



# THE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE NEWSLETTER

June 1988

No. 14



*Produced at the Institute of Early Childhood  
Development, 4 Madden Grove, Kew, Victoria, 3101.*

ISSN 0728-5531



## Danger ahead?

There is an undercurrent of unease among those working in the area of children's folkloric play. Increasingly, the free time of youngsters, the time in which they can repeat traditional play lore and invent new variants, is decreasing.

Adults, often well-meaning, are encroaching on this free play-time with sport and physical education activities. The practising of adult-initiated team games is beginning to dominate lunch-time and recess in a number of Australian schools.

It is therefore of interest to note the warning sounded in a recent issue of the Newsletter of the Association of the Study of Play, an American-based organisation with an international membership. In the Spring issue of 1988, Brian Sutton-Smith, one of the most knowledgeable figures in the world of children's folklore and play (and originally from New Zealand), wrote, after speaking at a number of international conferences on play:

"I have spent my life playing with the scholarship on play behind the Triviality Barrier ... It begins to look as if I will have to come out of that closet and deal with people who believe that there is no important distinction between play and guided play and between a physical education lesson and recess. Frankly I'm in a state of shock. I thought I was doing good work defending Rabelais from Huizinga, Piaget, Bateson and the rest. Having to travel the country on behalf of recess and playground accidents will be tough."





The Prime Minister of Japan, Mr Takeshita, the former Prime Minister, Mr Nakasone and associates playing the game of Scissors,

Paper, Stone (janken), to determine who will first hit off in a game of golf.

'The Age' 7/10/87



## Alan Marshall: memories

In 1980, I visited Alan Marshall to talk with him about his memories of childhood play.

He was already gravely ill, and in a nursing home, but he had days when he felt quite well and welcomed visitors. I had known him since childhood, and found him still the same buoyant, curious, generous-spirited man.

What follows are extracts from that day's discussion. This most beloved of Australian writers, the author of I Can Jump Puddles and other fine works of fiction and autobiography, had a special affection for children. He never patronised them, responded courteously to the hundreds of letters they sent him, and always considered the activities of children matters of importance.

Here he is speaking about some of the games he remembered from his own childhood in rural Western Victoria.

Cherry stones didn't come in to the games that I played because we never had enough money to buy cherries. So therefore we never got cherries ... The games we played were based on having a pocket knife - that was with a long blade sticking out and one that came down at right angles ... Depending on how (the knife blade) stuck in the ground (the game) got scored. It was called Stag Knife. I used to love playing Stag Knife ...

With marbles, we played with little holes ground with our heels, you'd run them from one to another. And we had terms I don't hear nowadays, like Funny-Knuckle. When I looked the other day at a picture on TV, made in Australia, the children were playing Marbles. I said to Elsa, my sister, 'Good heavens, they're playing

Funny-Knuckle!' What they were doing, they were holding the marble ... that's a girl's way of playing. A boy puts the marble on the tip of his finger. He holds it down ... and flicks it a terrific distance. So Funny-Knuckles was the way girls played, and we despised that.

Another thing was cigarette cards, and we all tried our hardest to get a set. You see there was Arms and Armour of the British Empire, (and) the British Empire series which showed Canada and Africa and all British East Africa. Then there was the Golden Girls, pictures of beautiful actresses: Miss Tittlebroom (?) was one of them, and Lily Brayten (?), who was a Shakespearean actress in London. In these pictures they were all with their hands up against their chests and draped in white and looking so appealing. Lily Brayten was married to Oscar Ash (?), and he came over to Australia and she came with him. And I remember thinking, oh, to see her would be a marvellous experience.

Swap cards came in after - they were the next move after there were no cigarette cards. You see, they took the place of cigarette cards. Because people couldn't afford to put cigarettes in heavy packets so then they started the swap cards and you had to buy a set in the shops. They were like playing cards and I knew they (children) used to value them. To me, I'd just left school) when the swap cards came, but I used to save them for my children and they had all of them. They'd get them just as rough and tattered ... But they were not in sets so it didn't intrigue me so much.

Hopscotch was never played by boys. You see, a boy would never play Hopscotch because it was a girl's game. Now, when Skippy came in - they used to say Skippy - there was Spanish, and French (the two ropes), and then there was a game, very fast, which they called - there was a word they used to say. You went that fast, and the girl had to skip at terrific speed. And then there was the swinging and jumping from side to side - they were all the rage.

And then Jacks. Jack bones from the sheep. You see, your mother would buy a leg of mutton and always there's the bones in them. There were no plastics those days. They were really genuine knuckle bones. And what she'd do when she got them out of the sheep, she'd have to boil them, and when she'd boiled them a lot then you'd take them and scrape them clean. They'd be dried, and they'd get a lovely patina after you had them a while. I was very fond of that game (Jacks) ... But the dyeing - my father used to say, 'Don't dye them, you'll spoil them.' You see, there was some sort of lovely quality in the colour of the bones, and I don't think it was very common to dye them ... You had a bag for your jacks and a bag for your marbles and a tobacco tin to carry your cigarette cards.

□ □ □ June Factor



## Some comments on children's "rude rhymes"

(Marilyn Vernon was a first year student in the Diploma of Teaching at I.E.C.D. in 1987 when she wrote this article.)

During the late fifties and early sixties I attended three primary schools; all catholic. The first was in the small country town of Euroa, and unfortunately, my memories of playground verses from this era (pre - third grade) aren't vivid. I spent the remaining primary years at schools in Melbourne. Memory serves me better here - perhaps because I was a little older by then, and able to appreciate and understand the rhymes more readily. Most prominent in my memory are the entire collection of Fat and Skinny rhymes. The most popular was:

Fat and Skinny had a race,  
Up and down the fireplace.  
Skinny thought it wasn't fair,  
Cause he lost his underwear.

I remember these years also being especially significant for autograph books and their associated poems. Not all of these were rude or shocking - but the greater percentage of them were humorous, in a silly sort of a way.

### The night was dark and stormy...

The rude rhymes of today's children seem to hold more shock value than those that I knew as a child. The vulgar ones were distantly different from the ordinary ones, and quite exceptionally funny. I remember us children being delighted if we were able to recite them in the playground within earshot of a nun, without getting into trouble. Another trick was to pass notes under the desk, informing our friends of new and ruder rhymes. The hero of the day would be the child whose poem or song was the rudest, and had not been heard before.

In fifth grade, a very enjoyable verse was the one depicting Deadwood Dick, a shady character with suspicious habits. If memory serves me correctly, it went something like this:

Under this stone lies Deadwood Dick,  
The only man with a corkscrew prick.  
He travelled Australia from back to front,  
Looking for a sheila with a corkscrew cunt.  
When he finally found her, he fell down dead,  
Because her cunt had a left-hand thread.

Even in the early years of secondary school, the naughtier the rhyme, the better it was. By this stage, friends and I were training to be young ladies, under the strict guidance of the catholic nuns. Of course when one attended a convent, one simply didn't come home with anything that might be frowned upon. I don't think my mother knows to this day what really went on in the school playground.

I seem to remember scores of autograph entries (from the mid sixties era). One

was thought to be particularly smart if one could come up with a dirty ditty for a friend's autograph book. The tried and true poems wore thin, and the "disgustings" took over, for no apparent sensible or logical reason. I remember the following two from early secondary school:

The night was dark and stormy,  
The toilet light was dim,  
Suddenly I heard a splash,  
Judy (or whoever), had fallen in.

and

I'm a little Dutch girl,  
I don't swear.  
Bastard, bugger, bitch, bum.  
I don't care.



The belief that such rhymes are peculiar to childhood must have some truth in it. I think that upon reaching third or fourth form, or thereabouts, and being looked up to as a 'big girl', the attention and power-seeking days drew quietly to a close. Because these vulgarities were a form of power, especially, and specifically of a Catholic convent. I must admit the "dirties" made one exception - religion never featured in any of them. I can only speculate as to why this was so. Perhaps we lived in daily terror of being called to the principal's office, should a note or chant be discovered or overheard; or perhaps even at such a tender age, our respect for our religion was genuine.

My experiences tend to underline the fact that vulgarity in verbal lore does not restrict itself to a certain class of children. How many adults are there who do not have a quiet chuckle at a dirty joke? In Wendy Lowenstein's book, 'Shocking, Shocking, Shocking', she points out that the real experts in the field of improper material are more often than not, girls, and in particular, girls from middle class families, attending private schools.

My own nine year old daughter attends a small private Anglican Girls' Grammar School in an inner Melbourne suburb. The rude rhymes she brings home are quite amazing - although I must admit that one gradually becomes relatively unshockable. Her informant, it appears, is a little girl who attended a state school for several years, and who is a wondrous source of information, not only about playground chants, but also riddles, taunts, insults, superstitions, songs and jokes. I have included some examples of 1987 rude rhymes, vintage grade four.

Mary had a little lamb,  
She locking it in the closet,  
And when she got it out again,  
It left a small deposit.

and

Ching Chong Chinaman went to milk a cow  
Ching Chong Chinaman didn't know how,  
Ching Chong Chinaman pulled the wrong  
tit,  
Ching Chong Chinaman got covered in  
shit.

My daughter recites these to me quite spontaneously most of the time, but there is still an element of hesitancy, occasionally. I think she wonders if I will approve or reprimand her, so she begins with a warning that the material is "a bit rude". But, as I was, as a child, so too is she - absolutely delighted at the sensation she tries to create, and clearly very smug with the power and the glory of it all.

The learning and passing on of dirty ditties down through the ages of childhood has become quite a tradition and will remain so for many years to come. The unanswered question is, of course, just how dirty can this literature become? Maybe I led a sheltered life as a young Catholic schoolgirl, but it seems to me that the rude rhymes are becoming ruder as I get older. I wonder what my five year old son will bring home from school next year?

Whatever appeals to a child's sense of humour, and to their idea of what is rude, will surely remain much the same. Bottoms, panties, and lavatories were popular thirty odd years ago, and still seem to dominate the vulgar lore of today's playground - particularly in the primary school. I think my favorite rhyme was this one:

Ta-ra-ra-boom-di-ay,  
Go throw your pants away,  
When you get home today,  
What will your mother say?

☐ ☐ ☐ Marilyn Vernon



## Is there an Australian nursery rhyme? a tribute to Marion Sinclair

London Bridge is falling down,  
Falling down, falling down,  
London Bridge is falling down,  
My fair lady.

Half a pound of tuppenny rice,  
Half a pound of treacle;  
That's the way the money goes,  
Pop goes the weasel!

Every year hundreds of Australian adults buy books of traditional nursery rhymes for young children. They are one of the most popular types of children's literature, and range from cheap mass-produced editions and paper-backs to expensive art books. The Melbourne book-seller Albert Ullin estimates that his Little Bookroom shops carry about fifty different nursery rhyme or 'Mother Goose' titles, and about half a dozen new productions appear each year.

What is a nursery rhyme? A nursery rhyme is a short poem, song, lullaby or game which parents and grandparents use with babies and young children. A nursery rhyme is for most people their first experience of poetry, music and humour. It may be ancient, it may be funny, and it may teach the child something, such as to count or to tell the difference between left and right:

One two three four five,  
Once I caught a fish alive;  
Why did you let him go?  
Because he bit my finger so.  
Which finger did he bite?  
The little finger on the right.

A nursery rhyme can also be pure nonsense, although scholars might argue from now to kingdom-come about its meaning:

Most nursery rhymes are learned by word of mouth, the process that folklorists call **oral transmission**, although adults may use books to jog their memory, since publication of nursery rhyme books is almost as old as printing. The eighteenth century saw a real upsurge of interest in 'sonnets for the cradle' among English publishers, and one of the best-known of these was **Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book** ('for the Diversion of all Little Masters and Misses') which was published around 1744 by the publishers Mary Cooper; price sixpence. Several nursery rhymes still common in Australia appeared in Tommy Thumb, namely **Baaa Baa Black Sheep**, **Sing a Song of Sixpence**, **Hickory Dickory Dock** and **Little Boy Blue**, and it is possible that a copy of the 1744 book or one of its later editions came to Australia in the First Fleet or later transports. If it did, a fortune at Sotheby's is waiting for the lucky finder, since no known copy of the first edition of Tommy Thumb exists; even the British Museum only possesses a copy of Volume II.

Perhaps our present-day versions of traditional nursery rhymes did come from Tommy Thumb's **Pretty Song Book**, or from another eighteenth-century publication even more quaintly titled **Gammer Gurton's Garland**. This publication from about 1784 included **The Old Woman who lived in**

a Shoe, Little Bo-Peep and Goose-a-geese-a-gander, rhymes which are still popular in Australia today. It is, however, more likely that English nursery rhymes came to Australia in the memories of the human beings, both fortunate and unfortunate, who became our first European settlers. Such is the power of oral tradition, that ancient rhymes, stories and games have been passed down by word of mouth through centuries, crossing enormous boundaries of distance and time. One game sometimes called Buck Buck is played by Australian boys today and has also been documented in ancient Rome, in Nero's time.

The sheer volume of nursery rhymes in the English language is astronomical; the Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes compiled by Iona and Peter Opie and first published in 1951 includes over one thousand rhymes, and many of these are widely used in Australia. I have found the most popular ones to be the following, with This Little Piggy as the 'top of the pops': This Little Piggy went to Market, Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, Humpty Dumpty, Round and Round the Garden, Baa Baa Black Sheep, Ring a Ring a Rosy and Rockabye Baby.

Is there an Australian nursery rhyme? For over a hundred years a number of Australian writers have produced songs and rhymes for the nursery, but most have either passed into oblivion or remain firmly between the covers of the printed book. Regrettably, few Australian parents teach their children the words from Norman Lindsay's wonderful children's novel, *The Magic Pudding*, such as

Onions, bunions, corns and crabs,  
Whiskers, wheels and hansom cabs,  
Beef and bottles, beer and bones,  
Give him a feed and end his groans.



On the other hand, some of my recent research shows that **Waltzing Matilda** is one of the first songs Australian parents sing to their children. Like the nursery rhymes, most people learn **Waltzing Matilda** informally, from other members of their family. The power of oral tradition is such that every Australian, new or old, knows the Great Australian Folk Song, and its use with very young children gives Banjo Paterson's poem a claim to be, perhaps, the first Australian nursery rhyme.

The fact that a song or rhyme has a known author is no barrier to its passing into the folk tradition, if 'the folk' take it to their hearts. **Twinkle Twinkle Little Star**, **Wee Willie Winkie** and **Three Little Kittens that lost their Mittens** all have acknowledged authors, and the poet Longfellow is commonly credited with

There was a little girl, and she had a  
little curl  
Right in the middle of her forehead;  
When she was good she was very, very  
good,  
But when she was bad, she was horrid.

An Australian rhyme which is usually regarded as anonymous is **Kookaburra sits in an old Gum Tree**. **Kookaburra** was once exclusively a school or Guides' and Scouts' song, often sung as a round, but nowadays it is increasingly part of the family repertoire for very young children, together with old favorites such as **Little Jack Horner** and **See Saw Margery Daw**. As a song which belongs

more exclusively to children than **Waltzing Matilda**, **Kookaburra** perhaps has a better claim to be regarded as 'the Australian nursery rhyme':

Kookaburra sits in an old gum tree,  
Merry merry king of the bush is he;  
Laugh, Kookaburra, laugh, kookaburra,  
Gay your life must be.

However, **Kookaburra** is not anonymous: and both words and music were written by Miss Marion Sinclair, who died in Adelaide in February this year.

There are other songs and rhymes which are moving into the Australian nursery rhyme repertoire from a variety of sources, some traditional and some not. Iona and Peter Opie collected **Michael Finnegan** in school playgrounds in Britain, but it is often used in Australia as a nursery rhyme, told to children by adults:

There was a man called Michael Finnegan,  
He grew whiskers on his chin-e-gan;  
The wind came out and blew them in  
again,  
Poor old Michael Finnegan-innegan.

Music-hall and popular songs have also moved into the nursery, and the Australian favorite is probably **How much is that Doggie in the Window?**

The borrowing process goes both ways; the Beatles used many fragments of nursery rhymes such as the phrase 'See how they run' from **Three Blind Mice** in their song **Lady Madonna**, and the popular World War II song **I've got Sixpence** was an adaptation of **I Love Sixpence** from the eighteenth-century publication **Gammer Gurton's Garland**.





There are a number of kindergarten or primary school songs and rhymes which are popular in families and seem to be entering the oral tradition. *I'm a Little Teapot* *Short and Stout* is a strong contender for folkloric status, and other popular titles are *Bananas in Pyjamas*, *Little Peter Rabbit*, and *Five Little Ducks*. Only time will tell whether they survive to become true nursery rhymes. Australian parents have also appropriated to the nursery the folk songs *Old Macdonald had a Farm* and *This Old Man*, the latter receiving a fillip from its use in Ingrid Bergman's popular film of a few years' back, *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*. *This Old Man* (he had one, etc.) is an interesting example of the enormous amount of education involved in these inspired pieces of traditional nonsense:

This old man, he had one,  
He played knick-knack  
On my drum:  
Knick-knack paddy whack  
Give a dog a bone;  
This old man came  
Rolling home.

This *Old Man* teaches counting, practice with rhymes and with sounds such as 'knick-knack, paddy whack'. Learning the words involves quite a feat of memory, surpassed only by even longer cumulative rhymes such as *The Old Woman and her Pig* or *This is the House that Jack Built*.

Iona and Peter Opie wrote that children 'become joyful and wise listening to the same traditional verses ... wherever the English word is spoken ...' Nursery rhymes are one of the strongest pieces of evidence for the persistence of British traditions in Australia; the rhymes are used by royalists and republicans alike, and their

contents are often delightfully irreverent or anarchic, as in *The Grand Old Duke of York*:

The grand old Duke of York,  
He had ten thousand men;  
He marched them up the top of the hill  
And he marched them down again.  
And when they were up they were up,  
And when they were down they were down.  
And when they were only half way up  
They were neither up nor down.

To date, I have identified over two hundred and fifty different English-language rhymes used in Australia, and there are undoubtedly many more, in addition to those recited in other languages. Entertaining young children with amusing gobbledegook like *Hey Diddle Diddle the Cat and the Fiddle* is a family pastime which seems to exist in virtually every language. The following is my adaptation of a Greek nursery rhyme, popular in Australia:

Once I had a cat,  
Her name was Katerina;  
She wouldn't eat potatoes,  
Or soup or semolina;  
She wouldn't sing,  
She wouldn't dance,  
So I sent her off to Athens,



Perhaps one day a popular Australian nursery rhyme will derive from a language other than English. It might also be from one of the many Aboriginal languages in Australia, particularly since there is a rich Aboriginal Australian tradition of games and songs for children. It's also possible, knowing Australians' sardonic sense of humour, that the following example which was once told as a family nursery rhyme might become popular, especially in

the country:

Rabbit young, rabbit old,  
Rabbit hot, rabbit cold;  
Rabbit tender, rabbit tough,  
Thanks be to God  
I've had enough.

 Gwenda Davey

## Folklife: our living heritage

The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Folklife in Australia was tabled in the Federal Parliament in February 1988 and is now available from the Commonwealth Government Bookshop in your capital city. (Price \$29.95.)

This extensive report (306 pages) of 12 chapters has a number of appendices and numerous photographs. Chapter 3, 'The Nature and Diversity of our Folklife', includes a section on children's folklore.

The main recommendations are the establishment of:

- An Australian Folklife Centre
- An Australian Folklife Grants Scheme
- A National Collection of Australian Folklife
- A Folk Arts Committee within the Australia Council
- A Folk Arts Grants Program

Of particular interest to readers of the ACFN are the sections dealing with folklife in schools and tertiary institutions (chapters 8 and 9). On these matters, the Committee of Inquiry has recommended, inter alia:

"That the Government acknowledge:

- (a) the poorly developed role of folk arts, and folklife studies generally, in Australian schools;

- (b) the important role these can play
  - (i) in increasing students' understanding of their own culture and heritage, and those of their classmates, and therefore in developing students' sense of cultural and national identity;
  - (ii) in fostering understanding and sharing between students of different cultural backgrounds;
  - (iii) as a teaching aid generally, especially in the areas of arts appreciation and skill development;
- (c) the absence of adequate folk arts and folklife curriculum materials for use in Australian schools;
- (d) the lack of training in folk arts and folklife matters generally among members of the teaching profession in Australia.

That the Government acknowledge:

- (a) the poorly developed state of folklife scholarship in Australia;
- (b) the absence in Australia of provision for professional training as a folklorist, such as is available in most other developed nations;
- (c) the paucity of professional folklife expertise in the tertiary education sector, in government cultural and heritage institutions, and the teaching profession.

That the Government ask the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission to develop, in consultation with the Departments of Education, Employment and Training and the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories, and other relevant educational and other bodies, and in particular those tertiary educational institutions active in the folklife area, specific proposals to encourage:

- (a) the establishment of courses leading to professional qualifications in folklife studies, initially at the post graduate diploma and masters, and subsequently at the doctoral level;
- (b) the development of research and scholarship in Australian folklife within Australian tertiary educational institutions;
- (c) the incorporation into teaching training courses at all levels of a basic grounding in folklife studies;

- (d) the establishment, in tertiary educational institutions and TAFE colleges of non-award, community courses in Australian folklife, including training in field collection techniques as both on-campus and external studies and as summer schools."

The Minister for the Arts, Mr Gary Punch, has asked for public responses to the recommendations by June 1st 1988. These should be sent to the Minister c/- Parliament House, Canberra. Readers are urged to put pen to paper - this report is too important to be allowed to gather dust in a Canberra pigeon-hole!



## Blood noses, Cat's eyes and Dr. Spock

Most studies of the ancient, world-wide game of Marbles have focused on the rules. The Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, used the game as an illustration of the way in which children come to learn and understand rules.

However, another aspect of the game, the naming of the marbles, is less often discussed. Recently, one of the editors of the ACFN began to collect information about marble names from the Australian Children's Folklore Collection, the memories of adults, and from children in schools.

Two facts became evident very early in the study. First, every marble has a name - usually 'typological', i.e. marbles are named according to their size, colour and

texture. Second, the names are remarkably apt: a Galaxy marble is dark blue with white flecks, a Poo is a messy brown colour, and so on.

Names collected so far include:

Planet  
China Alley  
Night  
Tom Bowler  
Coke  
Go ) (green )  
Wait ) (yellow)  
Stop ) (red )  
Bloodsucker  
Pirate  
Cat's Eye  
Bird's Cage  
Blood Nose  
Birdshit

Doctor Spock  
Blush  
Poo  
Blue Snake  
Blue Bell  
Galaxy  
Blue Jet

Can readers add to this list?  
Descriptions and functions of each type  
would be useful.



## Hush 'n' Joggetty

Phyl Lobl has issued a tape and booklet of lullabies, dandling songs and body play songs "for kids and all those who care for kids". She says that people of all ages could use this material with babies and young children as an aid to:

1. Bonding and communication.
2. To calm and amuse both child and carer.
3. To provide a basis for music education.
  - \* Lullabies for melody input.
  - \* Dandling songs for rhythmic response.
  - \* Body play songs to aid physical awareness.



Phyl Lobl is a songmaker/teacher with many years experience in these three fields. She is also well known as a folksinger. She was a member of the Music Board of the Australian Council for three years and has published a music teaching kit called "Not Just Noise".

The booklet for "Hush 'N' Joggetty" is packaged in a heavy plastic envelope so it can be used - and survive - in a wide variety of situations, including bathtime. Cost of the cassette and booklet is \$12, and can be ordered from

Tully Publishing,  
PO Box 218,  
Hurstville NSW 2220  
Phone: 02 546 3523

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"Fiction is to the grown man what play is to the child: it is there that he changes the atmosphere and tenor of his life."

(Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Gossip on Romance', 1882)

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# Play: a new exhibition at the Children's Museum of Victoria.

July to December, 1988

The Children's Museum is currently preparing for a lively new exhibition on the subject of children's traditional play and games. **Play** follows the first exhibition, **Everybody**, which will tour the State in 1988 in response to popular demand.

Exhibitions about children generally focus on what adults provide for children. This exhibition uncovers the underground world of childhood - the life of children at play when not directed and controlled by adults.

All societies throughout human history have left evidence of the games and other play rituals of their young. Children play everywhere.

**Play** offers insight into contemporary Australian children's play lore, as well as presenting play artefacts from the past. It is an active, participatory exhibition inviting children and adults from all sections of the Australian community - including Aborigines and people from non English speaking backgrounds - to contribute their memories and play practices.

The exhibition will grow and change according to the interests and contributions of the thousands of child and adult visitors.

Through games and play, children develop skills and stamina, strength and co-ordination, imagination and consideration for others. They learn to co-operate and participate, negotiate and set rules. Children's spontaneous play is of enormous importance to their physical, social and intellectual development.

Traditional games and their modern variations form the fabric of the strong and rich children's folklore which is found in all cultures. In Australian playgrounds, children have been important agents of cultural integration and cross-cultural sharing in an era of unprecedented immigration and social change. The exhibition's purpose is to highlight and affirm the importance of play and games in the development of human beings as competent individuals and as contributing members of society.

## Data Collection

The participatory nature of this exhibition provides a unique opportunity to record and catalogue children's play lore.

The Myer Foundation has supported the employment of an archivist to record examples of games from visitors of all ages and backgrounds. This written down, taped and filmed material, and play artefacts which children use and adapt, will extend and update the existing Australian Children's Folklore Collection (housed at the Institute of Early Childhood Development, Melbourne). This archive has now become a significant resource for academics, librarians, museum curators, singers, story tellers and students at all levels. It provided some of the material included in the enormously popular published collections of Australian children's rhymes: 'Far Out Brussel Sprout!', 'All Right, Vegemite!', and 'Unreal Banana Peel!'.

All the material contributed and collected will continue to be accessible to the public.

## Traditional and Universal Games

The exhibition will comprise a number of inter-linked areas, each devoted to particular games. Some 'Old-fashioned' games, such as tops, cup and ball and diabolos, will be featured, and so will games that are still popular today: hopscotch, marbles, knucklebones, string games, paper and pencil games such as noughts and crosses and fortune tellers, and simple home-made toys like paper dolls, or toys made out of match boxes or icy-pole sticks (i.e. toys that can be made in the Museum using easily obtained materials).

Evocative settings will invite children's involvement and revive memories for parents and grandparents. Visitors will be welcome to demonstrate their particular ways of playing the games.

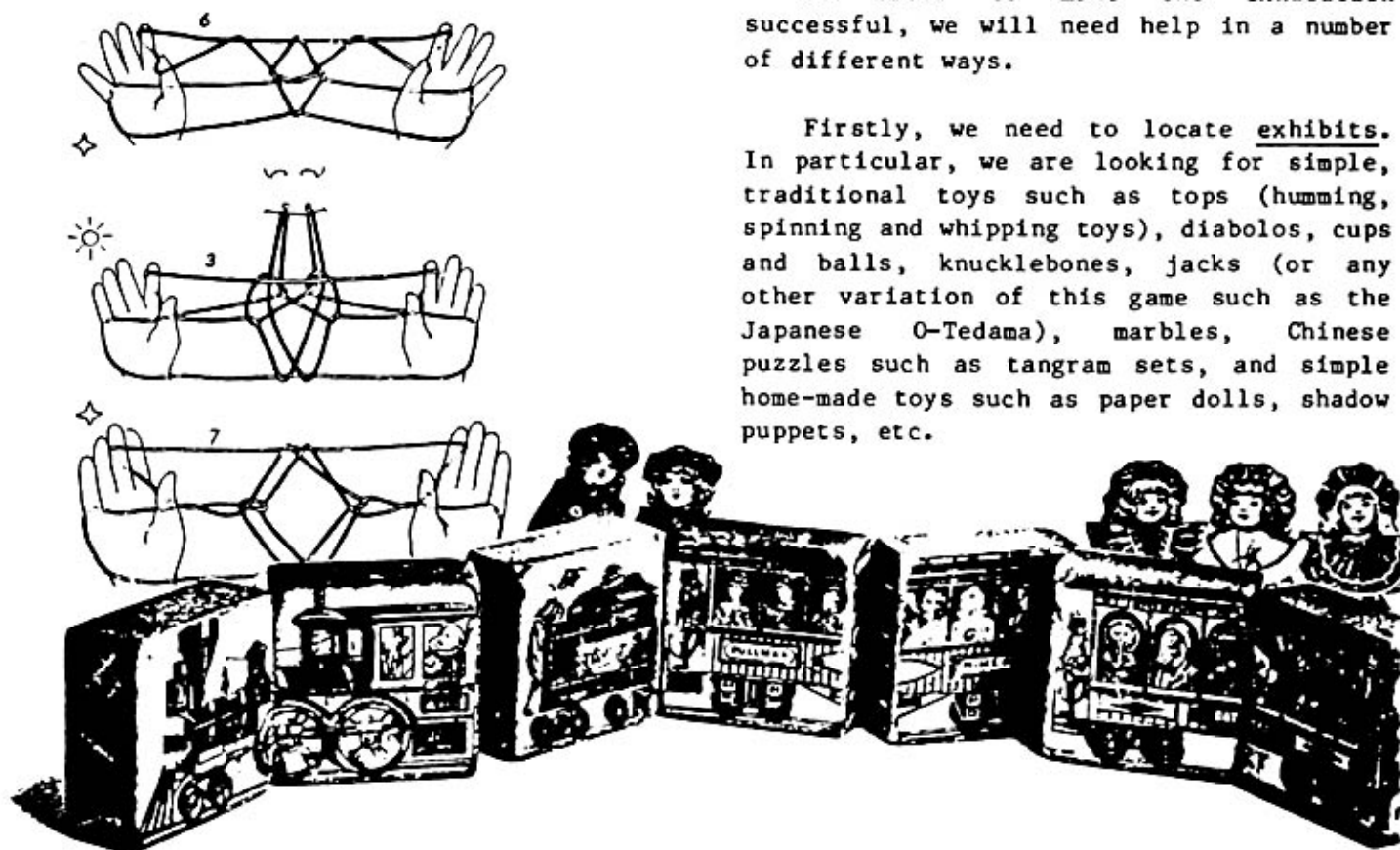
Graphics, artefacts and audio-visual exhibits will illustrate the enduring traditions and cultural variations, e.g. knucklebones from Ancient Egypt; hopscotch in Pompeii; the string games of Aboriginal Australia, Japan and Turkey.



### The Children's Museum needs your help!

In order to make the exhibition successful, we will need help in a number of different ways.

Firstly, we need to locate exhibits. In particular, we are looking for simple, traditional toys such as tops (humming, spinning and whipping toys), diabolos, cups and balls, knucklebones, jacks (or any other variation of this game such as the Japanese O-Tedama), marbles, Chinese puzzles such as tangram sets, and simple home-made toys such as paper dolls, shadow puppets, etc.



Secondly, we need information. For example, what hopscotch patterns were used by children last century? What hopscotch patterns are used by children in other countries?

Thirdly, we want to make the Play exhibition come alive. It's not much fun just looking at toys and games. We are also looking for people who can demonstrate how the games are played. During the Play exhibition, which will run from June to December 1988, we will organise special days when 'experts' come in to the Museum and demonstrate their play skills. So, if you were, or still are, good at spinning tops, playing diabolos, playing marbles, making string games, or making simple toys, then we would like to hear from you.

**Please contact us!**

If you have any of the above mentioned toys at home (or any other traditional toys that would fit into the theme of the exhibition), and if you would be interested in demonstrating some of your play skills to our Museum visitors, then please contact:

Dianne Beevers, Children's Museum.  
Phone: 669 9872 (9 am - 12 noon, Tuesday to Saturday), or 669 9906.

**Recording Children's Games**

Visitors to the Play exhibition will be invited to fill in cards to record games, rhymes, riddles, etc., they know.

Readers of the ACFN may be interested to see the kind of format used to collect such information, and to engage in some collecting themselves. The attached forms may be photocopied, and sent to the editors of the ACFN for inclusion in the Australian Children's Folklore Collection. (Material from other countries is also welcome.)



**Heather Russell**

PLAY: AT THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM  
July - December, 1988

TRADITIONAL GAMES AND TOYS : INFORMATION SHEETS

Collector's Name: .....

Name of Institute (if applicable): .....

Contact phone number: .....

Name of informant (optional): .....

Sex: .....

Age: .....

Country of birth: .....

Family language: .....

Present residence (suburb & city): .....

The information collected in the following sheets will be used as background and contextual material for the Children's Museum's next exhibition on **Play**. The information collected will make a significant contribution to our knowledge of the games played by children around the world. These information sheets will eventually be deposited in the Australian Children's Folklore Collection (housed at the Institute of Early Childhood Development, Kew).



**GAMES OF SKILL WITH SIMPLE WOODEN TOYS:  
TOPS, CUPS AND BALLS, AND DIABOLOS**

Name of informant (optional): .....  
Sex: .....  
Age: .....  
Country of birth: .....  
Family language: .....  
Present residence (suburb & city): .....

1. Did you play with tops, diabolos, or cups and balls as a child?

If so: Where?

At what age?

When?

2. Do you still have any of these toys at home? (If so, please ask to see them and describe them briefly, including approximate sizes.)

3. How did you play with your top/cup and ball/diabolo?

4. Were there particular games that you played with other children?  
If so, please describe these games, list the names of the games,  
and any relevant terminology. (Include translations if possible.)

5. Was playing with tops/cup and ball/diabolo primarily a boys' or a girls' game? Why?

## HOPSCOTCH

Name of informant (optional): .....  
Sex: .....  
Age: .....  
Country of birth: .....  
Family language: .....  
Present residence (suburb & city): .....

1. Did you play Hopscotch as a child?

If so: Where? (e.g. streets, playground, school, beach)

At what age?

When? (during which years, or decade)

2. Which hopscotch patterns were the most popular? (Please draw them.)

3. Was hopscotch primarily a boys' or a girls' game? Why?

4. What do you call hopscotch?

What do you call the 'taw'?

What did you use for a taw?

5. Any other special words used during a game of hopscotch. (Please include a translation if possible.)

6. Briefly describe how you played hopscotch.

7. Write here any other interesting 'bits' of information about this game.

## KNUCKLEBONES

Name of informant (optional): .....  
Sex: .....  
Age: .....  
Country of birth: .....  
Family language: .....  
Present residence (suburb & city): .....

1. Did you play Knucklebones as a child?

If so: Where?  
At what age?  
When?

2. What materials or equipment did you play Knucklebones with? (e.g. plastic jacks, stones, chopsticks, balls, etc.)

3. Was Knucklebones primarily a boys' or a girls' game? Why?

4. How did you play Knucklebones? Briefly describe the stages of a Knucklebones game. (Note down any terminology, with translations if possible.)

5. Any other interesting 'bits' of information?

## STRING GAMES

Name of informant (optional): .....  
Sex: .....  
Age: .....  
Country of birth: .....  
Family language: .....  
Present residence (suburb & city): .....

1. Did you play string games as a child?

If so: Where?

At what age?

When?

2. Draw and name each string figure that you can remember. (Please translate the names of the string figures if possible.)

3. Who taught you string figures?

4. Do you remember any stories attached to the string figures? If so, please give details.

5. What do you call string figures?

What is your word for the string itself?

Are there any other special words associated with string?



## MARBLES

Name of informant (optional): .....  
Sex: .....  
Age: .....  
Country of birth: .....  
Family language: .....  
Present residence (suburb & city): .....

1. Did you play Marbles as a child?

If so: Where?

At what age?

When?

2. How did you flick or throw the marble? (Please draw a diagram or describe in words.) What do you call this throw or flick?

3. What was the most popular Marbles game? What was its name and how did you play it?

4. Was Marbles primarily a boys' or a girls' game? Why?

5. Draw and name as many different types of marbles as you can remember. (Please translate the names if possible.)

6. Any other terminology? (e.g. playing 'for keeps', playing 'follows')

## HOME MADE TOYS

Name of informant (optional): .....  
Sex: .....  
Age: .....  
Country of birth: .....  
Family language: .....  
Present residence (suburb & city): .....

1. Do you remember anyone making toys out of simple, easily obtainable materials? e.g. kites, peg dolls, paper cut outs to stick on the wall, shadow puppets, etc.  
(Please describe the toys, list the materials used, and ask if you may borrow or keep the item.)
2. Did you ever make, or have made for you, toys from folded handkerchiefs (e.g. elephant, mouse), icy-pole sticks (e.g. boomerangs), match boxes, buttons etc? (Please describe, list materials used, and ask if you may borrow or keep the item.)

## PAPER GAMES

Name of informant (optional): .....  
Sex: .....  
Age: .....  
Country of birth: .....  
Family language: .....  
Present residence (suburb & city): .....

1. Can you remember how to make simple toys with paper?  
e.g. paper hats, paper boats, Fortune Tellers.  
(Please list the items that are made, and ask if you may keep them.)
  
2. Can you remember playing paper and pencil games?  
e.g. Noughts and Crosses, Hang the Butcher.  
(Please list the games, and show any relevant diagrams.)
  
3. Can you remember playing any other simple games using paper with other materials, like beans, stones or sticks? (Please list the games and give a brief description of how they are played.)