

# T.A.I.

Traditional Arts Indiana



Fall 2010

# Letter from the Director

Dear TAI Supporters,

Community is a primary focus for Traditional Arts Indiana. This special issue of our TAI magazine centers on various communities around our state. From the small town of Pekin, which boasts of the oldest continual Fourth of July celebration in the United States, to the growing refugee community from Burma that continues to celebrate Chin National Day in Indianapolis, traditional arts are used to unite communities and celebrate a shared heritage. Communities can grow out of geographic boundaries, religious beliefs, ethnic identity, occupational skills and/or special interests. As you read this issue, think about the groups represented and how music, crafts, stories, foods and other traditional arts are powerful tools for strengthening relationships and building communities.



TAI is staying active this fall conducting fieldwork, assisting in public programs and developing exhibitions for our Rotating Exhibit Network. We are always looking for Indiana traditions to document and trying to find ways to reach underserved communities. If you know of a community tradition or tradition bearer who TAI should know about, please contact us.

Looking to the Future,



Jon Kay, Director, Traditional Art Indiana

## Meet Our New Staff



### **Anna Batcheller** (Communications and Community Outreach Coordinator)

Anna is studying folklore/ethnomusicology and journalism at IU, focusing on photography, multimedia and issues of representation. She has freelanced and worked for newspapers, newsletters, magazines and folklore organizations.



### **Kara Bayless\*** (Digital Communications Coordinator)

Kara is a M.A. /M.L.S. student in folklore and library science. She researches the uses of folklore in elementary education, Russian fairy tales, Baba Yaga, and Ukrainian/Russian embroidery and material culture.



### **Suzanne Godby Ingalsbe** (Rotating Exhibit Network Coordinator)

Suzanne is a Ph.D. candidate in folklore with a minor in museum studies. She researches sacred spaces, material culture and issues of display, and focuses her public sector work in museums and folklore organizations.



### **James O'Dea** (Intern)

James is a senior majoring in anthropology with a certificate in African Studies and a minor in Bamana. He is working on the podcast series *A Second Serving*.



### **Kate Schramm** (Rotating Exhibit Network Coordinator)

Kate is a Ph.D. student in folklore. She researches community ritual and festival, the supernatural and issues of identity. She spent the past year surveying Japanese traditional artists in Indiana, both within and outside of the Japanese-speaking community.

### **Work-study students**

Chad Buterbaugh, Aaron Comforty, Hannah Davis, Chris Jacob, Perry McAninch, Sebastian Ramirez and Luke Zimmer

\* Just before this publication went to press, we received the shocking and sad news that our friend and co-worker Kara Bayless passed away. She will be greatly missed by the entire staff and friends of Traditional Arts Indiana.



This fall, TAI is working diligently on increasing our presence on the web. Catch us tweeting short updates about programs and events at [twitter.com](http://twitter.com) (“TradArtsIN” and “folktraditions”). “Like” us on Facebook ([facebook.com](http://facebook.com)) to receive up-to-date information about what’s going on at TAI and to share your favorite local traditions, stories and memories.

Also be on the lookout at [traditionalartsindiana.org](http://traditionalartsindiana.org) for a new website with a fresh, updated interface, useful resources, and information on our current programs and upcoming events. Learn about a recent survey conducted in Steuben County on [folktraditions.com](http://folktraditions.com), with artists such as apple grower Gary Stroh, chainsaw carver Scott Lepley, gourd artist Cassandra Chorpenning, and folk and bluegrass musician John Getz.



**Maple Syrup Festival**  
Ferdinand, Maple Spring  
Steuben, Washington County  
**19th Maple Syrup Festival**  
Leane and Michael Goering have been making pure maple syrup since 1961. They estimate that they have made over 13,000 gallons of pure maple syrup since then, and they continue to make more and more each year. In 1991, Leane and Mike organized the first Maple Syrup Festival on their farm to share and celebrate their tradition with the community. At the Maple Syrup Festival, festival-goers enjoy not only the sweet taste of maple syrup smothered pancakes and maple candies, but are also able to tour the sugarbush to see where and how maple syrup is made today, view historic reenactments of how pioneers and Native Americans boiled down maple sap into syrup, as well as enjoy



**Elmer Schlenker**  
Macedon, Ellettsburgh  
Milburn, Harrison County  
**Traditional ways in modern times**  
Elmer works with most of the same broom-making equipment that his father used. However, he doesn't grow his own broom-corn anymore, but orders it and other materials from a large broom-making factory that exports the sort of traditional baskets, by selling them small quantities of wire, string, staples and other supplies. His father always placed a label on each of his brooms, which looked like a broom maker's coat of arms, but today Elmer cuts rural pictures out of Country Magazine to label his ready-made brooms. If he makes a broom for a farmer or a local business, he will sometimes print a label on his computer with a picture of local landmarks.

## TAI Newsletter Credits

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# Indiana State Fair

## Main Street Stage

TAI hosted a day of bluegrass performances on the Main Street Stage on Thursday, August 19. This year the Not Too Bad Bluegrass Band (NTB3) and the Reel Tyme String Band performed two lively sets each to a tent filled with appreciative audience members of all ages. Many listeners took advantage of the opportunity to chat with band members and TAI staff between sets.

NTB3, whose members hail from three southern Indiana counties, gave the audience a preview of their October 2010 performance in Washington D.C. when Doug Harden (mandolin), Brian Lappin (banjo), Greg Norman (bass), Brady Stogdill (guitar), and Kent Todd (fiddle) will perform at the Library of Congress and the Kennedy Center. Brown County's Reel Tyme String Band, including members Dan Harden (banjo), Chris Bryan (guitar), Rick Hedrick (guitar), Brandon Lee (mandolin and guitar), and Loretta Vinson (bass and vocals), shared tracks from their new CD, *Lonesome Town*. Both bands served as great ambassadors for Indiana's bluegrass tradition, sharing the music with long-time fans and first-time listeners alike.



## State Fair Masters: Drake Purebred Farms



Wayne and Helen Drake have been involved in hog breeding and showing at the state fair for four decades. Wayne says the people are most meaningful to him, and he tells stories of fellow farmers he has known for years, tricks learned from the "old-timers," and the respect he has for the truly great breeders.





## Fiddle Contest

Fiddlers and fiddle enthusiasts braved the August heat to participate in this year's Traditional Arts Indiana Fiddle Contest. Each contestant performed three selections (a waltz, a hoedown and a third piece of the contestant's choosing) within a time limit of five minutes. This year's performers favored a bluegrass playing style, but also included swing, Celtic, and novelty tunes in their repertoires.

*Connor McCracken* (Fredericksburg, IN) took first place in the 11 & Under Division.

*Cole McCracken* (Fredericksburg, IN) won first place in the 12—17 Division.

*Doug Fleener* (Leitchfield, KY) took first place in the 18—59 Division.

*Ed Cosner, Sr.* (Portage, IN) won first place in the 60 & Above Division.

*Harold Klosterkemper* also won the Special Old Time Fiddling Award, a prize given to a player who exhibits mastery of a non-bluegrass “old time” aesthetic.

To close out the event, winners gave encore performances, and each of the three judges (Carolyn Dutton, Bradley Leftwich and Kent Todd) played a selection. Afterwards, participants wrapped up their jam sessions, put away their instruments and collected their ribbons, many expecting to see each other again at next year's contest.



Photos: Jon Kay and Joseph O'Connell





# “The Feeling of the Rope”

During the 2009–2010 academic year I was privileged to join TAI as an intern documenting traditional Japanese artists in Indiana. This grew from my own interest in Japanese folklore, nurtured by four years of living and teaching in Japan. I interviewed people closely connected to Japanese traditions and others who have become part of global networks of art enthusiasts.

I filled memory cards with pictures and video, documenting creativity and continuity in action. In Japanese and English (and often some mixture of the two!) I enjoyed conversations over snacks, meals and tea. At times, the interviews had an almost preternatural ease, with the answers to my unspoken questions coming before I even had to ask them. At other times, the stories that people told me when the recorder wasn't running were the ones that opened my eyes to the rich and nuanced history that these groups often share.

As folklorists, we know that communities and traditions are linked and sustain each other. Conversely, we focus less on idiosyncratic practices, skills or talents—no matter how gorgeously executed—that do not in some way reflect a connection to local community values and taste. This is a hard call to make, but we try to let community members inform us about what best reflects their values and identities.

I am deeply grateful to everyone who welcomed me into their meetings, practice spaces, identities and lives while I conducted these interviews. The facets of community that these artists have shared with me are best demonstrated by sharing their words and work with you.



**Kate Schramm**

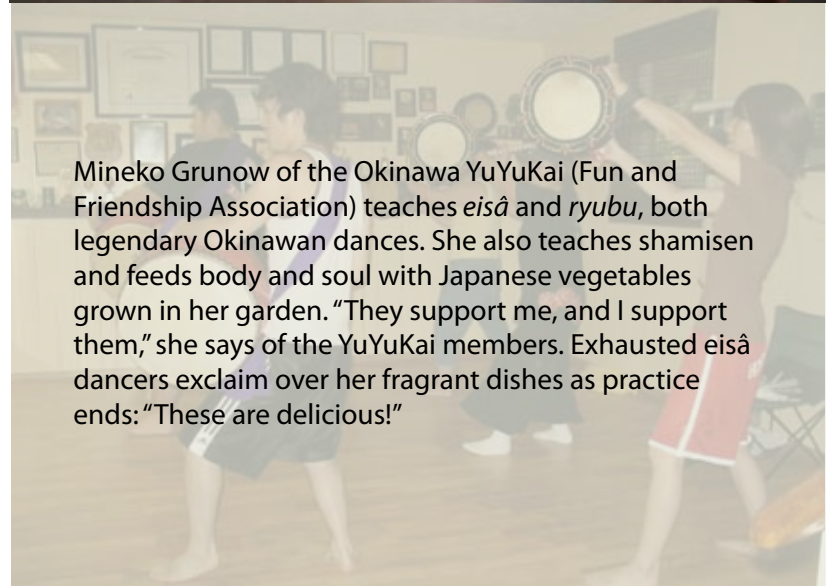
*Kamishibai* (Japanese paper theatre) performer Dorothy Kittaka exemplifies her commitment to the educational community as she works to inspire learning through creativity: “What I am doing, and I’m not doing this for money or anything, it’s just because I love doing it.”

For others, like the Indianapolis Minyo Dancers, Incorporated, that commitment can be seen in their weekly dedication to hours of practicing beautiful and subtle dance routines under the good-humored instruction of Toshiko Buck. Their founding members have been dancing since 1976, and their busy performance schedule stems from their concern with opening a gateway of cultural understanding between Japan and the U.S.



Photos: Kate Schramm and Greg Whitaker

Mineko Grunow of the Okinawa YuYuKai (Fun and Friendship Association) teaches *eisâ* and *ryubu*, both legendary Okinawan dances. She also teaches shamisen and feeds body and soul with Japanese vegetables grown in her garden. “They support me, and I support them,” she says of the YuYuKai members. Exhausted *eisâ* dancers exclaim over her fragrant dishes as practice ends: “These are delicious!”





# Reflections on Community



"It goes back to connections," explain Jay Zimmerman and Dean Houser, instructors of Bujinkan martial arts. "Hatsumi-sensei [the leader of the Bujinkan in Japan] is actually always talking about this *nawa no kankaku*, the feeling of the rope. He's always talking about the things you're connected to. With our dojo, the point is always trying to pass the teaching along, as pure as you can. That's why we go back to Japan, so we can stay as closely connected to the source as possible."

Another aspect of community can be found in the mutual support among members. At the monthly meetings of the Indiana Regional Origami Network of Folders (IRON Folders), folders ranging from novice to expert work side by side, defusing the frustration of coming up against formidable techniques. Denise Walker, maker of all-paper floral bouquets, remarked, "I've advanced so much more from these folks teaching me things."



The senses of continuity, creativity, and commitment linking space and time, Japanese and American, teacher and student, interest and passion, art and life really came together as they explained the Bujinkan leader's perspective: "All art is the same." It requires commitment, creativity and attention to others. Zimmerman elaborates, "If you study only for you, you will always stop. You have to study for the people who came before us and after us and right now."



# Independence Day



Above: The Spirit of '76 Band: Shawn Hubbard, Troy Hubbard, Scott Miller and Bill Nevels. Right: Spirit of '76 Band fifer Dean Weller displays a sign used by the band's original members. Background below: A rider on the "Treasure Chest" float tosses stuffed animals to parade watchers. (Photos: Joseph O'Connell)



When I tell people that I am from Pekin, Indiana, they rarely recognize the name. It falls to me to locate and explain the place—a difficult task to do well. One customary way of identifying Pekin is by its Independence Day festivities. The town officially boasts the oldest consecutive 4th of July celebration, dating its event to 1830. Today, the celebration and its centerpiece parade remain important public occasions, grounding senses of local community and cultural tradition in shared experience. Watching the parade in 2010, I tried to remember what it was like to be in the procession with my little league baseball team. This year, I returned to the parade in a new capacity. As part of my survey of Washington County, I conducted interviews with celebration participants on topics that ranged from competitive horseshoe pitching to stunt car driving. In the following excerpt, drummer Scott Miller discusses his early introduction to the Spirit of '76 Band, a marching fife and drum ensemble started in the 1950s that Miller has helped continue through the present.

“On the 4th of July sometimes my grandfather would bring me down to the celebration before the parade. He was the type of person who pretty much knew everyone around—one of those outgoing types. One of his good friends was the late Frank Neil, who played drums with the old Spirit of '76 Band. That's the old band that rode through the parade in a pickup truck. He'd bring me up and introduce me to the guys, and I thought that was so great. I looked at that and I thought, that's just it right there, I'd like to do that some day. I don't know what it takes to get there but I'm going to try some day. When they'd break into a song after Granddad got done talking to them it just chilled me. It really would set off that certain something in me that gave me the desire to try.”

*Joseph O'Connell*

**Joseph O'Connell**





Above right: A procession of tractors passes under the parade banner. Top left: A sign on Highway 60 alerts passers-by to Pekin's historic independence celebration. Bottom left: The local Eastern High School football team rides in this year's parade along with their Musketeer mascot. Right: Mike Schocke, a repeat champion of the Pekin 4th of July Celebration horseshoe pitching tournament, poses with some of his memorabilia. (Photos: Joseph O'Connell)



## Give to Traditional Arts Indiana

I would like to give to Traditional Arts Indiana. I understand that my donation will support the service and development of TAI and its work to identify, document and present Indiana's folk and traditional arts.

Friend (\$25+)  Patron (\$100+)  Supporter (\$500+)  Sustainer (\$1,000+)  Steward (\$5,000+)

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to Traditional Arts Indiana. All contributions to TAI are tax deductible.

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**TAI, 504 N. Fess Ave, Bloomington, IN 47408** or call us at **812-855-0418**.

All donors will receive a complimentary copy of the 2010 State Fair Masters DVD.





# Not Too Bad Bluegrass Band: Washington, D.C.



**On October 13,** The Not Too Bad Bluegrass Band performed as part of the American Folklife Center's 2010 Homegrown Concert series in Washington, D.C. Traditional Arts Indiana recommended the band to the Library of Congress as an example of a dynamic community of bluegrass musicians shaped by the legacy of Bill Monroe and the festival he founded in Brown County, Indiana. Formed when a group of top local musicians started a weekly jam session in 1987, NTB<sub>3</sub> continues to play at several venues and festivals throughout southern Indiana and beyond. On this trip they performed for a large audience at the Library of Congress before moving on to their concert at the Kennedy Center, where they played for a standing-room only crowd.

NTB<sub>3</sub> members came to bluegrass through various routes. Doug Harden grew up near Bean Blossom in a musically-inclined family, playing mandolin and listening to musicians at the Bean Blossom Jamboree. Brian Lappin migrated toward bluegrass from listening to the folk bands of the '60s. Bass player Greg Norman has also played since his youth, getting hooked on bluegrass when his father took him to the popular bluegrass jam at the Norman Conservation Club (NCC).

At age ten, Brady Stogdill tried to trick his father into teaching him guitar so he could play rock music. But after meeting Greg at the NCC jam, Brady became dedicated to playing bluegrass and forgot all about rock 'n' roll. It was also at the NCC jam that Brady met Kent Todd, a talented fiddler, singer and guitarist who switched to bluegrass fiddle from classical violin.

In addition to the band, many family and friends accompanied the group on their tour of the Capitol. NTB<sub>3</sub> exceeded everyone's expectations in Washington D.C., and Traditional Arts Indiana was happy to be a co-sponsor of their trip. For links to their D.C. performances, please visit [www.traditionalartsindiana.org](http://www.traditionalartsindiana.org).



From left to right: Jon Kay and the Not Too Bad Bluegrass Band: Kent Todd, Brady Stogdill, Greg Norman, Doug Harden, Brian Lappin (Photos: Jon Kay)





# Coffins & Caskets: Shipshewana, IN

*In late September in Shipshewana, IN, Jon Kay interviewed LaVern Miller, a coffin maker for the Amish families in that community. Below is an excerpt from their interview, where Miller talks about learning his craft and the importance of holding to this community tradition.*

J: So, LaVern, how did you get started making caskets again?

L: Well, back when I was 15, a local casket/furniture maker was looking for an apprentice, basically for the business. I happened to enjoy woodworking and started working for him for \$1.75 an hour. So, it just kind of grew from there.

J: Who all do you make caskets for?

L: Mostly, directly for the families in the surrounding area, the Amish community. Probably 90 percent of our sales are directly with families that are in need of a casket. The rest would be directly to the funeral homes. But, mostly to the families.

J: What is distinctly different about the way that caskets are made for the Amish community?

L: Well, the Amish casket is really a coffin, which means it has six sides. The funeral directors call them toe-pinchers, because they're narrow on the head end and the foot end. Your traditional casket is a rectangular box. That's the difference between a casket and a coffin. A coffin is a six-sided box.

J: And is that just a local preference or tradition?

L: That's a tradition. I really don't know when that style started, but Jonathan is the guy that made the caskets before I did, and it's been handed down. I don't know how many hands it's been through until it reached my point, but that's basically the same style that's



been used ever since the Amish were in the area.

J: What's the future of this? Do you have an apprentice of your own in sight?

L: Well, my two sons are working for me. The oldest one takes a pretty good interest in it, but the youngest one would rather be out in the fields somewhere. But, yeah, he will probably continue this tradition.

J: You use that word 'tradition' quite a bit. How is that important to you?

L: Well, it's important. Now, take the style of casket, the coffin, for the Amish community. It's important to me to keep that style. I call that a tradition. It's important

for me to keep that style. Now, we have made some slight changes in measurements only, but the actual design has remained the same. And that's important for me that it remains that way after I leave.

