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home the full weight of what it can truly mean to mentor someone. (McNeill 2019)

John Barre Toelken was a true mentor, guide, and teacher. His colleagues, students, and peers remember him as a brilliant scholar. His family and friends remember him as a cherished husband, father, grandfather, and kind soul who was fiercely loyal, ethical, and loving.

A poet, Barre opened *The Anguish of Snails: Native American Folklore in the West* with his exquisite poem “She Comes Along Carrying Spears,” that teaches:

The singer will surely chant,
 “May there be beauty and harmony
 ahead of us to the east,
 behind us to the west,
 on both sides of us as we travel,
 above us and below us as we go;
 may we go onward harmoniously,
 may it be finished in beauty.”
 (2003:xi).

Barre finished in beauty.

Notes

1. Portions of this obituary appear in Williams (2019).
2. Audio from the celebration, recorded by Lisa Duskin-Goede, is online at USU’s “Collecting Memories: Oral Histories of American Folklorists,” Utah State University Special Collections & Archives, <http://digital.lib.usu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/AFS/id/442/rec/7>.

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Burt H. Feintuch (1949–2018)

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Burt Howard Feintuch was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, on May 29, 1949. He departed this earth on October 29, 2018, leaving behind extensive folklore field research on local and traditional music from Kentucky; Northumberland, England; Cape Breton Island, Canada; New England; Louisiana; and Texas. His fieldwork collection, consisting of tens of thousands of recordings, images, and documents, resides at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. He was the author of numerous scholarly books and articles on folklore and music, and he produced several albums of vernacular music—including gospel, Northumbrian smallpipes, and Cape Breton fiddle and piano music—for Rounder Records and Smithsonian Folkways. He also made documentary films about gospel music, refugees, and African American history in New England. He was a



Figure 1. Burt H. Feintuch (courtesy University of New Hampshire).

dedicated father to his daughters Sophie and Hannah, a delightful life partner, and an enthusiastic cook. A talented musician, he regularly provided fiddle music to New Hampshire-area contra dances. He also played the banjo, the acoustic and electric guitar, the Northumbrian smallpipes, and the mandolin.

Those of us who loved and mourn Burt echo the words of the woman, known only as Dink, who did laundry on a Texas levee as she sang, "If I had wings like Noah's dove, I'd fly up the river to the one I love." "Dink's Song," of course, was famously captured by John Lomax just after the turn of the twentieth century. In the contemporary era, Burt caught tunes, too, and he did it in the best way possible. He documented tunes so that others could hear their power and the joy and resilience they brought to human existence. His work with music bears witness to its capacity to move people—often literally, as he was particularly fond of documenting dance music.

His mother, Janice Albert Feintuch, may have launched his career of documenting folk music when she took a teenaged Burt to see Pete Seeger in concert, which made a lasting impression. During high school in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, he was a member of the Folk Club, which focused on music. As an undergraduate at Pennsylvania State University, he worked for the Penn State Folklore Society folk music series, which hosted well-regarded traditional musicians including Mississippi Fred McDowell, Elizabeth Cotten, and the High Level Ranters. Not only did this series bring in the era's notable folk musicians, but it is also remembered fondly for an epic and drunken snowball fight between the New Lost City Ramblers and Penn State students.

Burt studied American Studies and Folklore, and Professor Samuel Preston Bayard was especially influential. Bayard molded and refined Burt's lifelong interest in documenting traditional and roots music. After graduation in 1971, he attended graduate school in Folklore and Folklife at the University of Pennsylvania. While at Penn, he learned to play the fiddle and completed his PhD in 1975 with a dissertation about Earl "Pop" Hafler, a traditional fiddle player from southeastern Pennsylvania.

His first academic job was as Professor of Folklore and Folklife at Western Kentucky University from 1975–1988, where he directed the master's degree program. While living in Kentucky, he followed local music from archives to kitchens and living rooms, to the Taylor Chapel A.M.E. Church, and to a Tennessee auto salvage yard, where he documented performances by the likes of Bud Garrett, Street Butler, Mose Rager, and Chlorine Lawson (whose name he loved). He produced an LP of this music with Bruce Greene, *I Kind of Believe It's a Gift* (Bowling Green-Warren County Arts Commission, ND). He also met the Cross Family, whose gospel music inspired him to produce an album, *Walk Around Heaven All Day* (Bowling Green-Warren County Arts Commission, 1981). He was the content specialist for a documentary film about them, *The Cross Family: Living the Life We Sing About* (Western Kentucky University Television Center, ND). He said that the highlight of his career was when the Crosses declared him an honorary family member. He may have earned this distinction because he followed them to church while lugging his weighty Revox A77 reel-to-reel recorder so he could tape them *in situ*.

During his Kentucky years, Burt published *Kentucky Folk Music: An Annotated Bibliography* (University Press of Kentucky, 1985) and edited *The Conservation of Culture: Folklorists and the Public Sector* (University Press of Kentucky, 1988). From approximately 1985 to 1998, he also studied the Northumbrian smallpipes in the northeast of England as a form of folk revival. Earlier, his studies with Professor Bayard in combination with an undergraduate study-abroad stint at the University of Durham in England—which involved extensive frequenting of The Bridge pub in Newcastle—awoke him to the potency of music that originated in the place where it was performed. His Northumbrian fieldwork ultimately led to the production of the album *Northumberland Rant: Traditional Music from the Edge of England* (Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 1999). While doing this work, Burt learned the smallpipes, and he played them well enough to enter competitions in North America and England; he made what he jokingly called his "New Age

debut” in 2001, playing the tune “Bonny at Morn” on a studio album at the request of musician and artist Sarah Fimm.

In 1988, he took a job as the Director of the Humanities Center and Professor of Folklore at the University of New Hampshire. There, he built an endowment that, over the years, has supported much faculty research in the humanities. He secured many grants, including funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Department of Justice, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the US State Department, and the Mellon Foundation. A study abroad program to Ghana was one of several interdisciplinary programs that he developed during his tenure at the Humanities Center.

He edited the *Journal of American Folklore* from 1991–1995 and was a representative for the American Folklore Society at the World Intellectual Property Organization from 2002–2008. He was elected a fellow of the American Folklore Society in 2012. At the invitation of the Librarian of Congress, he served on the National Recording Preservation Board for 16 years, until his death. There, Burt took it as his personal mission to promote the recordings of musicians of color and marginalized musicians; he wanted them to get the recognition that they deserved.

While at UNH, he produced two films: *Up-rooted* (Atlantic Media Productions, 2011), which is about refugees in New England; and *Shadows Fall North* (Atlantic Media Productions, 2016), which focuses on African American history in New England. He also published articles and edited books, including *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 2003); and *The Encyclopedia of New England* (Yale University Press, 2005), with New Hampshire senator David Watters, which was chosen as a *Boston Globe* nonfiction book of the year.

His later books foreground fieldwork that focused on local music. They include *In the Blood: Cape Breton Conversations on Culture* (Utah State University Press, 2010), which won an Independent Publishers Book Award; and *Talking New Orleans Music: Crescent City Musicians Talk about Their Lives, Their Music, and*

Their City (University Press of Mississippi, 2015). He was working on his final book manuscript, *Creole Soul*, which is about zydeco music in Texas and Louisiana, when he died. New Hampshire Artist Laureate Gary Samson partnered with Burt to take the photographs for these last three books. As a folklorist and Burt’s life partner, I accompanied him on many of the fieldwork trips for the books and finished *Creole Soul* for him.

Burt had an immersive passion for the cultures and music he studied. So, while doing Cape Breton fieldwork in Nova Scotia, Canada, we ate many an oat cake, heard many a funny square dance story or tale of the supernatural at Margie and Jimmy MacInnis’ home, and shared many a laugh with the Beaton family after a gig. We lingered into the wee hours of the morning, vigorously tapping our feet to music at the Red Shoe Pub, The Doryman, the Gaelic College, or at a house party with a midnight supper. We danced exuberantly—a word Burt liked and used often—to traditional fiddle and piano music in every small hall that we could possibly find on Cape Breton Island. The Brook Village dance near Mabou was a particular favorite.

Burt loved Cape Breton music because of its artistry, tradition, and rock ‘n’ roll intensity when played by local musicians for mainly local square dances. The music also held him in its thrall for the decades that he studied it because of the warmth, intellect, humor, and kindness of the people who played it. Out of this fieldwork, which continued from 1995 to his death, came several albums, including *The Heart of Cape Breton: Fiddle Music Recorded Live Along the Ceilidh Trail* (Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 2002); *Buddy MacMaster: Cape Breton Tradition* (Rounder, 2003); and *Cape Breton Fiddle and Piano Music: The Beaton Family of Mabou* (Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 2004).

Unfortunately, Burt didn’t live long enough to study local music in New Orleans and Houston for decades, but the years between 2010 and 2018 that were spent studying that music were folklorically glorious for him. During that time, he produced *Talking New Orleans Music* (University of Mississippi Press, 2015) and *Creole*

Soul. I remember chasing after the Mardi Gras Indians on the streets of New Orleans with Burt one St. Joseph's Night in March. I'd never seen him run before that day and actually didn't even know he could run, but we ran after the Indians for hours that particular night. It was magical. To our surprise, we ended up in the background of a photograph of a Mardi Gras Indian that appeared in the *New York Times* a few days later, as if it were a benediction to our experience.

We were moved by the generosity of African American trailriders in Louisiana and Texas, who invited us into their party wagons when they paraded through rural neighborhoods on horseback with zydeco music blasting out of their speakers as they rode. They shared their food, beer, moonshine, and thoughts about zydeco music with us. All in their path—including animals—stopped to watch them, arrested by the vivid, rich, pulsing tableau of music, people, and horses. After the rides, the trailriders danced, or “zydeco-ed,” as they say, late into the night in the dust of horse arenas or under the shelters of fairgrounds. The live zydeco bands that played for these dances had woofers the size of Rhode Island that amped out music so loud that it made all the bones in my body vibrate and caused Burt's pants legs to flap when the bass sound waves hit him. He always managed to find the best dive bars in all the out-of-the-way towns with names like “Cheticamp” or “Opelousas,” all places that cranked out first-rate live, local music. Wherever he was in the world, whether he traveled for pleasure or for

professional reasons, he always sought out the live music rooted in that place.

His passion for his subject of study was remarkable, as was his trademark wit, which he demonstrated at the end of his life during the worst of circumstances, while he was being treated for cancer. For example, when he was home recovering from a craniotomy meant to slow the progress of glioblastoma, I was scrubbing the bathroom. I asked him if he minded if I cleaned and organized the linen closet, too, a process that would prolong the use of strong-smelling cleaning solutions. He replied, “I would've had brain surgery more often if I had known that it would get you to clean out the linen closet!” When his oncologist told him that his brain needed to be mapped in preparation for radiation, Burt quipped, “If you're going to map my brain, will you please put in some points of interest?”

Burt had terminal brain cancer when he died, but it did not kill him. He was at home in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, recovering from chemotherapy and radiation treatment, when he felt like playing his fiddle with friends for the first time in months. He went downstairs to retrieve it. Once there, he decided to grab his mandolin as well. While going up the stairs with an instrument case in each hand, he fell over backwards. It was a shocking and tragic end to such a vibrant life. We wanted a gentler and sweeter ending for him. We did not get it. But because music was at least there to see him off, in that one small way, it was a fitting end for this dynamic, brilliant, and talented man who lived a life that was worth singing about.