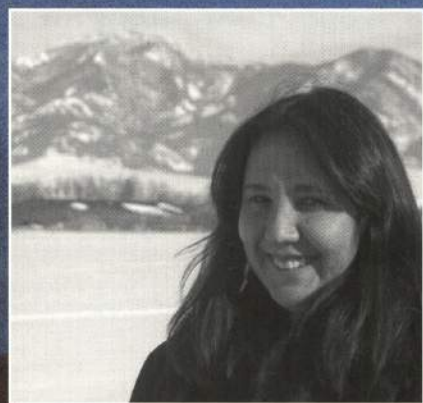


The  
**Montana**  
American Festival Project

1992 – 1995



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American Festival Project

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Seven Hundred Miles Wide – Many Stories Deep



# The American Festival Project

The American Festival Project (AFP) is a broad national network rooted in the belief that cultural exchange based on equality and mutual respect, can provide a context in which diverse Americans can begin to understand one another. It is founded on the principle

that cultural exchange is a long-term process which begins with an awareness of one's own cultural identity. The AFP joins the resources of artists, presenters, educators and other community partners to build local and national coalitions, stimulate dialogue, and engage the general public in issues of cultural pluralism. The specific format of the projects changes each time to reflect the character and needs of the home community. American Festival Projects have ranged from multi-year, state-wide projects to week-long festivals sponsored by universities, to exchanges between community-based cultural centers.

The American Festival Project was begun in 1982 by Roadside Theater and Junebug Theater Project, in response to a national increase in Ku Klux Klan activity. Since then it has grown to also include Carpetbag Theatre, The Dance Exchange, Francisco Gonzalez y su Conjunto, Robbie McCauley and Company, Pregones Theater, El Teatro de la Esperanza, A Traveling Jewish Theatre, and Urban Bush Women.

Additional festivals currently taking place around the country are "Miami X-Change", a two year collaboration with the Miami Dade Community College aimed at promoting understanding and mutual respect between Miami's African American and Haitian American communities; and "The Environmental Justice Festival", a multi-year community development project sponsored by Junebug Productions in cooperation with local artists and activist groups. Other important components of the American Festival Project's work include training projects with artists, community organizers, educators, students and others, and a higher education initiative that focuses on curriculum development and other uses of cultural resources to further work related to diversity in higher education.

## The Montana American Festival Project

The Montana American Festival Project is a multi-year (1992-1995) collaborative project involving Montana cultural organizations, community partners and artists, along with national touring artists and the American Festival Project. The six participating cultural organizations are Helena Presents (Helena), Fort Peck Fine Arts Council (Glasgow, Malta, Plentywood, Sidney, Wolf Point), Performing Arts League (Choteau), ASUM Programming/University of Montana (Missoula), Alberta Bair Theater (Billings), Northern Showcase/Montana State University-Northern (Havre). The dozens of partners have included Montana Indian Contemporary Arts (MICA) and Pride, Inc., as well as community groups, schools and senior centers around the state.

Over the course of the project's three years, these partners have worked together to create a dynamic cultural exchange which has grown from the ground up, shaped by each community's unique experience, vision and long term goals. The exchange has included not only perfor-

mances and workshops by both Montana and national touring artists, but the organization in most communities of story circles that have collected personal/local stories and begun to share them through performances by community members.

Through its exploration of oral traditions, and the collection and sharing of stories, the Montana American Festival Project is validating the richness, strength and cultures of each of the participating communities; helping people to better appreciate each other's cultural heritage and Montana's diverse culture; inspiring the further telling, collecting and sharing of stories; and providing venues for discussion and analysis of community issues. ☼



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# “It takes guts to make a democracy”

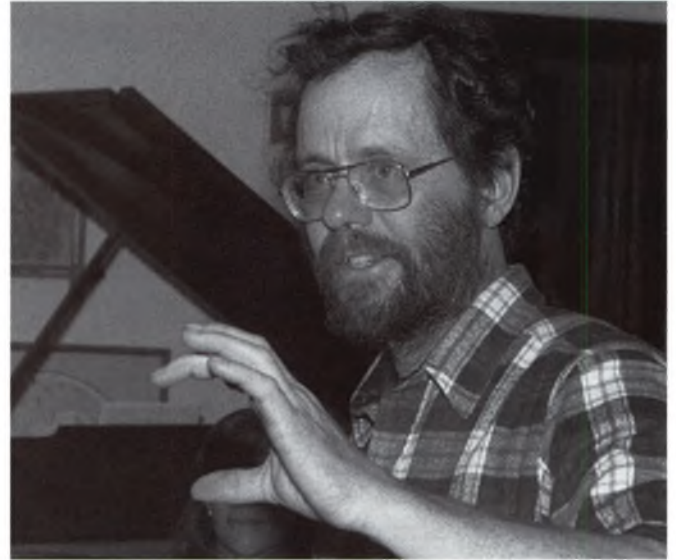
Ralph and Myrna Paulus

**R**alph and Myrna Paulus are farmers who live in the Montana community of Choteau, population 2,000. They are also key participants in the American Festival Project, bringing artists to Choteau and developing storytelling, poetry and theater among the people of Montana. In cooperation with the eastern Montana community of Fort Peck, they are collecting local stories as material for plays which they will perform in their hometowns and in each others' community.

**Q: What started you bringing artists to Choteau?**

**Myrna:** We had Norman Luboff's choir come. Norman Luboff is a choir director and choral music arranger quite famous on the international scene.

**Ralph:** There was a level of excitement and intimacy in the auditorium because they just sang their socks off. We had a potluck dinner and when they got done I heard this interchange going, the singers and people are all mixed up and it was just magic. I don't think there was a dry eye in the house when they got done. I mean these are real people. They got



*Ralph Paulus makes a point at a storytelling.*

kids and they're divorced and they got problems and they ain't no different than us, and if we put our mind to it we could do what they're doing.

**Q: How did you start working with the American Festival Project?**

**Ralph:** How do you go about finding artists? I don't know, I'm a farmer. I didn't go to art school, I don't know anybody at the university to call. But this looked really attractive, so I went and got involved, and Arnie (Malina) got us going and jeez, that made all the difference in the world.

He got us involved with the Westaf artists, Maria Benitez and Danny Berchevsky Jazz Dance. We did some pretty racy things for out here in the boondocks. And it worked. I mean it pushed out on the envelope, and it was OK, we got through it, the audience accepted it.

**Q: What does it mean to pick artists for rural communities?**

**Ralph:** Picking things that they'll like, so they'll want to come back. We're into what I think was our original intent. Here's an opportunity for us to dig in and send something

back. The communication is two ways. I think that to me is the most important part of what it is we're establishing. We're getting involved in going into our community and finding what's there and trying to connect that up with the rest of the world.

**Myrna:** I think it relates to the community because we end up finding out that our problems, although they may be totally unique to us ... there's someplace else that has a problem that's similar. People, despite what may be their ethnic background, we all have similarities.

**Ralph:** I went to New Orleans (for an American Festival meeting) and met with Ann Brown (from Mississippi). She's in her community struggling with lots



*Myrna and Ralph Paulus on their farm in Choteau, Montana. Myrna in addition to being a farmer and a mother is also president of the local school board. Ralph is a farmer, a father, and a member of the hospital board.*



of the same things we are. Ann Brown's is an agricultural community that has lost control of their own destiny, and likewise we are an agricultural community that's lost control of our own destiny. We're all white here, they're all black there. We're not in anywhere near as bad a shape as they're in, I'm sure. But we're in the process of losing control. There's a connection that's been made there. I don't know that I can do her much good but she sure did me a lot of good.

**Q: Can you describe what happened when Adella Gautier and John O'Neal of Junebug Productions came to town?**

**Ralph:** Adella did kindergarten and she had a session with first, second and third grade all coming to the auditorium, and told stories. Afterwards she got down and talked to the kids.

**Myrna:** They loved her ...yeah, made sure her color didn't come off. For some of the kids, she was the first black person they'd ever seen other than on TV. She said, "You guys know where I came from?" A lot of them said, "Africa?" And she said, "No, I came from New Orleans." The way she handled it, she's wonderful with kids. She's really quite spectacular.

Last year Junebug Jack did a performance for the 7th through 12th graders, and the freshmen and the juniors did some of their stories, performed for each other, and ended with some music. Carl was playing his guitar, and the auditorium was just kind of welcoming there. The kids that were in there were having a good time and the bell rang for school and nobody left.

School was over with and the kids that were in the auditorium were still there, and the auditorium door just plastered with kids looking in wishing they were inside. That was a really neat exchange to watch. Adella was singing, she even had Ralph's cousin up dancing. It was kind of a neat melding. It was like the kids were really part of the group and the group was really part of the kids.

**Q: Tell me one of your favorite stories.**

**Myrna:** Mike was telling it one night at one of our meetings. He was telling how his great-grandparents came to this area from Czechoslovakia; and they didn't homestead, they squatted down between Choteau and Augusta. They built just board shacks to live in and the men would go away for weeks at a time and work in the coal mines. The women stayed in those little shacks down on the river, because if they could live there a year and nobody booted them off, then they could claim the land, and they didn't have to file as a homesteader. The big, joyous occasion was when the men came back with a load of coal, so they could burn coal in the stoves instead of wood. My God, the hardships. ... Those women had the children there. The wind blows fiercely down along the river, and they had nothing on the walls. It was just boards nailed together. There's even holes, they could see outside. The men took off for the mines. And they stayed ... they stayed with

those men that would go off and do that.

**Q: How would you describe the interaction of farming and this cultural activity?**

**Myrna:** It's compatibility. There is a sense of uneasiness in being farmers. But there is a sense of joy at the completion of a task, such as when the seeding is done. It's not just a sense of accomplishment, it's a sense of joy. There's that same thing at harvest. It's a tremendous working experience. It's a unifying experience.

**Ralph:** I used to think that art and farming had nothing to do with each other. That's why I did it because I thought it had nothing to do with farming. But it has everything to do with farming. And in a sense art is more agriculture than agriculture.

And the leverage, too; you put the boar in with the sows. You didn't do much, all you did was open the gate. You run a couple of boars in there, and you got maybe a dozen sows, and in three months you got a mess. In another six months you've got 20,000 lbs. of pork to deal with, just from opening that gate. And that's the way this art stuff is. We're planting seeds, who the hell knows what's going to take off.

**Q: How does art relate to democracy?**

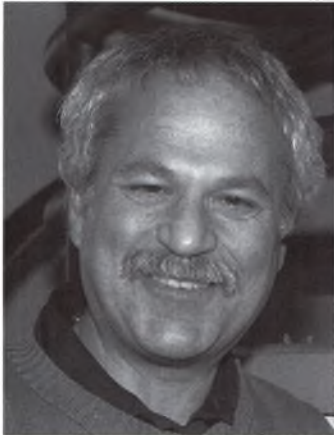
**Ralph:** You have to feel good about yourself to stand up for what you believe in. The problem with democracy is that there's a risk, you have to stand up and shoot your mouth off once in awhile. That's an important part of democracy. You have to have guts to make democracy work. The whole population has ... you can't just have a few. And the only way you can have that kind of guts is if you feel good about yourself.

This whole project is about empowering people, and they can then feel who they are and where they come from is honorable. No matter where they come from, it's honorable. And if they can feel good about themselves, they can participate in this government. ❁

*Story Circle. From top left: Kelly Troy, Mike Morris, Jeanette Gollehon, Gerry Paulus, Sarah Cobb, Barb Dahlman and Myrna Paulus all came together for a pot luck and story swap in January at the Paulus' farm house near Choteau.*  
Photos by Nic Paget-Clarke.



# A Sense of Pride of Community



Arnie Malina

**A** rnie Malina is the director of Helena Presents/Myrna Loy Center a community-based center for the arts in Helena, Montana. Arnie was responsible for originally organizing the American Festival Project in Montana.

**Q: Why is storytelling so important to the Montana project?**

Arnie Malina.

**Arnie:** The Montana presenters who participated in the original organizing meetings of the Montana American Festival Project discussed what we wanted to accomplish with the Festival statewide.

Pride of place and pride of identity were two recurring needs the Montana presenters spoke about: and we all came to the conclusion that getting people in communities to share stories about their lives would be the ideal way of developing a sense of pride, whether that had to do with telling the untold story of the Great Plains of the Eastern Montana region, (often eclipsed by the romance of the mountainous West), or whether it had to do with telling the untold stories of what it is like to be gay in Montana — in each instance, storytelling was seen as a powerful vehicle of support and community cohesion. Storytelling was also seen as an eminently democratic strategy, a way of getting all sorts of people involved in the power of the arts who might not otherwise participate.

In Helena, we did a number of different story circles, including sessions with women, environmentalists, and gay

men and lesbians. It seemed that organizationally it would be better to focus and work with one group over a long period of time to see if this kind of work could really make a difference. Focussing on gay men and lesbians in Montana on one level seemed like an anomaly because most people would probably say “What, are there gay people in Montana? I thought there were just cowboys there.” These are the same people who might say, “What, is there really culture in Montana?” Of course there’s culture in Montana. That’s the central meaning of the Montana American Festival Project.

The fact is, Montana is just like the rest of the country. Acceptance and homophobia are both part of the social fabric here. But gays in these sparsely populated rural areas face the additional challenges of extreme isolation. And gays want to stay in Montana, want to create a home here. “It’s our home too,” was one of the themes that came out of the story circles.

There were other reasons that made the gay story circles urgent. When the first gay and lesbian story circle took place in Helena, the newly formed statewide gay organization, Pride, launched a legal challenge to the deviate sexual conduct law which makes gay men and lesbians felons in the state. Gays in Montana, as elsewhere, have been participating in a civil rights struggle. The story circles were an important support for this struggle, including support for the six plaintiffs contesting the deviate sexual conduct law. In fact, the circles included a number of the plaintiffs in the legal suit.

I think this is a model project because it’s a rare opportunity for an arts organization to really focus on something and see it build over a number of years. These gay and lesbian story circles have been going on for two years and now they exist not only in Helena, but also in Missoula, Bozeman and Billings. People came to the first sessions from all over the state, sometimes driving over six hours to Helena. There was enough demand to widen their scope. We were lucky to have Steve Kent, the skilled director and workshop leader, who also happens to be a gay activist and was born in rural South Dakota, to conduct the support groups and story circles and also to begin the training of others to carry it on.

The story circles have been very successful and a real good example of how art can empower people. Men and women of

*Celeste Miller, dancer and storyteller in a workshop with young children in Helena. Photo by Kathe Lesage.*



*Los Angeles Poverty Department performed and did workshops in Helena and created a production with local homeless people.*





*Helena – the state capital of Montana, population 25,000.*

Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.

every kind of occupation – bureaucrats, ranchers, teachers, care providers, lawyers, artists – participated. A wide range of ages from young adults to senior citizens; the group was also blessed with some extraordinary gay people who are also disabled.

The story circles became a statewide network. People came to different groups in different cities. The stories themselves have been incredible. People have been amazed to listen to each other's stories. They've been full of rage and anger and fear and happiness and lustiness and passion and humor. Many have been hysterically funny with the precious particularity of real life. It was not uncommon for people to come to the group and come out for the first time.

**Q: How is this project related to Helena Presents?**

**Arnie:** We present a huge variety of media arts and performing arts events and projects. We believe that it is very important for the public to not only be entertained by "art" but to be engaged by some of the pressing issues of the day. Art can make social issues and realities come powerfully alive. People can learn from and be changed by art. Part of our mission is to present voices that are seldom heard in "mainstream America," to startle, to wake up, to engage the public; to consistently present the voices of other cultures as well as a wide range of aesthetic presentations, from the traditional to the avant-garde.

**Q: What's Montana like?**

**Arnie:** It's as beautiful as it gets. It has unsurpassable beauty. It has a lot of people who love living here, which is a wonderful feeling to be part of. It has a lot of independence, people are very self-made. It's a mix of very strong progressive impulses, and there's also a lot of danger here, racism. There's homophobia, a lot of anti-Indian action. It's

all here; it's a microcosm of the country.

For example, there was vandalism against a Jewish family in Billings and people banded together. The Human Rights Task Force, which is a strong organization throughout the state, suggested that people show solidarity with the Jewish family and started making images of the menorah. They handed them out and thousands of people in the community put a drawing of the menorah in their windows to let people know that there's no room for this kind of bigotry.

**Q: Has the American Festival Project been successful?**

**Arnie:** I think that it's opened up new windows across the state, new opportunities, and connections for presenters to their communities, and also a new understanding of their communities. On one level it's been a process of work, using different techniques. On another level, in getting more connected to the community, people's eyes have been opened. They've experienced what it's like to work multiculturally. You have to develop a whole new set of sensitivities and understanding when you work with people of another culture. It takes a lot of time and trust. I think people have all gotten off on getting people in their community to tell stories, and that's a very ennobling thing to do. First of all, it's very entertaining. You learn a lot, it's very provocative. I think people are genuinely proud and amazed to hear what other people

in their community say about their community, about their lives. People share a lot because of this. They laugh a lot, they cry a lot, they learn a lot. Which is a long way of saying that some of the goals of this project have been realized – which is quite an accomplishment. ☸

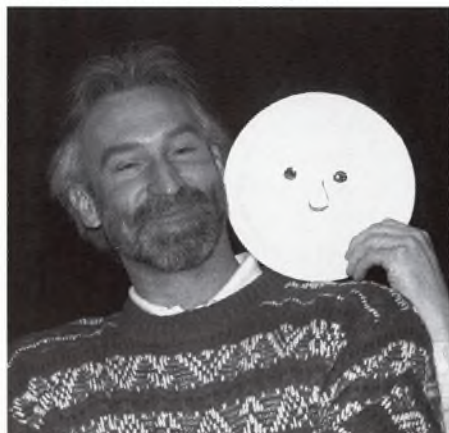


*Myrna Loy – a glass etching of the Helena-born Hollywood actress for whom the Myrna Loy Center is named.*

Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.

*Story Circles. Participants in the Helena and Missoula Gay and Lesbian Story Projects.*

Photos by Nic Paget-Clarke.







# From the Circle of Thunder to the Blood Moon

Susan Stewart

(excerpted from the original text)

**S**usan Stewart is an internationally-known artist living and working in Bozeman, Montana. As president of Montana Indian Contemporary Arts, she works with Native American artists around the state. As part of the Montana American Festival Project, she brought Native American performers Spiderwoman Theater to Bozeman to perform and work with the Native American community. In a series of workshops with local Native American artists, they created an installation performance work. The following is taken from an upcoming book by Susan Stewart.

My earliest memories of the Pow Wow come from my father, who had been relocated by the Government to California for a job. That's where I was born, along with four of my siblings. My father would take us on trips to the country to camp. He loved to be outdoors. He would sit me down and say "ee da gaa" (Look way over there, that's where I am from). I remember how homesick he was for his family back in the high plains of Montana. He was Crow, a proud man with strong ties to his people (also known as the Absoolakals).

Every year he would take his vacation and travel back to his Crow friends and relatives. He would never let us forget where we came from. When we crossed the border into Montana I could almost hear him sigh as he felt very much as if he was home. What I remember most in those days was how he used to sit for hours almost as if he were somewhere far off keeping beat to some rhythm in his head and whistling some song from his past. His hand would tap out the rhythm of a song he was singing in his mind. I would crawl up into his lap to sit and listen to these songs. I wanted to be inside his mind and see what he saw.

Oftentimes I would ask him to speak Crow to me. The sounds of the language would somehow comfort and make me feel safe from a world that I felt was all too foreign. So as a child I found those journeys back to the "Res" emotionally invigorating for my spirit. When he would speak Crow to me, I felt close to him and knew I was protected by a loving father who wanted so much to give me the best of both worlds. Some nights he would sing songs, Pow Wow songs, and tell me to dance, or he would put on a tape (reel to reel I might add) of his singing in a drum group that he had recorded from previous Crow Fairs. It only took me a



Susan Stewart.

Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke

second and I was up and dancing to my heart's content. This was truly his gift to me. My fondest memories were of my aunts dressing me up in fine buckskin dress and moccasins. Everything had a right way of being done, from the way the moccasins had to be tied, to the way our hair was braided. For example, the hair had to be braided with a certain precision, not too far forward or too far back, but near the ear lobe where it looked best. It must be tight but not too tight. They would tell me these things as they combed my hair. The red markings on my face were drawn near my temples next to the eyes, like a chevron mark fanning outward.

I remember how my Auntie Mayme would tie my moccasins. She stood in front of me as I sat, picking up my leg and placing my heel on her thigh. She had me hold my foot pointing my toe up to the sky, flexing the calf muscle. Then she wrapped the buckskin thong around my ankle and tucked it back into itself behind the ankle. She would ask me to stand and see if it was too tight, but it was almost always perfect. She would nod her head and say, "good", and proceed with the other foot in silence, slowly and deliberately. My Uncle Toots was a little skeptical of my competence and had cajoled my cousins into giving me a few tips before we arrived. Needless to say I took to it like a teal to a stream. I recall my Uncle's astonished eyes as I whirled around the Arbor leaving my cousins in the dust.



My father always thought of me as his baby Indian girl. I never stopped asking questions about the world from which he came and knew in my heart this was my world. Years later as I traveled those same highways I came to realize how my father must have felt, going back to the land of his beginnings, into Crow country, and knew I had come home this time for good. The culture is alive, growing and evolving. This survival is the miracle that I witness when I participate at the Pow Wows. We were once viewed as a dying race but we are not beaten, we are a thriving people. The celebration becomes a symbol of that survival, and it is this cultural experience that sustains my belief. ❁

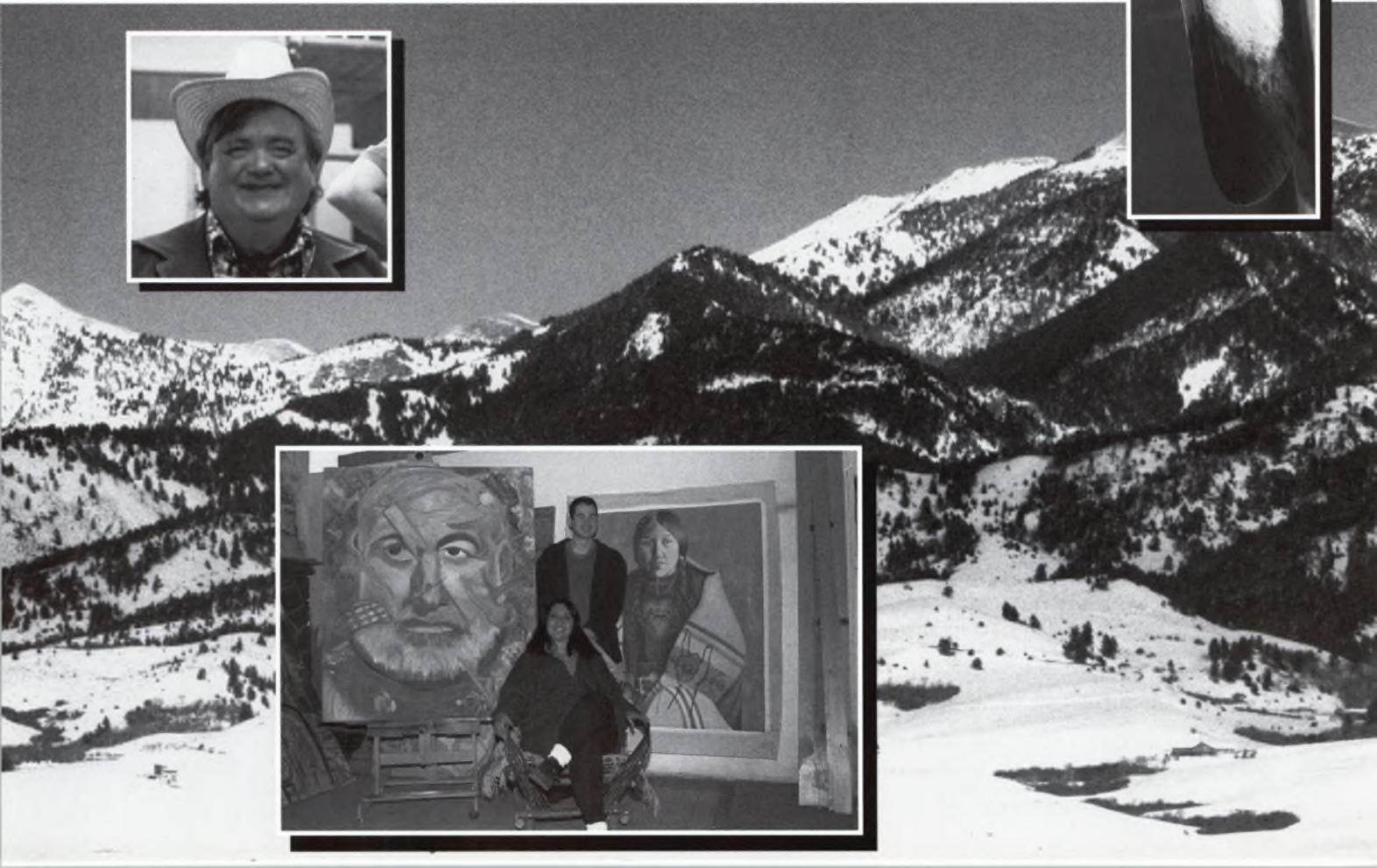


**Upper left inset:** Ernie Pepion, a Native American/Blackfeet artist who attended the Spiderwoman Theater workshops. Photo by Susan Stewart. **Lower inset:** In this photo, Susan Stewart poses with Ed Hemingway in front of portraits of the other's grandparent. Susan Stewart painted the portrait of Ed's grandfather, author Ernest Hemingway, and Ed painted the portrait of Susan's grandmother Katie Yarlott. Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke. **Upper right inset:** This feather was a part of the installation created during the Spiderwoman Theater residency. Photo by Chris Autio. **The landscape** is of the Bridgers Mountains above Bozeman. Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.

## Montana Indian Contemporary Arts

Since 1989, Montana Indian Contemporary Arts (MICA) has functioned as an educational and service organization, promoting and providing leadership for contemporary Indian artists in Montana and the Northwest region of the United States. MICA strives to develop a network of support for Native artists who are innovative and on the leading edge of contemporary American Indian art expression. It networks with many national organizations, as well as many of the reservation communities, bringing the Native voice to a national level.

MICA serves as an information center and dissemination point for all media of the fine arts. This work includes curating exhibits, developing literary publications and symposia, presenting performances and dances and assisting rural tribal communities in developing strategies for implementing arts programming in their areas.





## Fort Peck Fine Arts Council Cultural Treasure Project

Sharon LaBonty

**S**haron LaBonty is the Chair of the Fort Peck Fine Arts Council Regional Board. A long range goal of the Fort Peck Fine Arts Council has always been to present an original play about "the dirty thirties" (the time of the Fort Peck Dam building) and its impact on the people of northeastern Montana. The Fort Peck Dam project was the first Works Progress Administration (WPA) project to help bring the U.S. out of the Great Depression. Every week the obituary sections of local newspapers in the region record another valuable resource lost. It was imperative that the stories be recorded, documented and honorably presented before they are all gone. This story-collecting project is called the Cultural Treasure Project, and has been the focus of their three-year involvement in the Montana American Festival Project.

**Q:** Tell us a little of some of the stories you are hearing about the building of Fort Peck Dam.

**Sharon:** We're looking for human stories. It became very obvious that it's the time period of the dam, not the physical structure of the dam that people were telling us about. How did it affect the people's lives. It's the time period of Fort Peck. What was life like here in the '30s? Then, what was life like after the dam happened. How did that affect the people's lives – the people who came, and who were here.

Like Helen (one of the women involved in the project) said, her family lived out in a beautiful place. It sounds like it was just a wonderful place out along the river, that was flooded by the dam. She said, even though her family understood the reason for it, they left a beautiful place and their whole life changed. For the first time she went to a school with 200 kids instead of going to a school with eight. They moved twice in a year. There were real changes within herself as a child, and within her mother. Her mother talked about it being a real peaceful time before that, and how it became more stressful when they moved away from Eight Point (the points as the river wound were numbered.)

And there's the stories of the slide when the dam started caving in. It was called The Slide, when the dirt started sliding - it's an earth filled dam. There were some people's lives who were lost. A lot of people talked about where they were or how they heard about the slide. It was almost like "Where were you when Kennedy was shot?" Almost everybody that we've interviewed remembered the slide.

**Q:** You've said that this project has made your communities richer, which seems reflected even in its title. Could you describe what you mean?

**Sharon:** The project is involving more people in some way ... whether they are taking a workshop or going to a performance, whether they are telling their story, or writing a story. The Council has developed new partnerships, new friendships and connections in all of our communities. We're really working back and forth with the historical societies in each town. We've done several powerful workshops at the new Women's Resource Center in Glasgow. For the first time, developmentally disabled adults are included in our work. In Malta, we have extended our commitment to the Loring Hutterite community. They are telling their stories



**Tommy Bledsoe** of Roadside Theater works with Stephanie Newton at St. Mary's Parochial School during Roadside Theater's residency in Malta, Montana. Photo by Julie Simser

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and interacting with the artists. The Raul School near Sidney, a small rural school, has had several of the artists come. Those kids are collecting stories and helping to contribute to our project, which for elementary kids is a real positive thing.

And people are really starting to trust. Because we have brought the same artists back so many times, and people know where their story is going to go and that it will be honored, people are reaching out to the Council, instead of us having to go out and knock on doors. It's becoming more inclusive. In this kind of process, we are really working with-in our community. Yes, artists are coming in, and then they are leaving. But what is staying in our community is so much richer. Even if it is just the dialogue between the people who are involved. The school kids talking to their grandparents about what life was like in the '30s. That's making our community richer.

**Q:** *It sounds like one thing that's happening is that people may be getting a different perspective on their community.*

**Sharon:** We are learning things about our communities that we didn't know... learning things about people we've known for a long time, and getting to know brand new people. The project is causing a wide range of the population to be thinking about what happened in the past and to be looking forward to the play in 1996.

All of the story collectors have also become storytellers through the project. Every time we talk, we tell the stories we have recently heard. We are amazed by "hopper" invasions, German prisoners-of-war working the sugar beet fields, rivers that divided people, taxi dancers, and the constant wind. The oral tradition of storytelling has been revived through this work. We are listening to stories in a different way too. I can talk from personal experience. I never wanted to hear my grandparents' stories. Now, when I am involved with one of the interviews with older people in our community, it's really exciting to hear these stories, to meet these people. I feel a real change in my attitude, it's a real awareness of the importance of the work we are doing. And I wish my grandparents were alive so their stories could also be collected.



*Fort Peck Dam – spillway gate construction. June 10, 1937. Photograph used with the permission of Montana Historical Society, Helena. Photo: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.*

**Q:** *Does the project have a future beyond the producing of the play at the Fort Peck Theater next year?*

**Sharon:** This fall we plan to do an exchange with the Choteau Performing Arts League, another partner in the Montana American Festival Project. We'll be bringing their play to our communities and our play to theirs, which really puts into effect the Montana story swap idea we've talked about since the beginning. The stories are going to be similar. They are both rural, agricultural-based communities. The process was very much the same. But they are also east and western Montana, so there's going to be lots of differences there too. For our audiences, and for the people who have been involved in both communities, it's a real validation — that the process was so good, and that we're not isolated. That's the bottom line. And beyond 1996 ...We don't see that this is going to end with one play. There are so many stories and new partnerships. We have a real rich resource to draw from in the future. ❁



# Art, Nature and People in Montana

Alexandra Swaney



Alexandra Swaney.

**C**ultural space: a place with psychic room to create. That's a term that my friends and I used to talk about in the early 1970s when I came back to Montana to see if there was life after graduate school. A lot of us came here at that time, some returnees like myself, others refugees from the cities; all of us young people looking for a better way of life. Montana's economy was as booming as it ever gets (mostly with oil, gas and coal development), and we liked what we saw and felt: majesty of the landscapes, dignity and friendliness of the people. We stayed. We bought and renovated old buildings; opened restaurants and bakeries; started environmental action organizations and art galleries, movie theaters and bands; gave poetry readings; built houses and generally supplemented what was here by filling in the gaps. Real estate was cheaper then and we had lots of time and energy. We were excited by the rural-urban mix of our backgrounds, and we felt the urge to make our own cultural mark. We dreamed of creations that would be a truly vigorous blend of all our influences.

We began to discover that there were already many won-

derful artists here: painters, potters, writers, musicians. Bob and Gennie DeWeese, Jessie Wilber, Frances Senska, and Rudy Autio were among the helpful spirits and role models we encountered. To some extent, they had all chosen the life of the artist over career success or they wouldn't have continued living here. Open, creative, and interested in the community and the next generation of artists, they reflected the experience of living in Montana back to us in their art. The quality was always important, but sometimes the distinctions between high and low, folk and fine art were blurred. Artists of all kinds were influenced by "primitive" Western style painters, Native American geometric design and petroglyphs. Montana was rich in writers: Dorothy Johnson, A.B. Guthrie, James Welch and Richard Hugo had crafted literature out of the rugged lives lived on the frontier, in mining towns and bleak reservation country. There were even some homegrown jazz musicians. Jeannie Wrobel, that ebullient silver haired pianist, had studied with Teddy Wilson in New York. Don Brown, a saxophonist of Blackfeet heritage, did arrangements for many of the country's greatest big bands.

And we've learned that sometimes art here comes right up out of the ground and reflects the hardships and struggles of our people. In the Butte of the last century, rival copperbarons Marcus Daly and W.A. Clark competed to use and abuse the immigrants who came west with no more than their bodies as capital. In Butte today, Our Lady of the Rockies looks down on one of the worst scars humans ever inflicted on Mother Earth. Our Lady is a gigantic white steel statue, welded together

and placed high on a ridge of the continental divide in the 1980's, by the volunteer labor and prayers of the working people of Butte (assisted by some military helicopters). She honors the sisters, daughters, wives and mothers of Butte. Arms outspread, she looks down to the "Richest Hill on Earth," now a huge gaping crater, filled with toxic water.

The ruthless extraction of natural resources hasn't stopped yet. A new leaching process for gold mining is threatening to destroy more of Montana's beauty. The Zortman-Landusky gold mine has effectively polluted ground and surface water supplies on the Fort Belknap Indian reservation, and turned a sacred



*The elementary school at Bynum where Adella Adella the Storyteller and John O'Neal, both of Junebug Productions in New Orleans, performed and worked with the students. The school sits almost alone on the prairie, forty miles from the beginnings of the Front Range of the Rockies.*

Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.



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mountain near the Sundance grounds into something resembling a stepped Mayan temple. The Sweetgrass Hills, sacred to all tribes in this region, are also threatened by the need for gold for class rings. Northwestern Montana from the air now looks like a three dimensional quilt, with alternating bare patches where the trees have been cut and fuzzy patches where they have been spared. While most of us recognize that jobs and people are important, many of us grieve to see this amazing wildness continually eroded. Now another form of economic growth is changing the landscape. A whole new Montana immigration is taking place. Bozeman, with its great skiing and striking mountains is likened to Jackson Hole or Santa Fe. People with money are crowding to possess this beauty, building very large homes and skewing the local economies in many parts of the state. Some of us fear that local people will no longer be able to afford to live here and that the newcomers may destroy the spirit of our communities.

Other recent immigrants are even more alarming. Ironically, Montana, home of seven Indian reservations, has been attracting people in survivalist and white supremacist movements. Drawn by the large, mostly white population, a fear and hatred for people of color, and the good hunting and fishing here, some of these folks are calling for creating an all-white homeland in the Northwest, and sending all non-white people back where they came from. (Where, I wonder, would we send our native Indian people?) Yet those of us who abhor the open racism have to admit that it has always been with us here. Blacks, Chinese and Indian people have all been misused and despised by white society, even in the

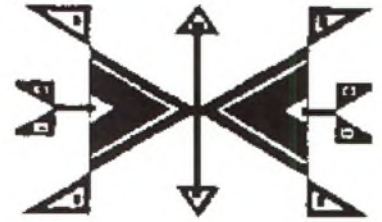
recent past. In the 1950's, African American contralto Marion Anderson performed at the Civic Center in Helena to a packed house, but she was refused lodging at the Placer Hotel. Still, most of us are trying to do better these days. When Jewish windows with menorahs were stoned last winter in Billings, hundreds of non-Jews put menorahs in their windows too (a New York Times front page story.)

Art is one of the best ways to encourage and celebrate the diversity of cultures. This year Montana audiences will see an historic collaboration between the Garth Fagan Dance Company from New York and five champion dancers from the Salish-Kootenai reservation, performed to an original score by jazz pianist Don Pullen, played by the African Brazilian Connection and the Chief Cliff Singers, a Kootenai drum group from Elmo, Montana. They will also perform together in Washington, D.C. and New York. This collaboration signals a turn in Montana's cultural life: a greater respect and recognition for the most ancient cultures, those of Montana's Indian nations. Their music and dance have come down to us across thousands of years. It is made by everyone: elders, children, men and women. To attend pow-wows and ceremonies is to feel the spirit of real community and unity.

We Montanans of the 90s are a diverse bunch. If we can follow the example of our Indian brothers and sisters, perhaps we can allow the arts to bring us together. Perhaps this state is big enough for all of us. ❁

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*Alexandra Swaney is a musician, an anthropologist, a nature lover, and a native Montanan.*



# Rebuilding the Driftwood Lodge

Ron Therriault

**R**on Therriault is the director of Native American Studies at Salish Kootenai College on the Flathead Indian Reservation, Western Montana. He is a former chairman of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation. This article is taken from a speech he delivered at a conference in Helena in 1993 on "Poverty in the Treasure State: Homelessness and Hunger in Montana."

*"The presentation of the Driftwood Lodge is a combination of oral and written history, gained through a lifetime of the presenter. At one point in his life he was told, 'When you gain the knowledge, you then have a responsibility to pass it on, if you take knowledge to the grave, you have wasted a life.' Driftwood Lodge is about a society that lasted tens of thousands of years. It is about the destruction of that society, both inflicted and self-inflicted. It is also about modern day society. A lesson learned by Native Americans is now a 'gift' to a society that is coming apart. If we as Native people can accept our failures and give another society our lessons, it may be something positive will come from the last five hundred years of our relationship. The presentation is given in the context of the human species, not a racial, ethnic, or any particular group. It is another way of looking at human existence, and possibly a perspective to create a social order that can make our visions."*

**I** have been without food. I have been without a house. I have been without money. I have never been poor. Never been poor. It is forbidden in my family to be poor. And that is where the basis of tribalism comes in.

If you can put in your mind this thought: you see a mother, a father, a child - two children, the nuclear family. That's the core of society. That's the strength of who we are as human beings. Then you add the aunts and uncles and the grandparents on both ends. That's the extended family. That's who we were and who we still are. Before the destruction, that was the education system, the welfare system, the law and order system. Everything that we now go out to strangers to get, came from within the family. No tribe starts without the family first and then the extended family and then the band, or if you will, the crowd, the lodge. It all starts at the beginning. What made us strong — literally for tens of thousands of years — is the older generation, the grandparents who address themselves as brothers and sisters, and the par-

ents who address themselves as brothers and sisters, and the children who address the generation above them as mother and father — all of them. You could be — to you maybe your uncle, to me he is my father who is my mother's brother. She is my mother who is my mother's sister. Everyone in the age level above is mother and father from day one. You were never taught anything else. That's why we had no orphans, because if something happened to your biological parents there was always mother, there was always father. In your mind they existed there already, so you became part of that. So you were never without family.

We know where we started to fall apart. We know it was with the fur trade. We know it was with economics. It was with new items. It was with all of those things human beings seek. But things that were new to our culture. Basically we left the survival society because of the new items and a change of values in our own people. We went to gather goods. A man that before walked eight miles a day with twenty-five pounds and maybe over three or four trips for a camp, now has three or four horses, kettle, blankets, gun. You name it, we have it all. But we no longer own ourselves. The fur company owns us. And with it, of course the gun. And of course alcohol. Do you realize that alcohol, when it first came to our people, couldn't change the structure. Yes, they drank it, but they did not give away their responsibilities. That is the key to our society. Those above had responsibilities to pass to the next generation, who had a responsibility to receive and then pass to the generations to come, or they won't survive. The responsibility started to weaken. As it weakened, our values changed, our religion changed. Those of us who held the old ways were few and far between. We started to lose our responsibilities. The generations like my mother and father weren't there. We saw a lot of the tribe disintegrate. They changed the values from family, from us - one, to I - me. And when you change values to that you start to disintegrate because you have lost the value of responsibility.

You started to see families fall apart. Got in debt - I will give you this blanket, you give me three pelts, and next month four pelts and pretty soon you owe your soul. Economics, the almighty dollar. As one follows this though you can start to see they're not doing what they were as a people, who they were as a culture. They're becoming what other people were. Then adding that the education we were exposed to was made to change us because we were not



*The headwaters of the Missouri River, near Three Forks, Montana. The great Missouri River begins here as three rivers meet within yards of each other. The three rivers are the Jefferson, the Madison, and the Gallatin.*

Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.

acceptable, our societies were not considered civilized. We weren't civilized because we had these funny things about us. We didn't care about money. We cared about people, our tribe, our family, our existence forever.

If you look at the structure of what we have in our belief system – the spiritual, the physical are not separate, everything is one. The Driftwood Lodge is a word. To many people it is just a word. To tribal people ...The Crow have a word for it — it is a world or universe, it is everything together. But they don't own the word, we can all use it.

You've seen the Driftwood Lodge. It floats on the little Blackfoot River. What it is is all those sticks squished together, piled together, and they're strong and they go down the river and they hit the banks. Every now and then a small one falls out. A little stick by itself and it gets beat to death all the way down the river. But the lodge stays strong because the lodge is the family, the family is the tribe, the tribe is the people, all people. And if they stay as a driftwood lodge, the river becomes life and as it moves and the lodge goes down the river, the more the people come together rather than push those people off because they're not like us. One day it will stop. It will block the river. The river is life and it becomes so strong that the river will change and go another way, and so will life. That's what humanity has to do. We know this because that's why we survived for tens of thousands of years.

So now we say, "What do we have to offer the rest of the world that is valid and which is of service?" Because if you have wisdom and knowledge and you take it to the grave without sharing it, you have had a useless life. Ask any elder.

Our existence is to share all. Doesn't matter. If you're human you qualify. Or if you're not human.

What we can give you is exactly what we had. To give it to you we must build it back amongst ourselves. And it's coming back. What we've realized is that those generations in between - yes, we lost that, and they're out in different places, homeless, hungry, poor. But we're taking a generation through education that we control, that says we're all right and we're changing and we're rebuilding the Driftwood Lodge. And someday they won't need me to teach. They won't need cultural committees to tell the people who they are. We generate a generation who know who they are and the cycle will start again. That's the strength of the driftwood lodge.

What is happening to your society right now happened to us already and we can sit back and see it. When you have no responsibility and no respect for the existence for all that is sacred. And all that is sacred is all that lives, and everything lives. When you lose that respect and you put the value and the economics ahead of the human existence, then you have fallen apart. So, at some point in time we do have something to offer you, when we build it back up to where we can be proud of our people as we were at one time. I hope by then you can see what is happening to this society and it starts changing. Don't wait. Too many mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers left this earth with useless lives because they passed nothing to the generations that were to come. So, once again, I have been without food. I have been without housing. And I have been without money. But I have never been poor. It is forbidden in my family. ☸





# Storytelling

Caron Atlas

*“If you truly want to know about people, listen to the stories they tell about themselves.”*

– from the Roadside Theater play, *Borderline*

The Montana American Festival Project is about people telling their own stories and what happens when we truly listen to and learn from one another. It is based on the premise that telling and listening to stories is one of the most powerful, creative, and respectful ways that we can communicate. The storytellers have been courageous and their stories have been recognized and honored on their own terms. Participants have been moved to tears and moved to action. There has been anger and pain as well as joy and celebration. The stories bear witness to an extraordinary landscape of particular experience and collective memories.

Six of the artists who led Montana story circles – Tommy Bledsoe and Donna Porterfield of Roadside Theater, Naomi Newman of A Traveling Jewish Theatre, Adella Goutier of Junebug Productions, Celeste Miller, and Steve Kent – were interviewed about their experiences in Montana. The following includes portions of these interviews along with selections from the hundreds of stories told in the Montana circles.

The Montana American Festival Project was planted in fertile ground. The story circles had power because the communities where they took place were ready for them. Celeste Miller describes the process which took place in Choteau before her story circle there.

*The woman at the senior center called people and said, “You’ve got to come down and you know that story about the time you did such and such? Well, come prepared to tell that story.” So they did. I thought it was the most effective story circle I had ever done because people came prepared with a particular story. And it had been drawn out of them by somebody who was an integral part of their community. When we all sat around in a circle I didn’t have a lot of explaining to do. People had come almost rehearsed with their stories and began sharing them. But then of course once people started talking, somebody would be reminded of another story that they wanted to tell. So this story circle that was supposed to go on for an hour ... Ralph finally dragged me out of there four and a half hours later. I think a lot of magic things happened that day.*

The magic of the circles was the sharing of human existence, finding out that you were not alone. It was, according to Adella, *an awakening of the human spirit, people opening up and accepting who they are. The power of the story lay in*

## Stories and Change

Transformation can only occur when the source of change is internal. Stories can be such a source of change because they come from within and are owned by the teller.

In Montana, the power of the story was obvious and abundant. Three and a half years ago several arts presenters from around the state of Montana and several American Festival Project (AFP) participants met to discuss the idea of having a state-wide American Festival Project in Montana. The initial idea had to do with the need for these diverse communities of Montana to address the forces of change on their community’s self-identity and esteem in the end of the 20th century. The AFP and these several towns wanted to find a collaborative arts project which would fit the various characters of each of the partners and be an appropriate medium.

We landed on story as a vehicle to approach these goals. At the beginning, the project moved along much like any “visiting artist residency” until the story circles, the story collecting, and the interviewing were really underway; and then it seemed that the source of the project had shifted. The stories’ power had set the tellers’ and the listeners’ lives into action; change became a possibility. The project became each and every town’s own. It then became clear that this arts project could, in fact, lead to community transformation.

– Theresa Holden

*Theresa Holden is the statewide coordinator for the Montana American Festival Project.*



Sue and Bob Facklam at a Choteau story circle.

Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.



its ability to know, heal, define, and validate. For Naomi, the storytelling enabled the soul to speak:

There was a story about this boy who never felt himself to be Jewish and he began to want to do something Jewish and feel some identity. He started to get interested in Hanukkah and the lights, and he lit the candles in the window and within seconds a big rock fell through the window. It frightened him and it's been a big struggle to own his culture, his religion, his heritage. He felt very isolated there. He felt not responded to. And I don't even know if he had told this story before. – Naomi



Lass Dudley (center) and Gerry Paulus listen to Sarah Cobb in Choteau. Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.

This woman talked about not telling this little girl that she was gay. And there was the thing of her voice being cut off, the image of somebody's voice being cut off by not saying anything. – Adella

There was a man in one of the story circles in Choteau who acknowledged that he was searching for the Native American ancestry that was his family's secret. This man used to wonder why he was darker. He was getting to know who he was and accepting that. – Adella

Many of the stories told were about place and home, insiders and outsiders, finding out and acknowledging who makes up your community, The story circles became an opportunity to work towards inclusion and demonstrated the diversity of voices and perspectives which constitute a collective memory. *Storytelling broke down time's boundaries (Naomi)* and revealed the significant resource of oral history that resides in each community.

In Glasgow, since the last time we had visited, one of the women, Sophia, had died. She had told a story about the  
please see page 18

## Hoppers!

Oh, grasshoppers! It was in the '30s but don't ask me what years. Lot of time it would literally look like it was clouding up when you would look up and it was grasshoppers coming. They'd just blotted out the sun. It was like a cloud, only they were grasshoppers. There were a few years that we had those. They ate up everything. Anything that tried to grow, they ate it up. And us kids. Dad, we, our garden. The only way we saved our garden was all the kids, there were five or six at that time, I suppose. Each took a towel in their hand and we'd start at one end of the garden, and we'd chase the grasshoppers out of our garden. About every half hour. Maybe. To save the garden. That's how we had garden stuff. Everyday? Everyday. Til the grasshoppers left. I don't know when they left or how long they lasted. – **Maggie Frazen**

Maggie Frazen describes the hoppers at their homestead in Larslan.

From the Fort Peck Story Circles.

## The Ghost Sheet

Sophia's father homesteaded up North, in the Larslan Area, and her mother came over from the old country (Poland) later. Their homestead was down in a coulee and Mama couldn't see what was beyond the homestead. One day she climbed to the top of the hill and discovered she could see forever. Mama had come from the old country with a belief in spirits and ghosts. Years passed and the children were small. It was winter and the prairie was covered with snow. It was cold and everywhere it was white. And the only sound was the wind. Mama said that there were spirits on the prairie. She said there was a ghost coming. The children didn't believe in ghosts but Mama kept saying, "There's a ghost coming."

– **Sophia Rouse/Sharon LaBonty.**

Sharon LaBonty is the chair of the Fort Peck Fine Arts Council Regional Board. She is retelling the story told by the late Sophia Rouse in November of 1992.

From the Fort Peck Story Circles.



continued from page 17

*ghost sheet which had stuck in everyone's mind. What really hit us was that although Sophia had died, her story remained in the community consciousness.*  
– Tommy.

*The stories serve as a way to tell newcomers what this town was like, and as a way to pass down the town's history to oncoming generations .... I'm interested in watching the children and how they respond to the idea of storytellers, the idea of telling traditional stories, the idea of what stories they are allowed to tell, of who has the stories. Of course Montana was really interesting to find connections. I felt like the connections between generations were a lot more solid than they are in other parts of the country.*– Celeste

*It's stories of survival we see. It's stories of people who came here without even knowing the language. Just got off the train and couldn't speak a word of English,*



*The Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.*  
Photos by Nic Paget-Clarke.

*came here from Russia, or Poland and pretty much made a substantial life for themselves. These were hard working people and they endured natural and economic hardship.* – Tommy

There were many compelling stories of survival and struggle and the telling of and listening to these stories honored the experience. Then, explains Naomi, *to some degree you've experienced some kind of redemption, some kind of purpose ...*

## Rick's Story

One night a guy jumped out of a car near Broadway and Jackson and yelling I was the fag he heard about from a friend, he punched me in the face breaking my glasses. I ran up the parking lot behind the building south of Broadway and hid beneath the stairs across from the trolley. The guy cruised the area in his car yelling obscenities while he searched for me. I had to find my way home on back streets without my glasses. I took the guy to court because I wasn't going to be intimidated by violence. The guy wasn't intimidated either. The next week he kicked in the door of my apartment and would have undoubtedly beaten me up again if I had been home.

*From the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.*

## The Lineup

I'm a Butte girl; I was born and raised in Butte, Montana. I discovered my sexual preference when I was 27 years old. I had just been married when I went to San Francisco to my brother's graduation from college. While we were at the graduation brunch my brother introduced me to the man who was the first love of his life. I replied, "all gays should be shot," I didn't realize at the time I would soon be in the lineup.

– Lillian Michalsky

*Lillian Michalsky is the statewide coordinator for the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.*

*From the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.*

*You can feel them saying this is really meaningful what happened to you. This is really a struggle you're in. And by doing it you can get the courage to live that struggle. For Celeste, The only way to survive is to tell your stories so you do exist. You're not silenced if you can at least tell your story.*

*There is an urgency, a need, its life and death in many ways. Because the gay and lesbian community is in crisis, because of health issues, because of acceptance issues. Once they've seen so much death, its just so urgent to be able to give voice to voices that won't speak any longer. So its essential that the stories be told so that change can come about.* – Celeste

*You're very being is not sanctioned by state law (Montana's sexual deviate conduct law), which is pretty disempowering. When people get together and realize that there are other people who are living productive healthy, complicated, exuberant lives, then they begin to see they are not so isolated.* – Steve

In the story circles people claimed their own stories and told them for themselves. Tommy emphasizes the importance of who gets to tell the story, whose voice is heard. *By ignoring somebody's story you're saying, "You're not important to this community. We can cut you out by not listening to your story. Its devaluation, its rewriting our history.* Adella quotes from an African proverb to illustrate this point, *Until the lion writes his own story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.*





## The Slide

About 1:30, 2:00 or whatever, all of a sudden, I heard, "You know, trucks just zipping around, So I got up and looked out the window and there's three, four of those government trucks. Men are running, Pretty soon they ran up to your door and said "Everybody out. Everybody into the trucks." And they didn't tell you why. They just told you to get in. And, of course they drove up the hill. And I'm sure the parents were concerned. "Where are my boys? Where is my girl?" Because the whole room went into any truck that went up the hill. And until we got to the top we didn't realize it that supposedly there had been a dam slide. We went as far as New Deal. Up the hill to New Deal is where our trucks went to. So you were clear up there. Up to New Deal. Up by Wheeler. It was frightening to everyone because you knew something dreadful had happened but you weren't sure. – Irene Allie

*Irene Allie taught sixth grade at Park School in 1938.  
From the Fort Peck Story Circles.*

*Friendships have been made in different cities. People are coming two and three and four hours to attend these story circles. This thing (the Gay and Lesbian Story Project) has grown from a single workshop of 15 people into working with 115 people. We've got about 250 hours of stories. We have been running to keep up with the growth of it.– Steve*

*We met a Sioux man who worked at the community college on the Wolf Point reservation. It turned out that the night before he had seen a documentary about Appalachian life and music. (ed. Donna's company Roadside is from Appalachia.) So he showed up at our story circle the next day even though it was about 20 miles away. People were nervous at first to be in the room together but found what they had in common. In the end we were playing music together and singing. – Donna*

*The story circles revealed the creativity of each of their participants. Naomi describes how this is part of a process which shapes the shapeless events of everyday living and tells the teller what matters, what has meaning. It pulls out of you what you don't yet understand, what you haven't yet digested, what hasn't yet found its place in your understanding. It's like you're chewing on your own life to get the nutrients out of it.*

*Ralph Paulus describes the risk of democracy, you have to have guts to make democracy work. Ron Therriault describes how when you gain the knowledge, you then have a responsibility to pass it on, if you take knowledge to the grave, you have wasted a life.*

*The Montana American Festival Project story circles were about using your creativity and imagination to engage in the risk of participation and the responsibility of transformation.*

*This isn't done somewhere else. Its done where you are. In your life. In the situation you live. In your town. - Steve*

*It's not an end, it's just a signal that you have to continue, you can't stop telling stories because if you stop telling that story you are relinquishing your voice in the development of your community. – Tommy. ☼*

*In Montana when people got together and told stories among themselves, they began to find that there was meaning in their so-called ordinary and soon-to-be-revealed extraordinary lives. And the people who have a sense of meaning and a sense of place, and a sense of connection and a sense of their history and their community are empowered. – Steve*

*The act of telling and listening to stories together helped build community. People got to know each other, took care of each other, and celebrated their coming together.*

*There was a girl who started telling her story and wept and wept. And as she told the story (about anti-semitism) there were two other Jewish couples there who said to her come to us for the holidays, you're not alone, we'll take care of you. - Naomi*



*Choteau's Main Street. Stories about the the grain elevator, the County Court House and the last public hanging are readily told.*

Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.



*Above.* Ora found this old metal coffee box (24" high) in his grandfather's ranch house.

*Below.* Tiny Thomas sings and plays old-time country-western music.



*Three Generations.* Twenty miles west of the tiny town of Bynum can be found the ranch houses of Ora Knowlton and Tiny Thomas, Ora's father, and (above) the original home of Ora's grandfather who settled here over a hundred years ago. Photos by Nic Paget-Clarke.

## Country-Western meets Bluegrass

Tiny Thomas and Ora Knowlton

**T**iny Thomas and Ora Knowlton live near Bynum to the north of Choteau. Life-long Montanans from ranching and farming families they have participated in various events with the Performing Arts League (Choteau) and the American Festival Project.

**Q:** How did it happen that you played music with the Roadside Theater from Kentucky?

**Tiny:** I play guitar and sing. All of the musicians there were all my relatives. There's a lot of musicians on the reservation (ed. the Blackfoot reservation in northern Montana near the Canadian border), good musicians. But Ralph called me, one of the guys called him, and said, if there's any musicians that want to sit in with us, have them come. So I called those guys and everybody was down and we had a good time.

Ike Hall played a fiddle and he plays an electric guitar, and then Fred DeRouch played bass. Then we all played together and that was fun. We enjoyed that because they played bluegrass and we do our country-western.

Everybody plays country-western up here. We go all over. Like we go to Great Falls, we go to Choteau, we go to Ft. Peck Indian Reservation and that's way down on Highline. All around the reservation. They go to schools, showing the younger kids that you can have fun without alcohol or

drugs. We do benefits. For instance, I have a cousin that has leukemia. He had to go to Seattle, trying to find a donor, so we gave a benefit dance for him because they had to be over there from June till November.

And they do all the old square dancing. They brought it to Choteau since I've invited them down. Now they have dances in Choteau. A lot of people are coming to learn how to square dance and do the old polkas and two-steps and jitterbug.

So with Roadside, we went to the retirement home. They had us for supper and we did music for them. They did their skits for the people at the retirement home. And then they got out and they talked with people, and everybody enjoyed each other by swapping their stories. I myself learned a lot from them. Everybody looks forward to them coming back.

**Ora:** The Performing Arts Group has shown everybody in this end of Montana how much fun it is to get around with music, laughter, dancing and I feel that the Performing Arts League, Roadside, and the rest of them have done a lot to pull us all together and show us exactly what happens through stories and actions that people are people and we're all equal. ❁



*Tiny Thomas and Ora Knowlton on their ranch by the Rockies.*



## Philip Aaberg



Photo by Neil Ricklen

As a child growing up in Chester, Montana, Philip Aaberg was exposed to a tremendous variety of music. He was born into a long line of church musicians and the first music he played on piano, at age four, was a Gregorian chant. He made his debut solo recital when he was seven and by the time he was in high school he was play-

ing in a garage rock band and taking the Great Northern Railway 12 hours to Spokane, Washington, every two weeks to study classical music with Margaret Ott. During the summers he traveled to Bozeman to play the modern chamber music of Charles Ives, John Cage and others.

A Leonard Bernstein scholarship took Aaberg to Harvard for classical training. His favorite composers, however, included not only the greats like Bach, Mozart, Chopin, Debussy, but Aaron Copland, Miles Davis, the Beach Boys, Chuck Berry, The Band, John Coltrane, the Beatles, Aretha Franklin, Joe Zawinul, and Traffic. Following these interests, Aaberg settled in San Francisco in the mid-'70s where he landed a series of R&B and rock 'n' roll gigs. Over the next ten years he recorded and toured, working with the Elvin Bishop band, the Doobie Brothers' Tom Johnston, Peter Gabriel's band, and Kenny Rogers, among others. In the mid-'80s a friend hooked him up with Windham Hill Records, resulting in his 1985 debut album *High Plains*. Aaberg is currently at work on his sixth album for Windham Hill. Aside from his solo piano projects, he has also recently recorded and performed with the premiere jazz bassoonist Paul Hanson, and toured with the Paul Drescher Ensemble, one of the most innovative new music/theater groups in the world. Aaberg's performance on PBS *All-American Jazz* was nominated for an Emmy. He is a recipient of the 1995 Montana Governor's Award for the Arts.

## Margaret Baldwin

Storytelling comes naturally to Margaret Baldwin, having grown up in a family of storytellers from Alabama and Texas. Through her work as a playwright, director, choreographer, dancer, actress and teacher, she has helped create opportunities for a wide range of people to not only perform published works, but to use music, dance and theater



to tell their own stories as well.

Ms. Baldwin's work with young people has included leading acting and improvisation workshops at a residential treatment facility for emotionally disturbed adolescents with Missoula Youth Homes in Missoula, Montana; working with Arts Alive Theatre for

Young People in Charlottesville, Virginia to develop a script and production with disadvantaged youths; and teaching drama and producing plays with elementary through high school students in Charlottesville. Through the Piedmont Council for the Arts in Charlottesville, she has conducted playwrighting workshops for persons with AIDS. With the Missoula Museum of the Arts, she has co-taught a mask-making, personal storytelling and performance course for persons with disabilities. She is currently part of an ensemble theater group she helped form in Missoula. Her original productions include: *But I Said No*: a play about acquaintance rape (co-authored with Doug Grissom), *Night Hawks*, *The Fisherman's Wife*, *Art is Pain*, *Strangers in the Night*, *Can't Touch This*.



## Kathleen Guehlstorff and Scott Crichton — Curly & Kate

Over the last decade, Montana folksingers Kathleen and Scott Crichton, also known as "Curly and Kate", have performed nationally in colleges, schools, libraries, historical societies and coffeehouses. They accompany their singing with guitar, banjo, autoharp, harmonica and lap dulcimer.



The stories they sing reflect their love for Montana, her history and people. With support from Montana's Cultural Trust, they've released two albums of original folk songs based on oral histories in the permanent collections of the Montana State Historical Society. The latest collection, *Hard Luck and Laughter: More Folk Songs from Montana's Oral Histories* (1993), draws on oral history accounts from the "New Deal in Montana/Fort Peck Dam Oral History Project", "Montanans at Work" and "General History of Montana" projects. It reflects the spirit of Montana families who, in many cases, lost all they had to drought and hard times, but hung on with a will to survive and to make the best of things.

Kate has over 30 years of performance experience in music and theater. Other projects she's been involved in include her work with the Montana Ballet Company to co-write, research and perform the multi-media production *Ghost Town Ballet*, honoring the early days of Western Montana for the 1989 Centennial of Montana's statehood; and her commission by the Northern Pacific Railroad Depot in Wallace, Idaho to write music celebrating the 1987 centennial of the depot.



Photo by Andy Geiger.

### Jack Gladstone

A singer, song-writer and cultural lecturer, Jack Gladstone is the son of a Blackfeet father and a German American mother. Born and formally educated in Seattle, Washington, Gladstone returned in 1982 to his native roots on the Blackfeet Reservation in northwestern Montana. Since 1986 Gladstone has pursued a full-time musical

career, performing throughout North America and Europe. He's developed programs that focus on topics ranging from "Cultural Change on the Northern Plains" to "Plains Indian History" to "Native American Relationship with the Environment" to "Mythology and Storytelling".

During his *Rediscovering America* performance, Jack Gladstone guides his audiences through myths, animal legends and personality portraits into a better understanding of what is truly our American heritage. During his *Oral Traditions as Art* school performances, Gladstone demonstrates how he has developed the ancient art of storytelling through contemporary folk music.

### Glacier Music Association

The Glacier Music Association consists of six different groups of Blackfeet musicians and their families. They live north of Choteau around Browning, and are best known for their traditional western music played as accompaniment for square dancing, jigs and line dancing.

### Ike Hall and His Friends

Native Americans of the Blackfeet Nation, Ike Hall and His Friends are a band that reside north of Choteau and in the towns of Browning and Heart Butte on the Blackfeet Reservation. They play traditional western music and popular country music with guitar, fiddle and vocals.

### Ripley Schemm Hugo

Poet Ripley Schemm Hugo was raised in Great Falls and on the south fork of the the Teton River, west of Choteau, in Montana. Year after year she returns to this area, and she is fond of saying that both her children and her poems were raised there. Currently living in Missoula, Hugo conducts writing workshops and residencies for communities and schools throughout Montana for the Montana Arts Council and Hellgate Writers. She is the author of *Mapping My Father* (1981), a book of poetry, and her poems appear in *The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology*, as well as in numerous literary journals. She is currently at work on a biography of the late Joseph Kinsey Howard, author of *Montana High, Wide and Handsome* and *Strange Empire*, a history of the early Metis people of Saskatchewan and Montana.



Ripley Schemm Hugo.  
Photo by Naomi Demarinis.

### Ray and Shirley Jacobs

A musician with no formal training and a former symphony viola player, Ray and Shirley Jacobs met at the Montana State Fiddle Contest in 1990. Both are accomplished folk musicians who play for old time dances, com-



pete, and tour around the region. Ray not only plays the fiddle, but guitar and his own invention, the “Rockie Mountain Dulcimer”. Shirley plays the harp, guitar and violin. During his 20 plus years as a fourth grade teacher, Ray invented the “Rockie Mountain Dulcimer” as an instrument that his students could build and play. Now they travel with 25 dulcimers and washtub basses, so their school assemblies can really be participatory.

## Junebug Productions

Junebug Productions of New Orleans was founded in 1980 and is the organizational successor to the Free Southern Theater, which was founded in 1963 to be a cultural arm of the Civil Rights Movement. It’s name is taken from the mythic Junebug Jabbo Jones, a character invented by members of the Student Non -Violent Coordinating Committee during the '60s to stand as an emblem for the wisdom of common people. Junebug Productions’ mission is to create and present cultural works that support and encourage those who work to end oppression and exploitation of African Americans in the Black Belt South and other oppressed people throughout the world.

To fulfill this mission, Junebug Productions conducts both national and local activities. The Junebug Theater Project is among the nation’s pre-eminent African American professional touring companies. The current repertory consists of five original plays, including two collaborations — one with Roadside Theater and one with A Traveling Jewish Theatre. Their residency work aims to place the skills they develop as artists at the disposal of people who are working for change in their own communities. Most of Junebug’s local activities are encompassed under the New Orleans Community Arts Program, which includes the New Orleans Story Network and a local presenting program.



**Adella Gautier** (*Adella Adella the Storyteller*) and **John O’Neal** of Junebug Productions both performed around Montana.

Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.

## Steve Kent

Steve Kent is a California-based artist, director, dramaturg, teacher and workshop leader. The wide range of his work has included training sessions for healthcare givers and healthcare recipients, and work in prisons. He has twice led journeys based on the Eleusinian mysteries to Greece and Crete with Deena Metzger. He has worked in traditional theatrical venues, on university campuses, and with diverse communities.



**Steve Kent** on the Paulus’ Chateau farm. Photo by Ralph Paulus

Steve Kent has served as artistic director of the Company and Provisional Theaters in Los Angeles, and is currently theatrical director for Junebug Productions and an artistic consultant for Roadside Theater, Carpetbag Theater, Seven Stages, Touch Movement Theatre and The Urban Bush Women. He is a member of Alternate R.O.O.T.S. He has directed productions at the Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles Theatre Center, Tennessee Repertory Theatre, the Illusion Theater, the Manhattan Theatre Club, the New York Shakespeare Festival and the International Brecht Festival. His original productions include: *The James Joyce Memorial Liquid Theatre*, *XA: A Vietnam Primer*, *Inching Through the Everglades*, *Singing My Mother to Sleep*, *Texts for Nothing* and *The War in Heaven* (both featuring Joseph Chaikin), *Bag Lady*, *Dreams Against the State*, *Mr. Universe*, *Daytrips*, *In the Outfield*, *External Pressure*, *AIDS/US/Women*, *Hard Times Come Again No More*, *City of God*, *Crossing the Broken Bridge*, *Junebug Jack*, and all of the productions of the Junebug Theater Project.

## Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD)

The LAPD is a performance ensemble of homeless people, formerly homeless people and a limited number of emerging artists, working since 1985 under the professional direction of John Malpede. The group, based in Los Angeles’ downtown skid row, holds regularly scheduled, open, free workshops for the community, as well as free street performances. The ensemble performs in art-spaces and theatres throughout Los Angeles, the state and the





## Artists' Profiles



*Los Angeles Poverty Department. A scene from "Give Up All Your Possessions and Follow Me."* Photo by John Williams.

nation, and has created "LAPD Inspects America," an ongoing series of performances based on residencies in such cities as Philadelphia, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Boulder and Helena. The artistic purpose of the group is to create cutting-edge performance work that reveals the reality of life on the streets. LAPD believes that people from the skid row area are best able to articulate the reality of homelessness, that a performance forum is important for the intellectual, emotional and spiritual development of these individuals and what they have to say is important for the society at large.



Photo by Joel Godbey

## Celeste Miller

Celeste Miller is a talking dancer. A dancing monologist. A movement storyteller. A performer of physical theater. She travels throughout the U.S. with her one woman shows, performing stories drawn from ordinary lives. Since 1987 Miller has been creating

a series of shows, *Lost and Found in America: Some of the Stories*, as a response to her longing for a clearly rooted place of her own. Turning to her own backyard, she's found in 'the suburbs' a place rich with its own traditions and histories. The backyard BBQ, the cavalcade of neighborhood characters, the stories of a people on the move, the roots of a rootless people. *Vision on 66: Go Dad Go* is the latest part of the series.

As a touring artist, Celeste works with the presenters and people of the places she tours to create participatory events to surround the performances. These activities include workshops, lecture/demonstrations, master classes, storytelling sessions and other events. Participants include anyone with a story to tell, a dance in their soul, a song to sing.

## R. Carlos Nakai

R. Carlos Nakai, a Navajo-Ute from Arizona, is an eloquent spokesman for the living musical heritage of the Native American people. Combining traditional and original melodies on the flute and Eagle bone whistle with a



Photo by John Running

knowledge of Native American lifeways, Nakai delves into the ethereal qualities of the music and the rich culture from which it sprang.

Nakai has performed throughout the world, leading the renaissance of the Native American flute by bringing the haunting, timeless sound of the traditional cedar flute to new listeners and into new musical styles. In addition to his solo appearances, Nakai has worked with guitarist William Eaton and pianist Peter Kater, and founded the ethnic jazz ensemble Jackalope. He has recorded seventeen albums for Canyon and Celestial Harmonies Records, and created scores for PBS Television. In 1995 the First Americans in the Arts gave him their first award for musical achievement for his career of performance, composition and education.

## Prairie Mountain Players



Photo by Melody Martinsen



The Prairie Mountain Players was begun in 1987 to provide quality amateur theatre to Choteau and the surrounding area. Annually the group produces a Dinner Theatre in the spring for adult audiences and a family oriented Dessert Theatre in the fall. The group is currently developing an oral tradition project with other local arts organizations.

### Rhythmaires

Featuring popular dance band music from the '20s to the '50s, the Rhythmaires have played their saxophone, drums, guitars and piano at community affairs in the Choteau area for the last 50 years. Their families were among the original Montana homesteaders, arriving here from various northern European homelands.



Photo by Melody Martinsen

### Roadside Theater

Roadside Theater's home is the central Appalachian Mountain coalfields of east Kentucky and southwest Virginia. Roadside's members, with one exception all natives of the region, have called on their heritage of storytelling, music, oral history and the mountain church to develop their original theatrical form and content. A natural storytelling style woven with acting and music allows the theater to speak to its audiences in a forthright and intimate manner. Roadside's plays are influenced by the body of archetypal tales, oral histories and ballads that are an important part of the Appalachian tradition.

Roadside began touring nationally in 1977 to show others a picture of its home that is unlike the stereotypical Appalachia regularly seen in the mainstream media. In the past eighteen years, the ensemble has scripted and produced 14 plays about its place and people, performed an average of 200 times a year, and toured to 43 states and Europe.



Photo by Jeff Whetstone.

Through its work, Roadside hopes to help strengthen cultural resources at home and in the communities it visits. Integral to the performance of its plays are community cultural residencies that celebrate the host community's history and culture and, in this light, begin to look at its current concerns. Many of these cultural residencies are multi-year projects involving cross-cultural exchange and the development of new plays. Roadside is a part of Appalshop, the Appalachian arts and education center.

### Spiderwoman Theater

Spiderwoman Theater, composed of three Skuna/Rappahannock sisters: Lisa Mayo, Gloria Miguel and Muriel Miguel, is the oldest continually running women's theatre company in North America. They take their name from the Hopi Goddess Spiderwoman, who taught the people to weave and has prophetic insight into the future, speaks all languages and is ever present to give and to guide.

The women call their technique of working "storyweaving". They create designs and weave stories with words and movement, creating an overlay of interlocking stories, where fantasy and power are comically intertwined. The essential threads of human existence are woven into a tapestry that covers all they see. Whether exposing racism or espousing women's rights, contemporary topics are placed in historical context and examined - often with a vengeance - through the techniques of Native storytelling and theatrical conventions.



Photo by Martha Swope Associates/  
William Gibson



## Jackie Torrence and Cephas & Wiggins



Jackie Torrence is one of the best known storytellers in the English language. Having learned her art from her grandparents, uncles and aunts, Jackie began telling stories as part of her job as a librarian and soon found herself on the road 280 days a year, including appearances at the Kennedy Center, the World Theatre, Lincoln Center and WolfTrap. Jackie was included in *I Dream a World*, Brian Lanker's celebrated photo essay on African-American women who have made important contributions at a national level.



Photo by Irene Young

Bowling Green John Cephas and Harmonica Phil Wiggins are urban acoustic bluesmen from Washington, D.C. Cephas takes his nickname from Bowling Green, Virginia, where an influential period of his life was spent. He started playing the guitar at the age of nine. His cousin, David Taleofero, taught him much of what

he plays — the alternating thumb-and-finger picking style that characterizes Piedmont Blues. His playing was also influenced by such famous bluesmen as Blind Lemon Jefferson, Reverend Gary Davis and Tampa Red, as well as music from the ragtime era. Cephas received an NEA National Heritage Fellowship in 1989.

Phil Wiggins was born in Washington, D.C. in 1954 and was attracted to the blues harp as a young man. He has played with many notable D.C. blues artists, including Archie Edwards and John Jackson, and attributes his style to his years spent accompanying Flora Molton, a renowned street singer and slide guitarist.

## A Traveling Jewish Theatre

A Traveling Jewish Theatre (ATJT) looks for connections where others see separation. This unique artist-led ensemble has, over the past sixteen years, created a body of work that defies categorization. In the polyglot tradition of Jewish culture, ATJT speaks many languages. It speaks poetry and it speaks story. It speaks secular Yiddish humanism and ecstatic mysticism. It speaks world history and women's wisdom. It speaks jazz and sacred chant. It speaks Jewish and it speaks American.

ATJT was founded in 1978 by Corey Fischer, Albert Greenberg and Naomi Newman. In 1987 Helen Stoltzfus joined the ensemble. The sustained vitality of the company comes in no small measure from ATJT's willingness to take risks in both the form and content of the theatre it creates. ATJT has created twelve original works for the theatre. The sources for these works have ranged from the legends of the Hasidim to the assassination of Trotsky; from Yiddish poetry to the reclamation of women's wisdom; from the healing nature of storytelling to the challenge of interfaith marriage and from the politics of the Middle-East to African American/Jewish relations. ATJT does not deal with social or political issues in isolation. It looks for the stories that can illuminate our shared confusion. It attempts to build bridges of language, music and gesture across the cracking landscape of communal discourse.

ATJT has performed in over sixty cities worldwide. Members of the ensemble also teach solo performance, improvisation and ensemble creation through ATJT's workshop program. In addition, the company has produced a 5-part series for American Public Radio entitled *Heart of Wisdom: Audio Explorations in Jewish Culture*. ❁



John O'Neal of Junebug Productions and Naomi Newman of A Traveling Jewish Theater.



## Alberta Bair Theater

*Billings (population 81,000)*

Located on the banks of the Yellowstone River in south-central Montana, Billings is the state's largest city. As the center of a vast trade region, the city is a major distribution point for Montana's and Wyoming's natural resources mining operations, as well as for agriculture and the oil trade. The city's specialized medical facilities serve all parts of the state. The Crow Indian Reservation is just southeast of the city, and caves in the nearby sandstone cliffs have had Indian occupants from the paleo hunter-gatherers to the more recent Crow Indians.

As Billings' primary performing arts center, the Alberta Bair Theater is committed to an interactive role with its community and has developed programs that reach into the neighborhoods of Billings, surrounding rural areas, and the nearby Crow Indian Reservation. As a charter member of the Kennedy Center's "Arts Centers and Schools: Partners in Arts Education Program", ABT has developed an extensive educational program that involves thousands of students and teachers in the performing arts each year. Most of the artists booked by the theater do educational work, as well as public performances.

In addition, the theater opens its doors each year to over twenty organizations that present performances in their space. The Theater itself sponsors about one third of the 120 plus events scheduled, including the Fox Series of diverse performances, a Family Series, a Jazz Series, and selected individual performances from grand opera and Broadway musicals to modern dance, ballet and headlining entertainment.

The theater also has a history of being a place where a diversity of views can be expressed, where the community can grapple with issues that face them. In this time of increasing racism and hate crimes in Montana, the theater is seeking new ways to serve as a vehicle for cultural exchange and understanding.

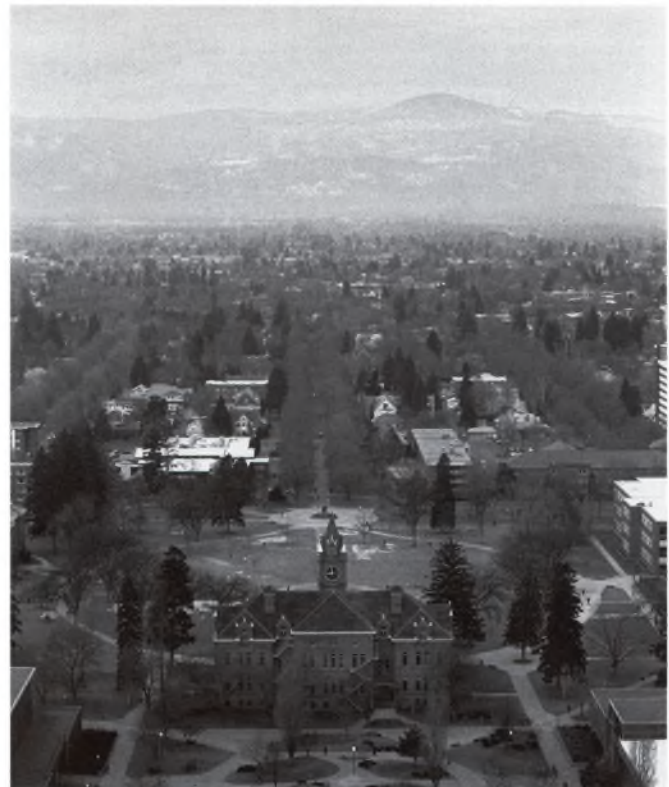
Their participation in the Montana American Festival Project is providing Alberta Bair Theater with opportunities to create new public forums for addressing issues of concern to the community. The Montana American Festival Project residencies are also helping the theater to increase its educational activities in the schools in Billings, in surrounding rural schools and on the Crow reservation.

## Associated Students of the University of Montana (ASUM) Programming

*Missoula (76,000)*

Diversity of life-style and opinion is abundant in Missoula, a college community situated in the Rocky Mountains near Montana's western border. A major participant in this city, the University of Montana holds as part of its overall mission embracing this diversity and "helping to build bridges between the different communities that exist at the University, and with the community at large; and helping students, faculty and their families better appreciate the many cultures and stories of the people that make up Montana."

The Student Activities Office, and particularly ASUM Programming, has taken on this challenge. As part of the Montana American Festival Project, ASUM Programming is using the process of hearing and sharing stories to help people to better appreciate each other's cultural heritage and Montana's diverse culture. To do this they are designing artists' residencies that promote storytelling and collecting in Western Montana. And in collaboration with Helena Presents, they are organizing the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.



*The University of Montana, Missoula, ASUM Programming, presented many of the artists involved in the project.*

Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.



## Presenters' Profiles

ASUM Programming also hosts the largest performing arts series in Western Montana, presenting nationally acclaimed artists such as Merce Cunningham, Twyla Tharp and the Kronos Quartet, as well as well-known popular entertainment, films and lectures, and a coffeehouse and folk music series. They help arrange workshops with visiting artists for the dance, theater and music departments of the University. And as a student staffed organization, ASUM Programming provides students with their first semi-professional experience in arts administration.

### Fort Peck Fine Arts Council

*Glasgow, Malta, Plentywood,  
Wolf Point, Sidney*

As the Missouri River flows through northeastern Montana, it is flanked on either side by the high plains of this region — a wide open landscape, where the big sky that stretches over the prairie's buttes and coulees, is filled with color when the sun rises and sets. Built on the Missouri as the first major project of the Works Progress Administration, the Fort Peck Dam generated not only jobs, but electricity and a source of irrigation for the region. This impact is the inspiration for a new theater work about the region.



*Fort Peck Theater in Fort Peck, Montana, was built by the WPA in the '30s in conjunction with the construction of Fort Peck Dam. At the time, movies were shown 24 hours a day to entertain the Fort Peck workers who were working in shifts around the clock.*



*A scene from Farley Family Reunion, Fort Peck Fine Arts Council's first limited tour.*

Twenty five years ago, the Fort Peck Fine Arts Council was formed in this area, with the primary goal of saving the historic Fort Peck Theatre. On its 20th anniversary, the Council set up a network of five satellite presenters. Ranging in population from 1,000 to 5,000, and spread out hours away from each other, the towns are Glasgow, Malta, Plentywood, Sidney and Wolf Point (on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation).

For its work in this sparsely populated area, the Council has gained recognition from the National Endowment for the Arts as a "very rural arts agency." It presents an annual performing arts series in these communities. Students from eight rural schools in the region interact regularly with a range of artists through FPFAC's Artists Informance Project. The Council collaborates with the Department of Family Services on the "Touch Project", which uses theater to provide sexual abuse prevention information.

The satellite presenters are currently working on an ambitious long range project: the development of a play about their region that can be performed by the summer of 1996. Based on stories collected in these communities, the play will tell with pride about northeastern Montana, the region most often overlooked in the story of the state. By involving all ages of community members, as well as local and touring artists, this project also seeks to increase communication and understanding

## Presenters' Profiles



between the area's Native and non-Native peoples.

In particular the play will examine the effect on the region of the Fort Peck Dam. Focussing on the people who were here before the dam, those who came for work, and those who stayed, the play will explore the complex history of the region, including the stories of the Native Plains Indians (Assiniboiné and Sioux) who inhabited this land for centuries and of the European people who were "homesteaders" here.

Over the course of working on the play, everyone has realized there are enough stories for several plays, and the stories are being recorded for other uses as well. In Malta and Sidney, the stories may become part of community history books. Cooperation between the Friends of the Museum in Glasgow and the Council has also resulted.

Participation in the Montana American Festival Project is helping the Council realize this long range plan. Local and touring artists are reinforcing the work of the playwriting project by helping to create interest in diverse stories, by leading workshops that offer particular methods for collecting and validating the stories from each community, and by drawing attention to work already underway on the project.

### Helena Presents

*Helena (25,000)*

Since its founding in 1976, Helena Presents has brought a wealth of adventurous activity to Montana, engaging residents with performances, films and conferences. Located in the capitol city of Helena, the organization serves regional artists and a wide range of audiences. In the '92-'93 season alone, Helena Presents presented eight one-week artist residencies, over 35 performances, 60 films, and the humanities/arts conference "Poverty in the Treasure State". Funded through a National Endowment for the Arts "Arts Plus" Award, Helena Presents has also created a formal partnership with the local schools to facilitate dance and theater arts education, and is widely acknowledged for the depth and skill of its educational activities. With the aim to challenge its audiences aesthetically and

politically, Helena Presents brought to Helena its first experiences of modern dance, new music, and innovative theater. It participates in the National Performance Network and is one of the founding members of the Lila Wallace Readers Digest National Jazz Network. In the last five years, Helena Presents has also co-commissioned dance, theater and music



*The Myrna Loy Center including the offices of Helena Presents is now in this building seen here as it was in 1930 when it housed the county jail.*

works with national colleagues, including *Crossing the Broken Bridge*, a collaboration with Junebug Productions and A Traveling Jewish Theater.

As founder of the Montana Performing Arts Consortium, and as its block-booking coordinator for over ten years, Helena Presents has served as a statewide catalyst in the creation of performing arts touring and special projects, such as the Montana American Festival Project.

Participation in the Montana American Festival Project is providing Helena Presents with new opportunities to explore and present performing arts that are created from various cultures' stories. Through the Project, touring and local artists are working with a wide range of community groups, collecting stories and providing performance opportunities and/or workshops on the different cultures and themes in their work. Out of the residencies several "story groups" have formed, including a women's group, a gay and lesbian group, an environmentally focussed group and several school projects. A significant focus of Helena Presents' American Festival



## Presenters' Profiles

Project work is its initiation, coordination and producing of the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project. A collaboration between Helena Presents, ASUM Programming of the University of Montana, and Pride Montana, the Story Project's primary objective is to develop a story/performance on the gay experience in Montana to be performed throughout the state. Plans also include development of a smaller educational vehicle available to any interested groups and a continuation of the story circles through the training of local facilitators.

### Montana Performing Arts Consortium

Part of the Western States Art Federation Initiative, the Montana Performing Arts Consortium (MPAC) began in 1981 and evolved into a statewide performing arts touring development and booking organization. It is governed by a volunteer board of nine directors and has twenty paid organizational members in Montana and Idaho. Performing artists also participate in the organization and elect one board member. Each year MPAC sponsors a conference and live showcase, conducts presenter and artist development workshops, and provides artistic fee support to rural presenters.

The purpose of the Montana Performing Arts Consortium is: 1) To promote and encourage the touring of the performing arts throughout Montana in a professional and cost-effective manner. 2) To provide support and technical assistance to performing arts presenters. 3) To foster a favorable climate for both artists and presenters in Montana.

### Northern Showcase – Montana State University/ Northern

*Havre (10,800)*

Montanans call it the Hi-Line, the northern-most edge of the state, where wide skies meet the plains and the horizon is broken by a few scattered ranges of mountains, like the the Bear Paws and the Sweetgrass Hills. The Chippewa, Cree and other Indian tribes live in the Havre region, along with descendants of German, Scandinavian and English homesteaders.

Montana State University/Northern (formerly Northern Montana College) serves this large part of the state, from Idaho to North Dakota, as well as three Canadian provinces. MSU/N is a unique institution where technical education and liberal arts education are of equal value - where technology and the arts complement each other at every level of the col-

lege experience. At the heart of the curriculum, MSU/N is committed to providing educational and cultural experiences that help students discover and better understand the interaction between the arts, sciences and technology.

As part of this overall program, USM/N annually sponsors Northern Showcase, an entertaining and stimulating series of cultural events aimed both at promoting awareness and appreciation of the visual and performing arts, and embracing regional diversity. Their involvement extends into the greater community, through programs in libraries, senior centers, with historical clubs and community groups, and on nearby Indian reservations.

Through participation in the Montana American Festival Project, the University of Montana/Northern has provided opportunities for the diversity of the area to be illuminated through the telling of numerous and various community stories.



*Freda McCarthy and Mike Morris dance in Choteau to music by Ike Hall and his Friends and the Roadside Theater.*

Photo by Bob Armstrong.

### Performing Arts League

*Choteau (1,700)*

Home to farmers and ranchers and the Pine Butte Grizzly Bear, Choteau is a community of 1,700 located in Montana's central plains, on the east slopes of the Rockies. The area is a major migratory flyway for waterfowl and is known for its rich archeological history, including the Old North Trail and the Egg Mountain Dinosaur Dig. Choteau's Performing Arts League (PAL) has grown almost

## Presenters' Profiles



as naturally as its mountains. Fifteen years ago, the idea of regularly presenting the arts in town was sparked by the warm reception given to a performance of the American Choral Society. Sometime after that, a grand piano was bought for the community, in memory of the family of a Choteau woman who had been organizing a concert series. The idea continued to take root, and in 1981 the Choteau Performing Arts League was incorporated. Early involvement in the statewide Montana Performing Arts Consortium encouraged them to create an annual series of programs, in collaboration with other MPAC members.

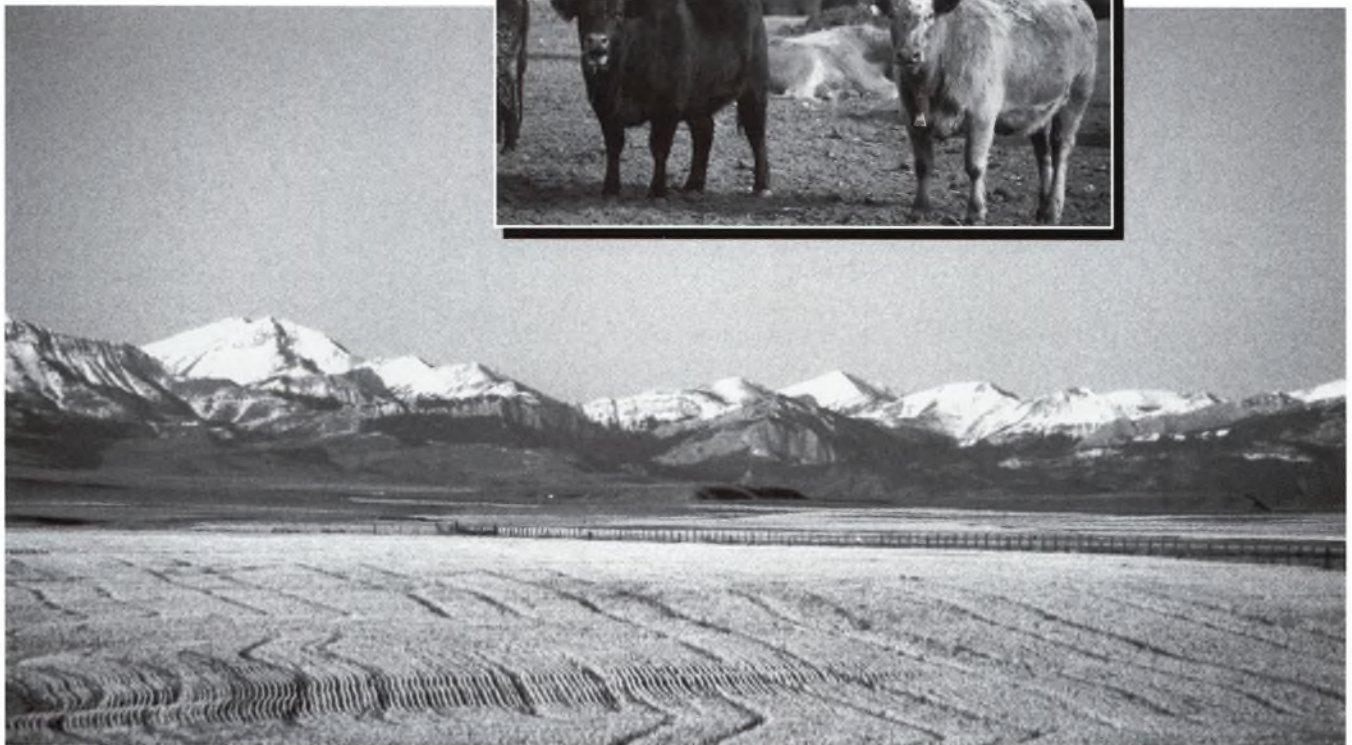
Each year since then, PAL has brought artists as diverse as string quartets and bluegrass bands, flamenco dancers and performance artists to perform in Choteau. The performance venues are varied - the high school auditorium, the library, the city park, a local bar. The League also provides performing arts programs for neighboring rural schools, some with enrollments of less than sixty.

Through participation in the Montana American Festival Project, PAL – and the community itself – are beginning to take a new look at not only the community's history and its varied cultures, but also at the ways that artists can be

involved in the community. Art is beginning to feel more accessible. Through Celeste Miller's work, community members had the new experience of an artist collecting their stories and creating a performance out of them right there in the community. During the Roadside Theater and Junebug Productions residencies, local musicians who had heard of each other for years had their first opportunity to join forces and jam. High school students from Choteau have begun collecting and developing their own stories.

A second story project will connect the work of the Vigilante Players with work of Spencer Bohren . Spencer's work consists of music of the era just prior to World War II. The Vigilante Players production of *Dance Around the Flagpole* also addresses issues in Montana just prior to WWII.

The Performing Arts League is also working with the Metis Cultural Recovery Committee to establish a mechanism to collect the stories, language, music and cultural paths of the Metis, with the goal of pursuing and continuing this culture. A significant although isolated population in the Choteau area, the Metis are descendants of Indian, French and Celtic heritage and were instrumental in the opening of the Northern Great Plains to white settlement. ❁



*Fields of winter wheat stretch to the Rockies, and cattle look on in northern Montana.*

Photos by Nic Paget-Clarke.





# Year One: Fall 1992 – Spring 1993

## October 31-November 9

*Naomi Newman, A Traveling Jewish Theatre, and John O'Neal, Junebug Productions.*

### Helena Presents, Helena.

Open rehearsals and performances of work-in-progress *Crossing the Broken Bridge*, co-commissioned by Helena Presents. Story workshops in the community and with the Gay and Lesbian story project.

### *Crossing the Broken Bridge,*

a collaboration between A Traveling Jewish Theatre's Naomi Newman, John O'Neal of Junebug Productions, and director Steve Kent, uses the lens of African-American/Jewish relations to examine the forces that divide and unite the human community. Through songs and stories, the play attempts to address the volatile issues of stereotypes, racism and anti-semitism with humor and compassion.

## November 7-22

*Roadside Theater.*

### Fort Peck Fine Arts Council in Malta, Glasgow, Sidney, Plentywood, Wolf Point.

Performances in each of the communities of *Pretty Polly*, along with story and music swaps, and story collecting workshops. Story swaps were also held in Loring and at Fort Peck Tribal College in Poplar.

### *Pretty Polly*

is an original play by Roadside Theater that weaves tales, family remembrances, and songs to tell the story of a local storyteller, Polly Branham Johnson.

## January 10-13

*Celeste Miller*

### Performing Arts League, Choteau.

Performances of *Vision on 66: Go Dad Go*, and storytelling and collecting workshops with community people of all ages and backgrounds.

### *Vision on 66: Go Dad Go*

is a living, speaking, dancing montage of the folklore, history and pop culture of Route 66. *Vision on 66* takes place in the back seat of the family car, and later into an adventure to search for a sense of home in the face of the 21st century. Celeste Miller has created this piece out of the stories of a people and the place they live, revealed in the geography and history of that place, as well as in the private places of dreams, fears and desires.

## January 14-17

*Celeste Miller.*

### Alberta Bair Theater, Billings.

Performance of *Vision on 66: Go Dad Go*. Community meetings and story swaps.

## January 18-21

*Celeste Miller.*

### Northern Showcase, Montana State University/Northern, Havre.

Performance of *Vision on 66: Go Dad Go*. Community story-collecting and school workshops.

## January 23-26:

*Celeste Miller.*

### ASUM Programming, University of Montana, Missoula.

Performance of *Vision on 66: Go Dad Go*. Lecture/demonstrations and master classes, along with workshops on dance

and storytelling with students and Native Americans from the Salish Kootenai community.

## January 27-Feb. 2:

*Celeste Miller.*

### Helena Presents, Helena.

Two performance of *Vision on 66: Go Dad Go*. Workshops with teachers, senior dancers, men's drumming circle, women, gay and lesbian story group, handicapped and disabled community theater, Project Alternative Learning, and school assemblies and workshops. Collected stories for her new piece, *Big Sky Spinning*.

### Poverty in the Treasure State: Homelessness and Hunger in Montana,

a conference held February 12 & 13, 1993, was inspired by the two-week residency of Los Angeles Poverty Department in Helena. With the goal of focussing public awareness on the plight of Montana's poor, the conference brought together a diverse national group of people working with the poor and homeless in both rural and urban communities. Numerous community activists including: Eula Hall, Director of the Mud Creek Clinic in Floyd County, Kentucky; Minki Mendora, President of the Montana Hunger Coalition; Tha Win of the Los Angeles Legal Aid Homeless Project; the late Brother Harry Somerville, Director of the Camillus House in Miami, Florida; Ron Therriault, Director of Native American Studies at Salish Kootenai Community College joined in an exploration the causes of homelessness, successful models for addressing the problems, and an action plan for dealing with low income housing and other concerns.



**Crossing the Broken Bridge.** Naomi Newman of *A Traveling Jewish Theatre* and John O'Neal of *Junebug Productions* performed throughout Montana in *Year One*.  
Photo by Kathy Sloane.

**February 1-14:**  
**Los Angeles Poverty Department.**  
**Helena Presents, Helena.**

The residency "LAPD Inspects Helena" included workshops/story circles with homeless and disabled people at God's Love Shelter and Montana House, and creation of a performance piece, which was presented in conjunction with the conference "Poverty in the Treasure State".

**February 2-9:**  
**Jack Gladstone.**  
**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council.**  
**Glasgow, Malta, Sidney, Plentywood, Wolf Point.**

Presentation of *Oral Traditions as Art* program at eight schools, including three Native American schools; workshop and assembly program for 8th graders at Glasgow. At the Loring

Hutterite Colony, he not only swapped stories, but traded cassette tapes for hand-knit socks.

**February 27:**  
**R. Carlos Nakai**  
**Northern Showcase, Montana State University/Northern, Havre**  
Public performance. MSU/N student workshop focussed on types of music and flutes Nakai plays.

**March 9-14:**  
**Roadside Theater. The Rhythmaires.**  
**Ike Hall and His Friends.**  
**Performing Arts League, Choteau.**

Performance of *Pretty Polly*. Roadside members led intergenerational storytelling and collecting and story workshops and jammed and danced with community members. They reported

that "community gatherings ... brought out abundant and diverse local talent. The Rhythmaires, descendants of European homesteaders in the area, performed old favorites on sax, drums, electric guitar and piano. A Native American band, headed up by Ike Hall, delighted the crowd with firebreathing originals on the acoustic guitar. School children from Bynum showed off their dancing skills, which were learned from a 50 year old tradition that required that the children social dance and learn about music on a daily basis."

**March 18:**  
**Roadside Theater.**  
**Northern Showcase, Northern Montana College, Havre.**  
Performance of *Pretty Polly*, followed by story swap, with local dancers and musicians, in the library.



# Year Two: Fall 1993 – Spring 1994

## October 25-November 5

*Ray and Shirley Jacobs.*

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council. Malta, Sidney, Glasgow, Plentywood, Wolf Point, Loring, Frazer, Whitewater, Saco, Dodson, Lustre.**

Music swaps or “jams” in senior centers in each town; assemblies in twelve schools; Rockie Mountain Dulcimer lessons for sixth grade music students in Glasgow; “Building a Rockie Mountain Dulcimer” workshop for adults.

## November 3-6

*Jackie Torrence and Cephias & Wiggins.*

**ASUM Programming, University of Montana, Missoula.**

Performance of *Bluestory*. Storytelling workshops on campus and at Salish Kootenai College, and Native American College in Pablo. Jackie Torrence led a storytelling workshop for the community at large. Cephias and Wiggins held a blues lecture/demonstration in the Music Department, open to students and the community.

### *Bluestory*

is a collaboration between storyteller Jackie Torrence and master blues musicians Cephias & Wiggins. Performing both individually and together, the artists illuminate the historical and social context of the Blues, providing a fresh look at the Blues as literature as well as music.

## November 5/6

*Jackie Torrence and Cephias & Wiggins.*

**Helena Presents, Helena.**

Performance of *Bluestory*. Jackie Torrence: Teacher training on collecting and telling stories; workshop with children and elders from Helena Indian Alliance; and storytelling for children. Cephias & Wiggins: Performance at Carroll College; workshop on guitar and harmonica; and a demonstration for the high school band.

## November 12-15

*Steve Kent.*

**Helena Presents, Helena.**

Initial work with Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project on gathering stories for eventual creation of a story/performance on the gay experience in Montana, to be performed around the state. Participants came from many parts of the state – Billings, Bozeman, East Glacier – some traveling up to 250 miles.

### **Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project**

is a statewide project which addresses the need for support, education and activism for gay men and lesbians in Montana. With a long-term goal of overturning Montana’s “deviate sexual conduct law”, the project is creating support groups around the state, using the form of story circles. A public performance piece, an artistic and meaningful expression of Montana gay and lesbian culture, is being developed from the stories and processes from these groups. A smaller version of the performance piece will be developed as a touring educational program which can travel to groups interested in understanding the issues facing gays in the Montana. The stories will also be compiled into an oral history of gays and lesbians in Montana, and filed in the archives of the Montana Historical Society. Current partners in the project are Helena Presents; the Associated Students of the University of Montana; Pride, Inc.; the American Festival Project, and over 100 individuals who have participated in the story circles. Additional sponsors include Lamda, the gay organization at the University of Montana; the Montana Human Rights Network; and Montana PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays).



**Touch Project.** The Fort Peck Fine Arts Council works with the Department of Family Services and the Touch Project using theater to provide sexual abuse prevention information. The Touch Project performs for elementary schools in six counties.

# Calendar of Events



## November 17-21

*Steve Kent*

**ASUM Programming,  
University of Montana, Missoula**

Initial work with the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project on gathering stories for eventual creation of a story/performance on the gay experience in Montana. Classes with the Departments of Music and Drama/Dance at UM.

## February 16-19

*Steve Kent.*

**ASUM Programming,  
University of Montana, Missoula.**

Ongoing work with the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project. Classes with Departments of Music and Drama/Dance at UM.

## February 11-15, 20-21

*Steve Kent*

**Helena Presents, Helena**

Ongoing work with the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.

## March 9-13

**Roadside Theater and Junebug Productions**

**Performing Arts League, Choteau**

Performance of *Junebug Jack*. Story-collecting in schools in Choteau, Bynum, Goldenridge and Greenfield, and with senior citizens; potluck dinner and folkdancing/jam session/story swap with the Glacier Music Association and other local musicians (Charlie Bartlett, Cecil Morey, Tiny Thomas) and storytellers, co-sponsored by the Metis Cultural Recovery Committee.

## March 15-16

**Roadside Theater and Junebug Productions.**

**Alberta Bair Theater, Billings**

Performance of *Junebug Jack*. Community work included teacher training, storytelling workshops with students and teachers.

## March 18-19

**Roadside Theater  
and Junebug Productions.**



*Lisa Mayo of the Spiderwoman Theater Company at a workshop in Bozeman.*

Photo by Susan Stewart.

## Helena Presents, Helena.

Performance of *Junebug Jack*. Story workshops with adults, teachers and children; teacher training session; environmental issues workshop; and story circles with the Gay and Lesbian Story Project.

### *Junebug Jack*

is a collaboration which brings together the urban African American troupe Junebug Productions with the rural white company Roadside Theater. The character "Junebug" is a mythic folk character who grew out of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Members of a the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee created the character to stand as a symbol of the wisdom of the common people. "Jack" is the archetypal Appalachian hero. Jack's story varies according to the difficulties and powerful forces he encounters. Both "Jack" and "Junebug" represent the triumph of wit over power, of the human spirit over oppression.

## March 14 - April 3

**Spiderwoman Theater and Montana Indian Contemporary Arts (MICA)**

**MICA, Bozeman,**

**and Helena Presents, Helena.**

MICA artists collaboration with Spiderwoman Theater to create a new installation/performance work for presentation in Bozeman and Helena. Part of the work is a comparative expression of the "urban" and "reservation" experience in the Indian world. Nationally recognized artists from MICA participated.

Spiderwoman Theater performed *Winnetou's Snake Oil Show from Wig Wam City* in Helena and Bozeman.

Their community activities in Helena included work with the gay and lesbian story network, and with women, teachers, and the Helena Indian Alliance.

An exhibit of work by MICA artists is planned for the Myrna Loy Center, Helena Presents.



## Year Two (continued)



Orville Grasdock and Tommy Bledsoe of Roadside Theater share their fiddle/violin experiences. Photo by Choteau Acantha.

### **Winnetou's Snake Oil Show from Wig Wam City**

rains irreverent spitballs on American stereotypes of "Indians." Based loosely on a German turn-of-the-century book by Carl May entitled *The Legend of Winnetou*, this piece deals with mysticism, healing, ecological knowledge and stereotypes. It satirizes New Age "plastic shamans" and how they project a completely untrue view of Native American culture, and it delves into the issue of the medicine man and of phony mysticism.

### **March 21-23**

**Roadside Theater and Junebug Productions**

**ASUM Programming,  
University of Montana, Missoula**

Performance of *Junebug Jack*. Story swap and discussion on issues related to land use and other environmental issues in Montana, open to the public. Classes with UM Departments of Music and Drama/Dance, including classroom discussion about environmental racism. Workshops with Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.

### **March 25-28**

**Steve Kent.**

**Helena Presents, Helena**

Continuing work with the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.

### **April 3-16**

**Celeste Miller.**

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,  
Glasgow, Sidney, Malta, Wolf Point,  
Plentywood.**

Continuation of the story collecting process, both for local production and for Celeste's piece *Big Sky Spinning*. Workshops in schools, a day care center and the Glasgow Women's Resource Center.

### **April 18-22, April 25-29**

**Celeste Miller.**

**Helena Presents, Helena**

Story and movement workshops in schools; continuation of the story collecting process with the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.

### **April 23**

**Celeste Miller**

**Performing Arts League, Choteau**

Planning meetings with coordinators and key participants in local story col-

lecting and performance project.

### **May 5-7**

**Steve Kent**

**ASUM Programming,  
University of Montana, Missoula**

Ongoing work with the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project. Classes with UM Departments of Music and Drama/Dance.

### **May 27-June 4**

**Steve Kent**

**Helena Presents, Helena,  
and ASUM Programming,  
University of Montana, Missoula**

Ongoing work with the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project: Prepare 15 participants from around the state for a live presentation of stories from the project, at the statewide Montana Gay and Lesbian Gay Pride Festivities, June 4. This first public presentation was enthusiastically received.



*Helena Presents* is based at the Myrna Loy Center, named after the Hollywood actress who grew up in Helena, Montana.

Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.



# Year Three: Fall 1994 – Spring 1995

**July 16**

*Margaret Baldwin*

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,  
Glasgow**

Workshop and planning meeting with community coordinators to begin the writing process of the story collecting project.

**September 26-30**

*Celeste Miller and Philip Aaberg*

**Performing Arts League, Choteau,  
Greenfield, Bynum, Augusta**

Goldenridge Workshops in schools; two-day open rehearsal of collaborative piece *Big Sky Spinning* to be performed in April; working sessions with community members on performance of local stories.



*Celeste Miller teaching a workshop on movement and storytelling. Photo by Kathe Lesage.*

## ***Big Sky Spinning***

is a full length work with music, story and movement by Philip Aaberg and Celeste Miller. It is a piece grounded in the stories of the specificity of Montana folk and their place, and how these stories reflect a human theme.

**October 1-8**

*Celeste Miller and Philip Aaberg*

**Helena Presents, Helena**

Celeste led movement and story workshops with elementary school classes, a community theater, mental health professionals, Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project. Celeste and Philip worked together on *Big Sky Spinning*, offering open rehearsals.

**October 3-7**

*Curly and Kate (Scott and Kathleen Crichton)*

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,  
Glasgow, Malta, Sidney**

Performance of *Hard Luck and Laughter*, a program of folk music writ-

ten from oral history, including songs from the builders of the Fort Peck Dam. Informal story swaps following each performance.

**October 9-16**

*Margaret Baldwin*

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,  
Glasgow, Malta, Sidney**

Drama workshops with five rural schools; continuation of the story collecting process with the writers groups in each community.

**November 4-5, 12-13**

*Steve Kent*

**Helena Presents, Helena**

Collecting additional stories and scriptwriting for the 1995 performance, and local facilitator training, with Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.

**November 6, 9**

*Steve Kent*

**Bozeman**

Storytelling and story collecting for

Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.

**November 7-8**

*Steve Kent*

**Billings**

Storytelling and story collecting for Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.

**November 10-11**

*Steve Kent*

**ASUM Programming,  
University of Montana, Missoula**

Collecting additional stories and scriptwriting for the 1995 performance, and local facilitator training, with the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.

**November 14-20**

*Roadside Theater*

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,  
Sidney, Glasgow, Malta**

Performances of *Mountain Tales*; school and community workshops; story and music swaps; continued



# Year Three (continued)

work with the writers groups in each community.

### November 15 & 16

*Steve Kent*

**Performing Arts League, Choteau**

Scripting workshops with community members working on performance of local stories.

### November 15-17

*Naomi Newman, A Traveling Jewish Theater, and John O'Neal, Junebug Productions*

**ASUM Programming,**

**University of Montana, Missoula**

Performance of *Crossing the Broken Bridge*. Classes with UM Departments of Music, Drama/Dance.

### January 8-15:

*Kathleen Guehlstorff Crichton*

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,**

**Glasgow, Malta, Sidney.**

Meetings with storytellers in each town whose stories will go into songs for the performance.

### February 13-18

*Roadside Theater*

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,**

**Glasgow, Sidney, Malta**

Intense scripting work with the writers groups in each community.

### February 18, 21, 26

*Steve Kent*

**Helena Presents, Helena**

Ongoing work with the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.

### February 19-20

*Steve Kent*

**Performing Arts League, Choteau**

Ongoing work with local production, including rehearsals.

### February 22, 25

*Steve Kent*

**Bozeman, Montana.**

Ongoing work with the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.

### February 23

*Steve Kent*

**Billings, Montana**

Ongoing work with the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.



*Montana state capitol, a focus of controversy about the rights of lesbians and gays and a statewide struggle against discrimination.* Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.

### February 27-28

*Steve Kent*

**ASUM Programming,**

**University of Montana, Missoula**

Ongoing work with the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.

### March 2-3

*Steve Kent*

**Performing Arts League, Choteau**

Ongoing work with local production, including rehearsals.

### March 4

*Steve Kent*

**Helena Presents, Helena**

Ongoing work with the Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project.

### March 5-25

*Margaret Baldwin*

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,**

**Malta, Sidney, Glasgow**

Week-long residencies with the writers groups in each community. High school writing class, workshops with the developmentally disabled and adults in the community corporations of each town. "Artifact" writing and "Mask and Myth Making" workshops at the Women's Resource Center in Glasgow. Work with Kathleen Crichton.

### March 12-18

*Kathleen Guehlstorff Crichton*

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,**

**Sidney, Malta, Glasgow**

Continuation of story-gathering process, including work with writers groups in each community and meetings with storytellers. Work with Margaret Baldwin.

### April 2

*Celeste Miller and Philip Aaberg.*

*Community people from Choteau*

**Choteau Performing Arts League,**

**Choteau**

Performance of *Big Sky Spinning*; performance of *The Choteau Stories* by community people.

### April 3-8

*Celeste Miller and Philip Aaberg*

**Helena Presents, Helena**

Continued work on *Big Sky Spinning*, with performances on April 7 & 8.

### April 10-16

*Margaret Baldwin*

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,**

**Glasgow, Malta, Sidney**

Preparation with work groups in each community for local stories included in *Big Sky Spinning* performance; drama workshops in four rural schools.

# Calendar of Events



## April 17-20

*Celeste Miller and Philip Aaberg.*  
*Community people from Glasgow,*  
*Malta and Sidney.*

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,**  
**Glasgow, Malta, Sidney**

Performances of *Big Sky Spinning* in each town; performance of local stories by community people.

## May/June

*Steve Kent and local project*  
*participants.*

**Helena Presents, Helena**  
**and ASUM Programming,**  
**University of Montana, Missoula**

Premiere of Montana Gay and Lesbian Story Project piece at Montana Gay Pride Festival, June 10, Missoula, fol-

lowed by tour to other Montana cities.

## May-August

*Margaret Baldwin and Kathleen*  
*Crichton*

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,**  
**Glasgow, Malta, Sidney**

Continued work on final play writing and song writing, working with communities and participants in the community performances.

## May-August

**Choteau Performing Arts League,**  
**Choteau**

Reconsider the community performance and the stories, collect more stories if needed, work on scripting of stories again.

## August-October

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,**  
**Glasgow, Malta, Sidney**  
**Choteau Performing Arts League,**  
**Choteau**

Casting and rehearsals of workshop performances. Performances in each town. Community response to play.

## November

**Fort Peck Fine Arts Council,**  
**Glasgow, Malta, Sidney**  
**Choteau Performing Arts League,**  
**Choteau**

The Exchange: Choteau stories tour to Glasgow, Malta and Sidney and perform with Fort Peck play in each town; Fort Peck play tours to Choteau and performs along with the Choteau stories. ☞



*Junebug Productions and Roadside Theater perform their original collaboration Junebug Jack. Left to right are John O'Neal, Kim Cole, Shawn Jackson, Ron Short, and Carl LeBlanc.*  
Photo by Rhonda Simpson.





## American Festival Project

**Appalshop**  
306 Madison Street  
Whitesburg, KY 41858  
ph: 606/633-0108 fax: 606/633-1009

*Director*  
**Caron Atlas**  
*Associate Director*  
**Lina Newhouser**  
*Project Coordinator*  
**Justine Richardson**

## Montana American Festival Project

*Statewide Coordinator*  
**Theresa Holden**  
*Site Liaison*  
**Steve Kent**

## Montana Journal Staff

*Editor*  
**Lina Newhouser**  
*Assistant Editors*  
**Caron Atlas**  
**Nic Paget-Clarke**  
*Graphic Design*  
**Nic Paget-Clarke**  
*American Festival Project*  
*Logo Design*  
**Deborah Payne**  
*Montana Logo Design*  
**Biff Karlyn**

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## Montana American Festival Project

**Alberta Bair Theater**  
P.O. Box 1556  
Billings, MT 59103  
ph: (406) 256-8915  
fax: (406) 256-5060  
*contact: John Vogt*

**ASUM Programming**  
**University of Montana**  
UC 104  
Missoula, MT 59812  
ph: (406) 243-6661  
fax: (406) 243-4905  
*contact: Tom Webster*

## Fort Peck Fine Arts Council

P.O. Box 973  
Glasgow, MT 59230  
ph: (406) 228-9208  
*contact: Sharon LaBonty*

**Helena Presents**  
15 North Ewing  
Helena, MT 59601  
ph: (406) 443-0287  
fax: (406) 443-6620  
*contact: Arnie Malina*

**Montana Indian**  
**Contemporary Arts (MICA)**  
P.O. Box 6157  
Bozeman, MT 59771  
ph: (406) 586-1441  
*contact: Susan Stewart*

**Montana Performing Arts**  
**Consortium**  
P.O. Box 1872  
Bozeman, MT 59771  
ph: (406) 585-9551  
fax: (406) 585-0468  
*contact: John Barsness*

**Northern Showcase**  
**Montana State**  
**University/Northern**  
P.O. Box 7751  
Havre, MT 59501  
ph: (406) 265-3700  
fax: (406) 265-3777  
*contact: Cheryl Lee, Coordinator*

**Performing Arts League**  
P.O. Box 521  
Choteau, MT 59422  
ph: (406) 466-2857  
fax: (406) 466-2857  
*contact: Ralph Paulus, Vice-President*

**Alexandra Swaney**  
Box 71  
Jefferson City, MT 59638  
ph: (406) 933-5339

## Local Project Facilitators

### Fort Peck Area

**Sharon LaBonty** (*Glasgow*)  
ph: (406) 228-9208

**Terry Lodmell** (*Malta*)  
ph: (406) 654-1407

**Jill Degn** (*Sidney*)  
ph: (406) 482-4223

**Candy Markwald** (*Sidney*)  
ph: (406) 482-4155

## Gay & Lesbian

### Story Project contacts

**Lillian Michalsky**  
*Statewide Coordinator (Helena)*  
ph: (406) 227-5348

**David Gay** (*Bozeman*)

**Shaun Phoenix** (*Bozeman*)

**David Herrera** (*Billings*)

**Frank Klin** (*Missoula*)



