

## Responses . . .

Articles and reviews in *CCL* often stir critical response. Sometimes the response takes the form of a new article (as in Agnes Grant's "A Canadian Fairy Tale: What is It?"). At other times the response comes to us in letter form. We propose to open some of these letter-exchanges to our readers.

### 1) MORE ON MUFFERAW: from *S.D. Neill*

When I reviewed *Tall Tales of Joe Mufferaw*, (*CCL*, issue 18/19, 1980) I complained about Mr. Bedore copyrighting the name Mufferaw, since the name was public property as part of folk history. Mr. Bedore wrote to tell me he had made up all the Mufferaw tales and had chosen the name Mufferaw from several "Joe" names he had heard applied casually to anyone — as we do with Mac or Buddy. He heard none of the tales from anyone. I tend to believe him.

Mr. Bedore also wrote me regarding the copyright notice: "Canada's copyright protection is merely a registration of a title which one can take to court of law to try to prove first ownership. I like to know that people tell the Mufferaw." He asked his publisher to change the copyright notice in the book so that people would not be discouraged from telling the stories. The publisher agreed, but failed to change the notice in *Scotty the Pike*, Bernie Bedore's new book of Ottawa Valley stories. (Toronto, Consolidated Amethyst, 1981. 63 pgs., \$7.50 paper. ISBN 0-920476-20-9.)

Joe Mufferaw stories *did* exist before Bernie Bedore. George Monteiro (1960) quotes from a 1937 publication: "Joe Mufraw . . . drove calks into his boots in the shape of his initials and could kick his mark in a ceiling eight feet high" (p.28). Monteiro also refers to W.B. Laughead's *The Marvelous Exploits of Paul Bunyan* (Minneapolis, 1922 and 1924) where Pete Mufraw ("You know Joe Mufraw?" "Oui, two Joe Mufraw, one named Pete.") starts out to look for Paul Bunyan (Monteiro, p.30). There is also a woodsman's song called "Joe Mufraw" which was published in *The Frontier: A Magazine of the Northwest* (vol.9, 1928, p.28) (O'Connor, 1980) which begins:

*H'I'm a Canadian logger, me name is Fontaine  
Me come from Quebec to the woods of Couer d'Alene  
H'I'm look por me brudder, hees name's Joe Mufraw  
Shees a lousy top-loader dey say down de draw.*

In any case, people are telling Joe Mufferaw tales and making up their own, it seems. A paper by Jeanne S. Pattison, "On the Trail of

Joe Mufferaw" (1974), in the Ontario Folklore Archives, York University, is cited by Jennifer O'Connor (1980). O'Connor notes: "Tales related to Pattison by Mrs. Jean Richter, for example, appear to have been inspired by Bedore; Mrs. Richter noted that she believed she had first learned of Mufferaw through Bernie Bedore. Her tales are unique first-hand experiences with Mufferaw artefacts found in her vicinity" (p.9).

What this means, of course, is that Mr. Bedore has created stories of a legendary lumberman which are so full of the life and the spirit of a past time and told in such a style that they have been accepted as part of a living oral tradition. When Donald McKay wrote his book *The Lumberjacks* (1978) he interviewed men who had worked in the lumbercamps, but when he wrote: "Long before Paul Bunyan and his blue ox Babe there were stories of Joe Montferrand and his mythical pet white moose" (pp.38-39), he did not give a source. It is quite likely he picked up the moose from people telling the Mufferaw stories created by Bedore. In his letter, Bedore writes "I remember deciding that Joe Mufferaw should have a pet, and that pet should be the typical Canadian giant animal, the moose. I called him Broadaxe, after the axe used to square timber in the old timber days. I decided the moose should be white so he would be different from moose in general."

To have his stories so completely accepted as to be confused with the oral folk tradition is, perhaps, the best compliment Mr. Bedore can receive. It is also the best recommendation for these collections of tall tales — the quality of the stories, the vitality of the characters, and the easy-telling style are right out of Bernie Bedore the storyteller, as well as Bernie Bedore the author.

#### References

Monteiro, George, "Histoire de Montferrand: L' Athlete Canadien and Joe Mufferaw", *Journal of American Folklore*, 73 (1960) 24-34. (Monteiro quotes from *Upper Mississippi: A Wilderness Saga*, New York, 1937, p.182.)

O'Connor, Jennifer J., "Joseph Montferrand and his Legendary Other ego Joe Muffraw", 1980 (unpublished).

McKay, Donald. *The Lumberjacks*. Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978.

## 2) BIOGRAPHY AND BORDEN: from *P.B. Waite*

The *CCL* issue on history and biography raises questions that suggest high school students would be better off with the biographies than with reviews of them. Dr. Swainson's review of the books about Sir Robert Borden is a case in point. In history men are apt to be what the evidence