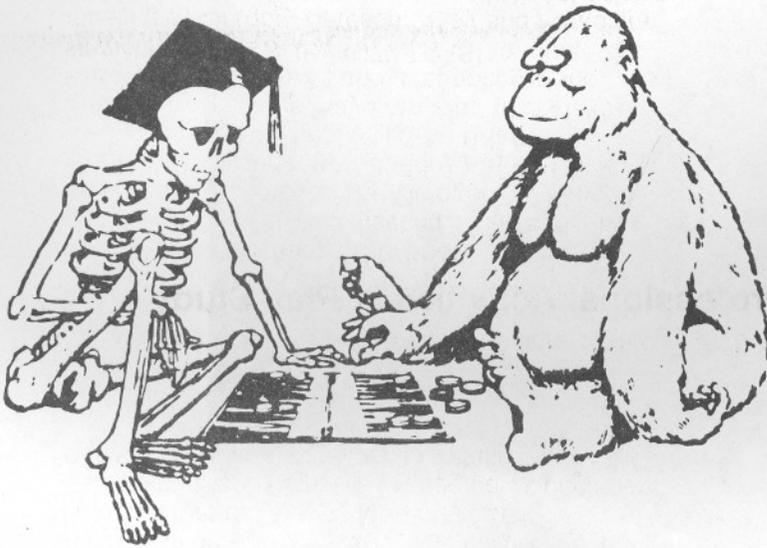


TASP NEWSLETTER

THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF PLAY

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TASP News Briefs

1988 Meeting

The annual meeting of TASP for 1988 will be held in conjunction with the California Folklore Society, April 21-24 at the Marina Marriott in Berkeley, California. Please see the full page announcement in this issue -- you may want to detach it and post it.

Play & Culture

Editor Garry Chick reports that preparations for the first issue of *Play and Culture* are proceeding well. Four articles have been scheduled for publication in the first issue: Richard Schechner's keynote address at the Montreal meeting, "Play and the Performative Genres"; "The Ontogeny of Play," by Raymond Coppinger and Charles Kay Smith; a sure-to-be controversial article by Brian Sutton-Smith, "Does Play With War Toys Make Children Aggressive?"; and a reprinting of the keynote address to the 1977 TAASP annual meeting by Gregory Bateson, "Play and Paradigm." Chick expects to have one or two additional articles and a couple of book reviews, as well. He reports that manuscripts will receive prompt review and can be published without delay.

Three new members have been added to the editorial board. James Johnson will serve as book review editor, while Phillips Stevens and Frank Salamone have joined the board of reviewers.

New Subscription and Dues Policy

Remember that to coincide with the publication of the new journal, TASP membership will be on a calendar year basis beginning in 1988. Garry Chick will be sending membership renewal notices in October. Dues for individual members will be \$35, which includes a subscription to the quarterly journal and the newsletter which will be published three times per year. Institutional subscriptions to *Play & Culture* will be handled through Human Kinetics Press. Institutions may join TASP for \$15 per year, which entitles them to receive the newsletter.

Dr. Play's Quiz #2

Editor's Note: This is the second of what may become a regular series of quizzes related to play subjects, provided by a TASP member known only as Dr. Play, aka Dr. Tyl Dolen.

This is a story of a southwestern United States Indian girl. She was a very special child from the beginning. Not only was she born in the year of the first apple petal, at a very young age she could dance the ceremonial dances and weave miniature baskets. Little Apple Petal Year, (Lapy, as she called herself) also knew the language and the history of her people well before other children.

Great! I love it!

She would often go to a secret place with her friends, where they would drink river water and eat edible plants. There they often shared their dreams and made believe they were someone different. Little Apple Petal Year created an American name for herself one day after eating some mushroom caps; so this is really the story of:

Joan, a high zuni

The "story" leaves many questions unanswered. By finding the meaning of the indian girl's given name, the story's conclusion becomes evident.

PLAY THINGS: Professional Activities in Play Study

Art of Play

TASP member Adam Blatner, Department of Psychiatry, University of Louisville School of Medicine, has co-authored a new book that should be of interest to play scholars. *The Art of Play* by Adam Blatner and Allee Blatner is scheduled for publication by Human Sciences Press in December 1987. The authors use psychodramatic techniques to promote imaginative role playing in adults, for purposes of recreation, therapy, and education. This process would seem to have applications in many fields, including psychotherapy, theater arts, group dynamics, recreation, and education.

PCA/ACA Meetings

The Popular Culture Association and American Culture Associations will hold joint annual meetings March 23-26, 1988 in New Orleans. For information contact Ray B. Browne, Popular Culture Department, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403.

Call For Consultants

The Strategic Planning Committee in Research of the Association for Care of Children's Health is interested in compiling a directory of consultants with expertise in the psychosocial research of children. Consultants should possess skills related to grantsmanship and manuscript preparation. For further information and/or application contact Marion Broome, RN, PhD, at (404) 721-3162 or Astrid Hellier, MSN at (404) 721-2451.

AAHPERD/NAPEHE Meeting

Don Franks, Past President of the Research Consortium of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and Janet Harris, Vice President for Projects and Research for the National Association for Physical Education in Higher Education, will host a meeting in Fort Worth, Texas on September 11-13. The meeting will bring together representatives of a number of organizations involved in the study of sport and exercise to discuss common interests and prospects for cooperative work. TASP has been invited to send a delegate to the conference.

A Tribute to Alyce Cheska

Editor's Note: Alyce Cheska retired from the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Illinois in June 1987. The editor thanks John Loy for his help in providing materials used in this article.

Most of us in academic life lament the relentless demands on our time made by teaching, research, and administrative duties. We then go home and complain about how hard it is to complete one's work, pursue a chosen recreation, and have some time for family and friends. In this context the career of Alyce Taylor Cheska -- athlete, coach, physical educator, athletic administrator, anthropologist, teacher, poet, and painter -- is all the more remarkable. In the course of a career spanning over forty years, she has not only demonstrated incredible energy and diverse talents, she has also been at the forefront of the movement to apply ethnographic methods and anthropological concepts to the study of play and sport. And she has done it all with recognizable style and verve -- almost everyone associated with her over the years has their favorite Alyce Cheska story.

Alyce Cheska's career in higher education, which ultimately resulted in the wedding of the disciplines of anthropology and physical education, has taken a couple of ironic twists. After graduating as valedictorian of her high school class in Duluth, Minnesota in 1939, she was prepared to take a scholarship to study anthropology at the University of Chicago, but her father insisted that she attend the local campus of the University of Minnesota. When she enrolled, she rather flippantly chose physical education as her major, and she graduated in 1943, again ranked number one in her class. The almost serendipitous choice of an undergraduate major had long term consequences, for Alyce remained connected to physical education and athletics in one way or another throughout her career. After spending several years as a public school physical education teacher and church youth director in Minnesota, Alyce became director of the women's physical education department at Whitworth College in Spokane, Washington in 1953, starting the women's program there from scratch. In a recent interview with Illinois sportswriter Loren Tate, she recalled that the facility she inherited there was an empty room with a dirty jockstrap on the floor. From there she moved to Central Washington State University in 1953, to Northern Arizona University in 1959, and to the University of Illinois in 1966, in each case serving as chair of the department of physical education for women, and promoting women's varsity athletics. She also found time to complete an MA degree in educational psychology at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis and an Ed.D in physical education and higher education administration from the University of California at Berkeley. Her administrative service to women's physical education and athletics was prodigious: she has been a member of AAHPER since 1942, and has

served as an officer in the Southwest District, the Northwest District, as Chairperson of the Division for Girls and Women's Sports, and as National Vice President. She has maintained membership and held office in numerous organizations related to physical education, sport history, sport sociology, and sport psychology. Recently, she has served since 1981 as the University of Illinois faculty representative to the Big Ten and the NCAA, the first woman to represent a Big Ten school in such a capacity. Loren Tate dubbed her "one of the foremothers" of women's athletics. And Cheska was carrying on this string of teaching and administrative activities in her own inimitable fashion -- operating a motel to finance her graduate study, becoming a partner in a restaurant in Flagstaff, Arizona, and making well-timed forays to the blackjack tables in Las Vegas.

If "foremother" of women's athletics is appropriate, then clearly "mother of TAASP" is even more so. During her pre-Illinois years, her early interest in anthropology remained dormant, though it was no doubt stimulated by the opportunity to observe games and sports among the American Indian groups of Arizona. But after arriving at Illinois in 1966, Cheska began post-doctoral study in the Anthropology Department in 1969, a practice which she has continued to the present. One should not make the mistake of assuming that this study of anthropology was amateur or avocational in nature; Alyce was named a Fellow of the American Anthropological Association in 1978, and she was designated an Anthropologist in Another Unit from 1977-85 and subsequently an Affiliate Faculty member by the Department of Anthropology at Illinois. In the early 1970's, she was one of a handful of persons applying the study of anthropology to sport and play. In 1973, the same year that Edward Norbeck organized a symposium on sport for the American Anthropological Association meetings, Alyce organized a session on the anthropology of sport for the AAHPERD meetings, and plans were made for the anthropologists and physical educators to get together the following year. This they did in the spring of 1974 at the North American Society of Sport History, and The Association for the Anthropological Study of Play (now TASP) was born. In addition to founding the organization, Alyce has served in almost every conceivable capacity -- as the first editor of the newsletter in 1974-75; as associate editor from 1977-80 and 1981-82; as editor of published proceedings, 1979-81; as program chair for the annual meetings, 1980-81; as president, 1981-82; on the publication committee which laid the groundwork for the publication of the new journal, 1985-87; and as a member of the executive council, 1974-82, and 1985-87. Her efforts on behalf of the organization have been essential to its growth, and her own conception of how anthropological methods and concepts may be applied to the study of play and sport have been at the core of TAASP since its inception. In addition, TASP members have been able to count on Alyce year after year for insightful commentary on their

delivered papers, for a kind smile and sincere inquiry about their health, and for great conversation around the lunch counter, dinner table, or bar.

While Alyce Cheska's organizational and administrative efforts on behalf of TAASP were crucial to its development, her scholarly contributions to the field have also been quite significant. Her dozens of published articles have drawn both on her experience in women's athletics and on her study of anthropology, particularly the study of play and games among North American Indian groups. From her experience in women's athletics she has developed an interest in the analysis of power relations; from her study of Indian cultures an interest in ethnic identity; and from her anthropological training an interest in ritual and symbolism. These themes have been interwoven in her work. Some of her recent articles, published in Quest and The Physical Educator have shown the promise of anthropology to physical educators, while other articles have been aimed at sport sociologists, sport historians, and play scholars. Two recent books promise to be major contributions to the field: The Anthropology of Sport, co-authored with Kendall Blanchard, is the first textbook in its field, and the first book to systematically collect and organize the existing anthropological materials on sport, play, and games. Cheska's most recent work which has just been released, extends her work in anthropology to a new culture area; its title is The Role and Place of Traditional Games and Dances in West African Nations. She has still another book on the anthropology of play under contract, and one suspects that retirement from her teaching duties will result in her publishing at an accelerated rate.

So far, I have touched on the accomplishments of Cheska the teacher, Cheska the administrator, and Cheska the scholar; nothing has been said about Cheska the artist. Yet, this aspect of her life is equally significant. Alyce Cheska has, throughout her life, been creative and expressive. As a young woman she was an accomplished dancer and an outstanding tennis player. She has written, and continues to write, poetry. But her most cherished and accomplished creative form is painting. She has studied painting with the same energy she has applied to anthropology, and for most of the last decade has spent the summer months painting in coastal Nova Scotia. As this article is being prepared, Alyce is completing a one woman show in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. Retirement will allow her to spend at least a few more weeks each summer in Nova Scotia, searching for new scenes to paint and new ways to paint them.

A chronicle of accomplishments such as this hardly does justice to a career as complex and dynamic as that of Alyce Cheska. Those who know her can read between the lines and understand what these accomplishments represent in more personal terms. Those who do not know her should make it a point to get to know her, at the TASP annual meeting if you have no earlier opportunity. Alyce,

the membership of TASP sincerely thanks you and looks forward to your continuing involvement in the years of your "retirement."

Playfully Yours

By Brian Sutton-Smith

Editor's Note: Brian Sutton-Smith has consented to write a semi-regular column for the TASP Newsletter, giving its readers the benefit of his perspective on current activities and issues in the field of play studies. The following is the first of what I hope will be many such contributions from Brian.

On June 8-12 of 1987 I visited the Triennial Meeting of the International Playground Association in Stockholm, Sweden. There were some 30 countries represented in this, the largest of all international play societies. It was founded in Sweden in 1961 and changed its name to the International Association for the Child Rights to Play in 1971. I felt considerable sympathy for this name change because it has become increasingly clear that a number of American Preschools and Elementary Schools have cut out times of free play in order to justify themselves to paying parents or to achievement oriented taxpayers. For my own part, I prefer the notion that we should argue for the child's right to recess, seeing we don't really understand what play is in any profound way (with apologies to my co-members of TASP). My argument would be that if we can give children recess, then they themselves can determine what play means to them. When I heard the addresses in Sweden, however, I began to wonder whether IPA might be unwittingly using the "child's right to play" as a romantic icon to justify their own political and perhaps commercial (building playgrounds) agenda about childhood. It was admittedly a decent human agenda (against child poverty, child abuse, etc.), but was nevertheless a subsumption of the notion of play to these political and commercial ends. For several days I attended a theme session on the topic of Play and Violence, and in this column I would like to report some of the incongruities that I witnessed at that meeting.

The background for this meeting were several resolutions of prior conferences. In 1981 in Rotterdam a similar meeting had proposed "that all possible action should be taken to prevent the increasing commercial exploitation of children's play" and in Ljubjana in Yugoslavia in 1984, another had recommended "that all nations be requested to enact legislation prohibiting the production and sale of war toys."

The sessions began with the President Nic Nilsson pursuing a fairly alarmist path. He was alarmed that the British had dropped their Minister for play; he was alarmed that the Swedish toy firm of Brio had dropped their sponsorship because of earlier remarks he had made; he spoke against the increasing competitiveness of children's play; and he castigated the Dutch firm of Lego for allowing its toys to continue to be produced in South Africa, though the company itself had drawn out. The following day Per Sparre, the Vice President of the European Toy Retailers Association, circulated a response including such statements as:

"The sole reason for the Swedish Toy Industry not to support the IPA-conference were the accusations from Nic Nilsson on the Swedish trade as a whole by calling us pimps, hallicks and lots of other things that do not merit to be repeated."

I was a little confused by all of this, as some of my best friends are probably "hallicks".

Professor Joe Frost of the University of Texas countered Nilsson to some extent by suggesting that the problem was one of education rather than of toy boycotts. But like Nilsson he painted a fairly dismal picture, of an America with its linkage of war toys and war cartoons, its television watching of violent shows, its increase in child-child killings, its suicides, its pregnancies, its alienation, divorces, latch key children and finally its potential for raising a generation of terrorists. In the light of all this he was very much for teaching parents to know that violent war toys and violent TV were both bad. "Most adults don't understand play, in the most trivial sense," he said. "They need to be educated." Although Frost painted such a picture of imminent domestic disaster from war toys and television, Nilsson's alarm had more to do with the Peace Movement, anti-nuclear attitudes and the notion that if we genuinely want to live in peace we can hardly give children war toys. "Even with a lot of imagination," he argued, "It's still just a shooting mechanism."

In contrast to these speakers, Professor Atsushi Kadowaki of Tokyo argued that the cause of the current troubles lies in the families of children who, his evidence showed, had in the past 30 years become increasingly deviant. More and more children hate their parents and hate their classmates. "Japanese society is reaching a stage of extreme alienation," he said. "Family disruption is the core of modern problems, not war toys or television."

Yet another note was taken by Dr. Gisela Wegener-Spohring of George-August University, Göttingen, West Germany. "Should we intervene in children's war play?" she asked. On the contrary. It is important to note that the most violent content of their play is mediated by extremely cooperative interaction. The interaction is what is real; the content is only pretense. She described a variety of entirely peacefully child organized games including such content as: pretense whipping of one bound boy by two others who, when they were joined by girls, combined together to give the prisoner imaginary food. Another group of children played a game of adopting Dracula and his grave into the family, and of sharing a cannibalistic episode in which they ate a mean kid, and then the girl in the family married Dracula. Another pair played their parents were dead and hid themselves in a house threatening to cut the noses off any villains who would invade their place. "There is no purpose in stopping war toys," says Spohring. "It doesn't stop these games. They know they are not approved. When I come to observe they become sly and creative in saying they are doing something else. Aggressive and violent themes are normal in all children's play. We shouldn't mix up our problems with theirs."

Listening to all this I was forced to contrast it with the recent recommendations of Professors Levin and Carlsson Paige of Boston (at an Educators for Social Responsibility Conference in New York in December 1986), who in the light of increased anxiety by teachers and parents about war play in preschools have advocated that teachers take the task of political socialization and enter into their children's war play and ask about Rambo's family. "Who is there when he sits down to dinner?" And, "Wouldn't it be better if he had glue not bullets in his guns so people would not be killed?" Etc., etc.

Playfully, of course, some of us seem to be a little shorter on glue these days than we used to be.