we were kids.

Pat had also arranged for the Berea Dancers to give a performance not far from Edinburgh in a fine, modern studio made by remodeling an old horse barn. I don't have access to the location's name now that I've retired. The performance was recorded on 8-track tape as I recall. But, before the performance, Pat had himself prepared a spectacular dinner for us. The dining room had rich wall to wall purple carpeting which set off the gleaming white linen table cloths. Crystal goblets on the banquet table were filled with elderberry flower squash which Pat had personally made. Its yellow color against the white and purple were unforgettable. Have you ever made elderberry flower squash? It requires collecting a large number of the flowering stems and tediously pulling the petals, stamens, and pistils from the branching stems. The flowering parts are then steeped like tea. When did Pat ever find time to make this brew as well as organize and lead our tour?

Patrick Shuldham-Shaw was an incredible person. It is fitting that you are assembling memories which will hopefully inspire others in years to come to share their talents generously in making life a great and fun filled adventure.

John M. Ramsay
St Louis, Missouri
November 3, 2006