

Call for Participation

by Peggy Bulger and Ann Hoog

September 11, 2001 Documentary Project

Attention all Folklorists, Oral Historians, and other cultural fieldworkers:

The date of September 11, 2001, will be remembered by us all forever. At a time of national crisis and mourning, one wonders what positive action should or could be taken? As folklorists, what might we contribute to the future?

On December 8, 1941, Alan Lomax (then in charge of the Library of Congress's, Archive of Folk Song) sent an urgent message to fieldworkers all around the country to collect "person on the street" reactions to the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the declaration of war by the United States. Among those fieldworkers who responded were Bob Allen, Fletcher Collins, John Henry Faulk, Lewis Jones, Vance Randolph, and Robert Sonkin. Recordings were made in all parts of the United States in which people expressed their immediate reactions to the attack on Pearl Harbor and the U.S. declaration of war. Interviews were conducted with shoemakers, electricians, janitors, oilmen, cab drivers, housewives, students, soldiers, and physicians.

People of many ethnic groups and ages are represented in these interviews, expressing their opinions on the political, social, financial, and military aspects of the United States involvement in the war.

These field recordings were sent to the Library of Congress where they were made into a series of radio programs and distributed to schools and radio stations. The radio programs and field interviews are still housed in the Archive of Folk Culture at the American Folklife Center, where they comprise an invaluable aural resource and are part of our American legacy. The Center has continued to make these unique recordings available to researchers and media producers (most recently by Sound Portrait's American Talkers series for National Public Radio).



"Remember the Lost," a poster on the wall at Arlington National Cemetery. Photo by James Hardin, September 19, 2001.

The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress is interested in partnering with folklorists and other cultural specialists throughout the nation to provide a similar service today. We call for all of those who are interested in participating to use their training in a positive way during this time of national crisis and mourning. We ask you to document the immediate reactions of average Americans in your own communities to the September eleventh terrorist attack and to what many have called "an act of war." What were they doing when they heard? How have their lives been changed? We are asking those who are interested to document these reactions on audio tape (all formats accepted).

These interviews will be deposited in the Center's Archive of Folk Culture, where they will be preserved for and made available to future generations. Time is of the essence. If you need release forms or have any questions please contact the American Folklife Center: (202) 707-5510; folklife@loc.gov . Thank you in advance for all those who will participate.

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