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THE PACIFIC NW FOLKLORE SOCIETY PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE by Stewart Hendrickson

This is a reflection on what we have done in past years, how we have evolved in ways that we never expected, what we are doing now, and what we plan for the future. It is also a call for others to become involved and eventually take over this project that we began. We need YOU!

The Pacific Northwest Folklore Society was founded by [Walt Robertson](#) and friends in 1953 in the University District of Seattle. But that's history – [you can read about that](#) on our web site. In 2007 Bob Nelson in Everett, a founding member of the PNWFS in 1953, and I in Seattle decided to revive the Society, with a desire to promote the more traditional music and folklore of our region through concerts and other activities with local folk musicians. No one else seemed to be doing that, and we thought it was a worthwhile thing to do.

Our first two events were house concerts with [Bob Nelson](#) in April and [Jed Marum](#) in June of 2007. Then a [reunion concert](#) in October with Bob Nelson and [Don Firth](#) – they had played together since the mid 1950s in Seattle – and two more house concerts, [Jeff Warner](#) in October and [The VanNorstrands](#) in November, 2007.

In March 2008 we began a series of monthly, 2nd Friday Coffeehouse Concerts – still going strong – a few house concerts, and later, occasional series of Sunday afternoon free concerts in cooperation with the [Everett Public Library](#). Concerts at our current venue, [Couth Buzzard Books](#), began in May, 2010.

During these years we've hosted some great folksingers from out of town – [Jeff Warner](#), [Jed Marum](#), [Brian Peters](#), [Kate Power & Steve Einhorn](#), [Steve Gillette & Cindy Mangsen](#), [Curtis & Loretta](#), [Debra Cowan](#), [Small Potatoes](#), [Claudia Schmidt](#), and others – as well as local folks – [Alice Stuart](#), the [Canote Brothers](#), [Ginny Riley](#), [Pint & Dale](#), [Tania Opland & Mike Freeman](#), [Squirrel Butter](#), [Kate MacLeod & Kat Eggleston](#), and [many, many others](#).

We've collected and posted over 55 [Pacific NW songs](#) with lyrics, audio recordings and videos, lots of [historical information](#) about PNW folklore, and an [events page](#) on our web site. And we also have this bimonthly e-zine, the NW HOOT, with interesting articles, CD reviews, and information about upcoming concerts.

All of this is done on a minimal budget. At most of our concerts we ask for a \$10

donation (all the money goes to the musicians). What we do is a labor of love. We have no committees, membership dues, fund drives, etc., but we do accept donations to keep this going. This is about Pacific Northwest Folklore, preserving and promoting the folk music and rich folk history of this region. And it's all about the music.

The past two months, April and May, have been particularly busy, with a nationally-recognized folk artist, Claudia Schmidt; three fantastic local musicians, Grant Dermody, Mark Graham and Orville Johnson in a concert co-sponsored with the Couth Buzzard; a touring musical duo from California, Dan Frechette & Laurel Thomsen, in addition to our usual 2nd Friday Coffeehouse Concerts and two free Sunday concerts at the Everett Public Library with local and regional musicians. We didn't plan all this far in advance, it just happened and we took advantage of the opportunities to bring more good music to the community. We were overstressed, to put it mildly, but it all worked out well.

Now we need to get back to a more sane and relaxed concert schedule in June and July. In August we will take a break with no concerts, and resume the regular concert schedule in September. We will have two free Sunday concerts at the Everett Public Library in September and November.

In addition to our regular concerts, we are in the process of starting a monthly 2nd Saturday (noon – 1 pm) Community Sing at the Couth Buzzard. This began with a Group Singing Workshop in May and will continue with monthly Sings beginning in June. These will emphasize the traditional and old songs in a song-leader and song-learning format.

And we need to think of the future and about who's going to carry this on when we can't do it any more. We'd like to have some younger folks involved, grow the tradition – not just be a museum of what was – and include more genres of music, but still keep this a grass-roots, low-budget organization. We need new ideas.

We could use some help. Setting up for a concert is no big deal – the coffeehouse has it mostly set up and we don't need a sound system. But we could use someone with good ideas about concert promotion and social media, and help with booking. We also need people to write articles for the NW HOOT. But above all, we need people committed to Pacific Northwest folk music and folklore to carry on this organization in future years. We need new ideas on how to create community in folk music. Where are you? – we need YOU!

We need some feedback and encouragement that what we've been doing is appreciated and worthwhile. Don't be shy, [let us know what you think](#) . Are we doing the right things, are there other things we might do, what would you like us to do? [Talk to me](#) about this over a cup of coffee at [Couth Buzzard Espresso Buono Cafe](#).

[Stewart Hendrickson](#)