

March 30, 1992

Art Thieme
Peru, IL 61354
P.O. Box 117

Dear Mr. Thieme:

Last Saturday night in Amherst we enjoyed your picking, plucking, bowing, humor retailing, and singing no end. I appreciate the fact you would sojourn up out of Illinois to Wisconsin and help us out here.

I spoke to you about the folk songs you had collected on the Kennedy assassination and expressed an interest in obtaining a copy of any you had recorded. You suggested I might write you and you would see if you could give me a reference to some you had recorded. At the same time you noted you had 200 songs in a manuscript slated to be deposited in the National ARchives folk song division.

I would deeply appreciate any references you could give to the recorded songs and would especially appreciate obtaining the words to the song you sang that your rope ladder climbing, crawling friend wrote.

In the few words we exchanged I noted that Hood College in Frederick Maryland is assembling a major collection of manuscripts on the assassination of President Kennedy, with special rooms and up to date research tools. This ought to have close to 400,000-500,000 pages of material, plus tapes, and other materials assembled by those who have fought the official story of a lone nut assassin these many years. If you could feel your way clear to depositing a copy of the folk songs there you would find that over the many years they will be given much considered attention by the individuals who are going to use this major collection.

Contact: Professor Jerry McKnight
JFK Collection
Hood College
Frederick, MD 21701

If you would not be offended I would also observe that they teach geography a little bit strangely down in Illinois. You said you were from Peru and that it was near Peoria and LaSalle. Up here we teach it differently, placing it twixt Bolivia and Ecuador. But it is a free country and no body can impose geographical knowledge on any body else; it makes America great.

You mentioned Iowa songs. I do not know if this is a good song or not, but we sang it at home on the playgrounds. I sort of suspect some folks from central Illinois where I am originally had a bad experience of some kind there years ago. The last line you sing in a louder voice than the rest.

Ioway, Ioway
Land where the tall corn grows.

Ioway, Ioway
Land where the tall corn grows.

Ioway, Stayaway
Its the land where the tall corn grows.

Perhaps you did not notice that the Amherst area is packed full of people who are remnants of the 60s generation. Several of them scattered through the hollows and hills, tucked away in farms, have interesting pasts. I do not think Tom Pease mentioned all of them, if any, to you, for they make up an unusual group of Americana Extraordinaire, as we say in Wisconsin. Some are research chemists, others lawyers, some accomplished artists, folk medicine specialists, fine craftsmen and women in wood, guitar singers writers, and what not. I could tell you many wonderful stories about their talents and philosophies, but one story must do to give you a sample of this place's inhabitants.

This was told to me by a philosophy professor from here at the University who one day stopped by my table at the coffee shop to tell me what had happened. He traveled out in the county roads to see the land. He noticed that as he drove slowly past one farm the chickens were in the road running alongside his car. He was going 15 miles an hour. He pumped some more gas into his motor and went up to 40-45 miles an hour and looked down and saw the chickens were running right alongside him! Then, he looked carefully and saw they had three legs. Amazing.

He looked up the farm owner and discovered he and his wife were formerly genetic researchers in a large university who had taken up the simple life around Amherst. (You probably met them last Saturday.) Asked why the three legged chickens the farmer replied he and the Mrs like chicken legs, so they had decided to improve upon "the fowl supreme." There is the result. The professor asked: "How do they taste?"

The farmer replied, "Well we don't know, we haven't been able to catch 'em yet."

Sincerely

David R. Wrone
History Department
UWSP
Stevens Point, WI
54481