

SKETCHES IN THE SAND



One of the pleasures of being editor of this journal is that I enjoy a great deal of interaction with people and I have free rein in this column. I am pleased that this time there is an especially joyous event about which to write.

I am happy to extend on my behalf and that of the Editorial Board and the membership of the Society of Ethnobiology CONGRATULATIONS and wishes that are at once sincere and almost estatic over the welcome news of an honorary doctoral degree awarded this spring by The University of British Columbia, Canada, to Margaret Siwallace. Dr. Siwallace has been acknowledged in several papers published by the *Journal* and many will remember her presentation on *ooligan* grease at the Seventh Annual Ethnobiology Conference in Seattle (April, 1984).

It is gratifying to see that at least one institution of higher learning recognizes and acknowledges—so it would seem—that folk knowledge is a valuable human resource as well as being fascinating in its own right and having its own wisdom and insights. Formal recognition of Margaret Siwallace's talents, skills, devotion, and contributions to academic scholarship through work with ethnographers and ethnobiologists is both richly deserved and long overdue. I commend the scholars of the Pacific Southwest of Canada who undoubtedly nominated her for this great honor and The University of British Columbia for making the award.

It is heartwarming to note in recent years (it's about time) a shift in attitude and regard of academicians toward those wonderful fellow humans—the possessors of folk knowledge who are at once our teachers (teaching us humility, patience, and other qualities we didn't ask about), our students (learning from us qualities that, in some instances, they might better be without), our friends, and our guides. Ethnographers and especially ethnobiologists now often refer to those with whom we have such a relationship as native consultants (rather than as informants, a term prevalent in the older literature). And occasionally some of these folk teachers now participate in ethnobiological conferences as they did at the Third Annual Ethnobiology Conference in Tucson (1980) and at the ethnobiology symposium sponsored by the Congresso Brasileiro de Zoologia in Brazil last year.

Although many are mentioned in dissertations and published works, there are nonetheless others who share their folk knowledge who remain unacknowledged by the academic world. In some cases this is by choice, in others there is no easy or natural way by which acknowledgement can be made. I know of several Native North and South Americans, for example, who, from time to time, show urban school children their gardening and agricultural methods or who give demonstrations and receive little recognition for this sharing of themselves.

I feel certain that Dr. Siwallace would be delighted for the *Journal* and the Society of Ethnobiology to recognize all those who live close to tradition, Nature, and the Soil (e.g. many Native Americans, rural folks of the Appalachian and Ozark Mountains or people of Mexican heritage in the American Southwest), both in and out of embodiment, who have been or are our co-servers, co-workers and "folk colleagues" in ethnobiology. We thank each of you wherever you may be.

W.V.