

# THE ARKANSAW TRAVELLER

## FOLK THEATRE



© 1976  
ARKANSAW TRAVELLER FOLK THEATRE  
HARDY, ARKANSAS

# THE ARKANSAS OZARKS

When the early pioneers of our country settled on the Eastern seaboard, the Ozarks were considered part of the "West". Here in the Arkansas Ozarks, the Osage Indians were willing to fight just about anyone. The migration westward first brought hunters and squatters.

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, geologist and student of Indian lore, visited the White River area in 1819 and wrote that the white hunters who lived here subsisted on game and wild honey. They might plant a few vegetables such as cabbage and corn. Once a year they would take their furs to exchange for items they could not produce such as rifles, powder, salt, hatchets, etc.

In 1828 Captain Basil Hall, an Englishman, went up the Mississippi River and he defined a squatter as "a person who without any title to the land, or lease asked or granted, squats himself down and declares himself the lord and master of the soil for the time being. There is nobody to question his right, and indeed, according to all accounts, it might not be altogether a safe topic of conversation to introduce."

The territorial government of Arkansas had been established in 1819. The relatively weak government tried to maintain order, but behind the hunters and squatters came criminals and fugitives from justice. Some of the early settlers banded themselves together as "Regulators" to act as vigilantes to deal with the rowdies.

Arkansas achieved a lot of notoriety during those early years. She became a favorite topic for humorists.

However, the independent pioneers who settled the Ozarks were of hardy stock. They were isolated for many decades and the culture survived long after other parts of the country became a huge melting pot for most new Americans.

The English and Scotch-Irish came by

boat and wagon train. They fought Indians and built their log cabins. Unlike the hunter and squatter, these independent people began to think of civilizing the region.

The Ozarks were not readily accessible and the trails westward often went around the rough terrain. The Ozarkians were more or less "left alone" to preserve their customs and traditions. The old British ballads continued to be passed from parent to son or daughter. This area has been recognized as a "seedbed" of Anglo-Saxon culture.

Modern highways and communication methods as well as later migrations began to erode these folkways. In the last 15 years there has been a deliberate effort made to preserve and revive this treasure of folk crafts and songs.

In the meantime, Arkansas is taking on a new image. In the nineteenth century, "Arkansaw" was ridiculed as a backward and totally uncivilized state. Today, it is one of the fastest growing states in the nation. Arkansas is known for its progressive agriculture and is a leader in broiler, rice and soybean production. Industrial development is accelerating. The Ozarks have become a favorite retirement area for Midwesterners particularly. Improved roads, good schools, hospitals and recreational facilities are found throughout Arkansas.

The most recent concern is that the Ozarks will grow too rapidly in the next decade and the natural and scenic qualities of the region will be spoiled.

We are proud of our folk culture. The Arkansaw Traveller Folk Theatre carefully holds to the old songs and tunes. We want to give you an insight into Arkansas in 1840.

The Ozark Folk Center at Mountain View was opened in 1973 to be a "living museum" for folk music and crafts. We recommend that you also visit the Ozark Folk Center while you are in Arkansas.



THE TURN OF THE TUNE.  
TRAVELLER PLAYING THE 'ARKANSAW TRAVELLER'.

## THE ARKANSAW TRAVELLER

It has been said that the Arkansaw Traveller is the most celebrated specimen of Arkansas folklore and humor. The phrase, "Arkansaw Traveller", has served as the title for a dialogue, a fiddle tune, at least two paintings, several engravings and a number of plays. There are more than a dozen versions of the Traveller dialogue. Our Arkansas history books devote at least a chapter to the Arkansaw Traveller. (It is often spelled Arkansas Traveler).

Several persons have claimed authorship of the dialogue. In Arkansas, Colonel Sandford C. Faulkner is usually given credit for it, but there are some doubts about this. Colonel Faulkner was born at Georgetown, Scott County, Kentucky, on March 3, 1803. In 1829 he settled as a cotton planter in Chicot County, Arkansas. In 1839 he moved to Little Rock. Supposedly, in 1840, he was touring the state with three politicians and the party

approached a squatter's cabin to ask directions.

The squatter was playing the first part of the Arkansaw Traveller tune. His witty answers became the basis for the story and accompanying tune. Col. "Sandy" became known as the "Arkansaw Traveller". He often was called upon to tell the story and play his fiddle. When he went to New Orleans, the fame of the "Arkansaw Traveller" preceded him. A special room was devoted to his use with a sign over the door, "Arkansaw Traveller". Joseph Tosso of Cincinnati, Mose Case of Buffalo and Edward P. Washbourne of Arkansas have also been credited with both the tune and dialogue. These men did not know one another. The Arkansaw Traveller is a typical piece of folklore because the authorship cannot definitely be established.

Here are a few quotes from a composite version:

## THE ARKANSAW TRAVELLER CONT'D.

A lost and bewildered Arkansaw traveller approaches the cabin of a squatter in search of lodging and the following dialogue ensues:

Traveller: "Hello there, stranger."

Squatter: (Finishes the first part of the tune and then gruffly says) "Hello, yourself!"

Traveller: "Mister, I got lost a ways back and I need a place to spend the night. What about putting me up for the night?"

Squatter: "You go to the devil!"

Traveller: "Mister, where does this road go?"

Squatter: "This road don't go anywhere. Hit's here when I get up in the morning!"

The dialogue continues with the squatter giving humorous answers. He's actually the star of the encounter, outwitting the lost city colonel at every turn. The squatter is playing the first part of the fiddle tune, but he doesn't know the "turn of the tune". (The fine part). Finally, the traveller demonstrates that he can play the "turn of the tune" and this changes the attitude of the squatter. He becomes very hospitable and sends Sal, his wife, to get that "buck deer I killed this morning."

The traveller spends the night, playing music to entertain the squatter.

This tune and dialogue became known world wide.

### The Paintings

Edward Payson Washbourne, son of a minister, Cephas Washbourne, was born in a mission in 1831 among the Cherokee Indians. He lived in the Arkansas River Valley area near Russellville. (An early nearby village was called Norristown).

In the late 1850's he painted the "Arkansas Traveller". Fame soon came to him and he began a companion piece, "The Turn of the Tune". Before completing the last work, he died of pneumonia. An unknown artist completed this piece.

In 1859 the Traveller was lithographed by Leopold Grozelier. In 1876 and 1880, J.H. Bufford's Sons in Boston engraved both works of art.

Currier and Ives also had a famous 1870 lithograph distributed.

In the Arkansaw Traveller Folk Theatre you see an authentic log cabin, much like the squatters of that day inhabited. The setting and dialogue are carefully re-enacted. To broaden the skit, neighbors come to the house for a folk musical such as was so common in the log cabins of a century ago.

The Traveller production is pure folk theatre. Somewhat improvised each night, it provides a unique entertainment not reproduced elsewhere.

As you sit back in your chair after the squatter's meal of beans and ham hock, potatoes, greens, slaw, onions, cornbread and a dessert of peach cobbler, imagine that you were there in 1840 as Colonel Sandford Faulkner rode up to the squatter's cabin.

Please join in any of the songs or participate in any way you wish. Tonight, you're visiting Neal Crow, the carefree and witty squatter.



# HISTORY OF THE THEATRE

Since 1959 leaders in North Central Arkansas have sought ways to stimulate economic development. They quickly recognized the value of the folk crafts and music as a possible means of helping the mountain people. In 1961, the Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas, led a tour of leaders to Gatlinburg, Tennessee to study the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild. The result was the Ozark Foothills Craft Guild which began in 1962. The Guild initiated the first festival at Mountain View, working closely with Extension Agents and local leaders and later the Ozark Frontier Trail Festival and Craft Show at Heber Springs.

Leo Rainey, Area Development Agent for the Cooperative Extension Service, who helped organize the Ozark Foothills Craft Guild, conceived the idea for the folk theatre after a group of Sharp County leaders made another tour in 1967 to Gatlinburg. He approached James Bobo of Hardy who added to the initial idea and in 1968 the theatre opened in very crude facilities just south of Hardy on Highway 167.

Olaf and Orilla Pinkston of Cave City provided leadership for the music and served as musical directors for five years. Harris Dark of Hardy was manager from 1971-72. Other leaders throughout the region supported this locally initiated project.

The theatre was successful and in 1973 more adequate facilities were needed. The present theatre seats 850 persons and features the pre-show food service. F.E. Davis of Hardy built the new facility. Chester and Claude Morgan hand rived all the red oak shingles used on the theatre. Susie Roll and Pam Fair lived at the theatre as managers in 1973 and helped get the new facility completed. Rebecca Street was manager during 1974-75. The production that you see today is a product of many suggestions by those who have been involved. In the folk tradition, additions and changes are made when someone has a better idea.



The cast are all area residents who enjoy performing. You will learn more about them as you read of their main occupations.

Perhaps the authenticity of the theatre plus the deliberate effort to present a wholesome family type show has helped to bring the spectators down an isolated rural road in a sparsely settled area to see the famous Arkansaw Traveller folk play and musical.

# PRODUCER — DIRECTOR

Leo Rainey of Batesville, Arkansas performs the role of Sheriff Hidebound. He plays the picking bow and mandolin. He also serves as producer and organizer for the theatre. In 1968 he was a prime mover in initiating the concept for the attraction.

Martha, his wife, operates the gift shop one night each week. His daughter, Nancy, is a waitress and musician. Alan, the son, was a member of the cast in the early years of the show.

Leo is an Area Development Agent with the Cooperative Extension Service. He works with and advises leaders in 13 counties in North Central Arkansas regarding community development, particularly in the fields of tourism and crafts.



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

James Bobo, Hardy  
Leo Rainey, Batesville  
Don Martin, Ash Flat  
Jack Adams, Hardy

Martha Roll, Batesville  
Bill Hughes, Batesville  
Eugene Street, Cherokee Village  
Wilson Powell, Batesville

Producer and Director    Leo Rainey

Manager    Ida Ackerman

## MANAGER AND ASSISTANTS



The challenge of feeding and entertaining thousands of people each summer require the best efforts of nearly 50 people. The food service is one of the more popular aspects of the theatre. Ida Ackerman, center, does some preseason planning with Ina Mays, left, and Joyce Griffin.

Mrs. Earl Peebles, not shown, has been the ticket teller for the theatre for years.

Some of the cooks (not shown) are Leala Morgan, Ivo Fulton and Christine Gentry with helper, Ruth Gentry.





The image of the theatre has been built to a great extent on the personality of Neal Crow as the "squatter". Neal is a fisherman and hunter. He usually has 12 to 15 coon dogs at a time. He owns "old Blue", the dog who knows just when to bark on songs when Neal sings. When Neal laughs and jokes, he is only staging his day to day character. His natural attitude is much like that you see and hear. Neal was the original squatter and did not miss a show during the first eight years. Some people say he is the assistant director and Leo Rainey agrees.

The "fiddlin colonel" is another original Arkansaw Traveller. Ralph DePriest is a true folk musician. Born in Searcy County, Arkansas, he is from a line of musicians. His father, grandfather and uncle all played the fiddle. Ralph is employed by the State Forestry Commission. He and Rebecca have two daughters, Myra and Phyllis. When Ralph was eight years old, his father told him not to bother the fiddle that hung on the wall. This mountain psychology was just the right approach to whet Ralph's appetite. At every opportunity when his father was gone, Ralph played the fiddle and he has become one of the outstanding fiddlers of the entire Ozark region.



The image of the literary has been built in  
a great extent on the personality of Jack Crow  
as the "quaker" - that is a fisherman and  
hunter - really has it is a man who is a  
man in every way - the dog who knows  
but he is not an animal when he is  
in the water and when he is on  
the land. He is a character in his natural  
state that you see and hear.  
The "quaker" and did not  
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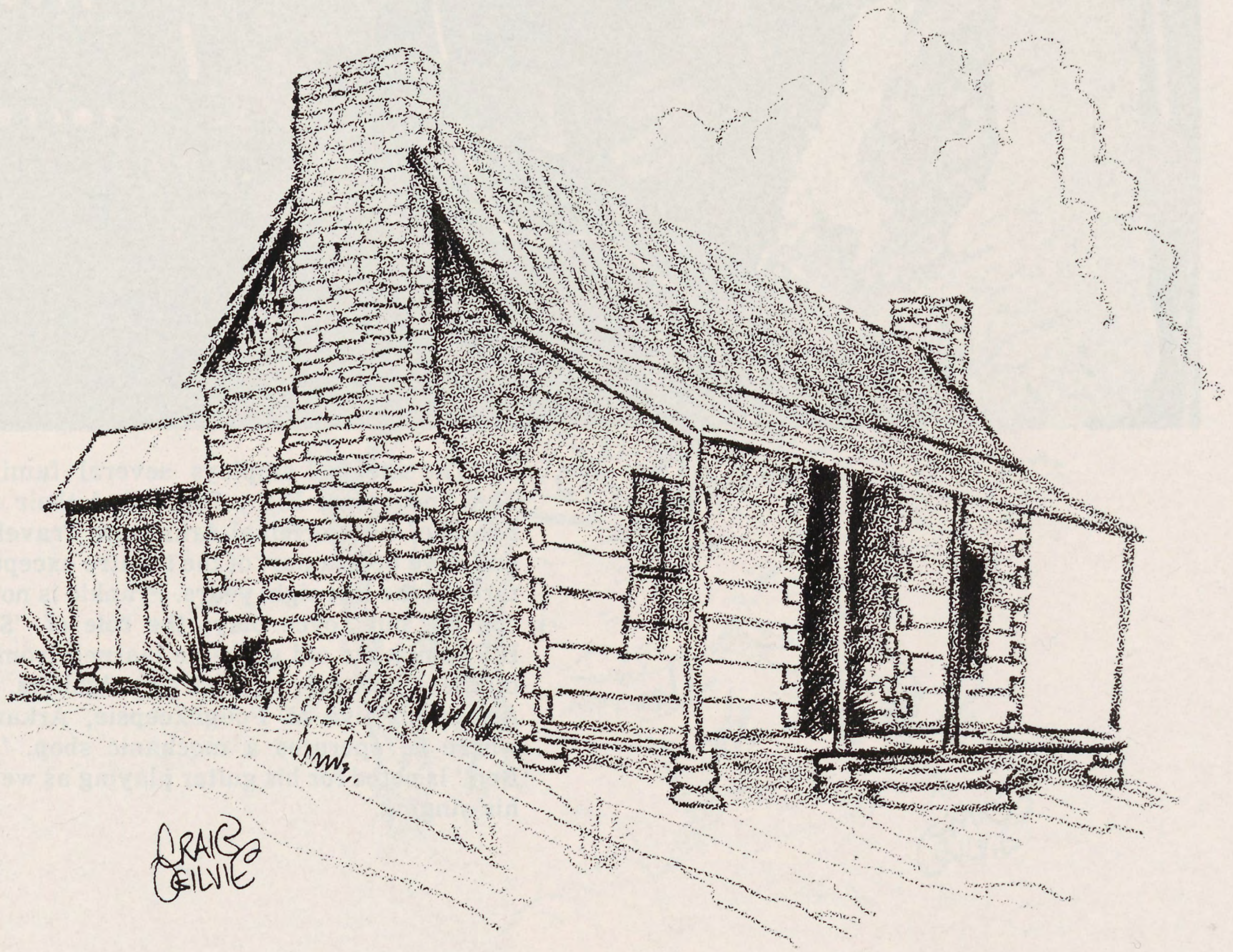
CRAIG  
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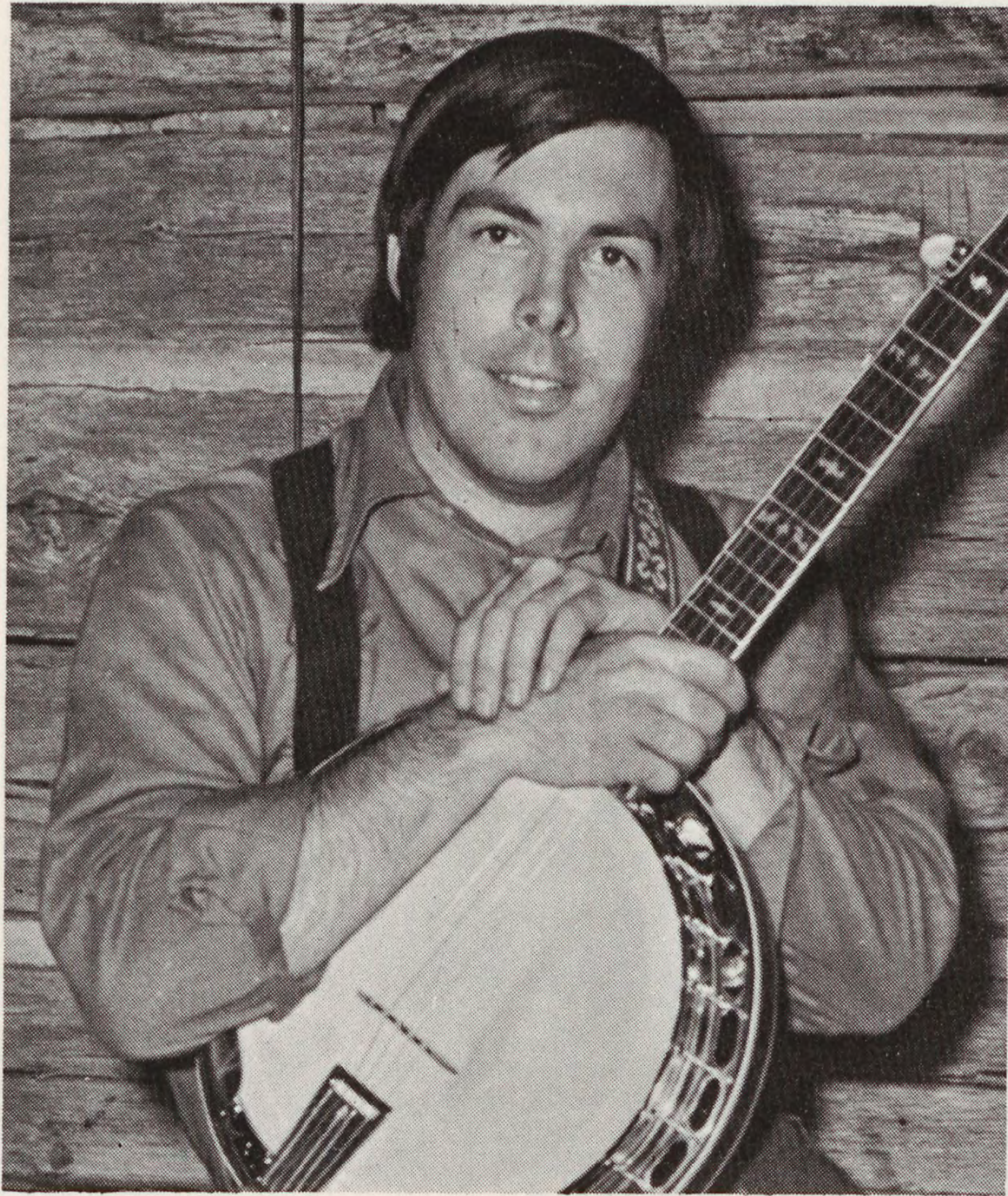
Arkansas...  
folk...  
Arkansas...  
father...  
father...  
Forest...  
two...  
Ralph...  
not...  
This...  
approach...  
opportunity...  
played...  
outstanding...  
region



The theatre employs several families. The Andersons, B.F., Joyce and their son, Frankie, were original Arkansaw Travellers and have been a part of the theatre except for three of the last eight years. Frankie is now in college, but Joyce plays the role of "Sal". B.F. sings the old songs he learned from his mother and uncle as well as neighbors. The Andersons live at Poughkeepsie, Arkansas where he operates a mechanic shop. "Big Ben" is noted for his guitar playing as well as his singing.

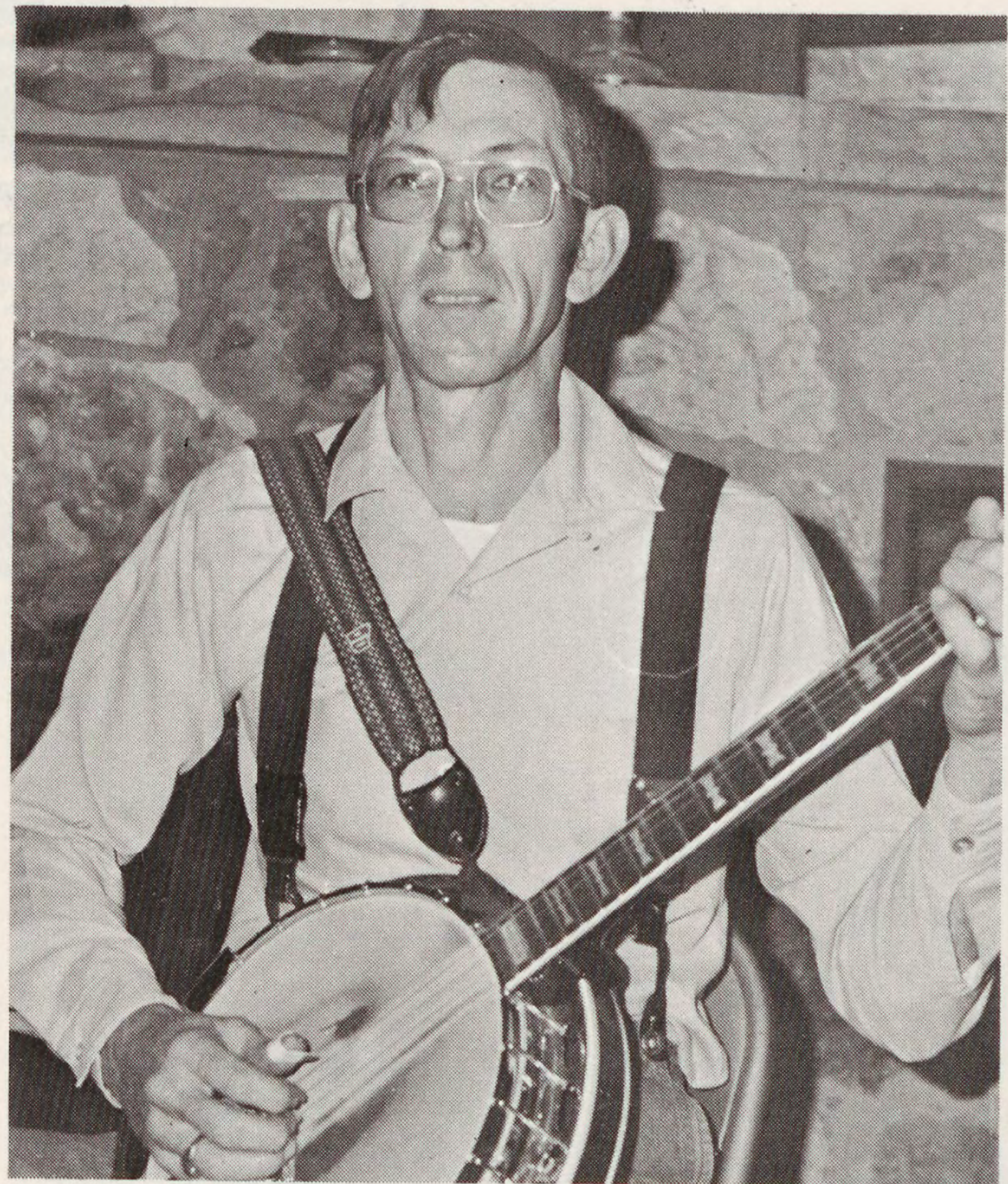
"Hiram John" is the role played by the natural humorist and bawdy singer Bruce Fernigen and Sharon Dyer about 15 miles southeast of Hardy, is one of the most isolated regions of Arkansas. He raises cattle and tries to keep up on his hazing and haling. The children, Steve and Myra, both are actors, serving as the "children" of Sal in the play. Bruce has been with the Travellers since 1959 and is considered one of the strongest performers on stage. His guitar playing is consistently one of the audience favorites.

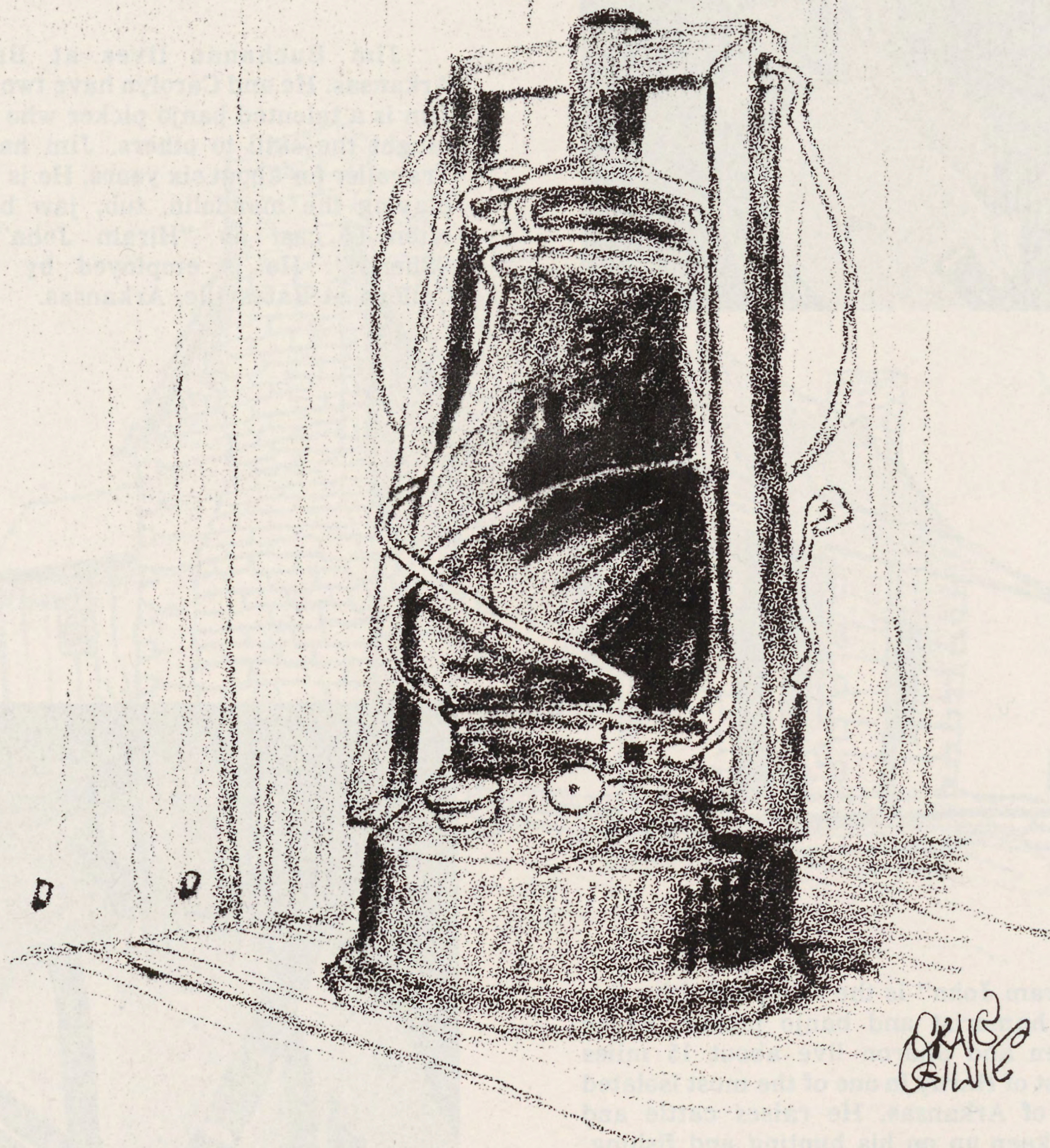




Jim Buchanan lives at Batesville, Arkansas. He and Carolyn have two children. Jim is a talented banjo picker who has often taught the skill to others. Jim has been a Traveller for about six years. He is versatile, playing the mandolin, tub, jaw bones and often is cast as "Hiram John" or the "Sheriff". He is employed by Arkansas College at Batesville, Arkansas.

"Hiram John" is the role played by this natural humorist and banjo picker. Bruce Fernimen and Sharon live about 15 miles northeast of Hardy in one of the most isolated regions of Arkansas. He raises cattle and tries to keep up on his hunting and fishing. The children, Steve and Myra, both are actors, serving as the "children" of Sal in the play. Bruce has been with the Travellers since 1969 and is considered one of the strongest performers on stage. His gourd playing is consistently one of the audience favorites.



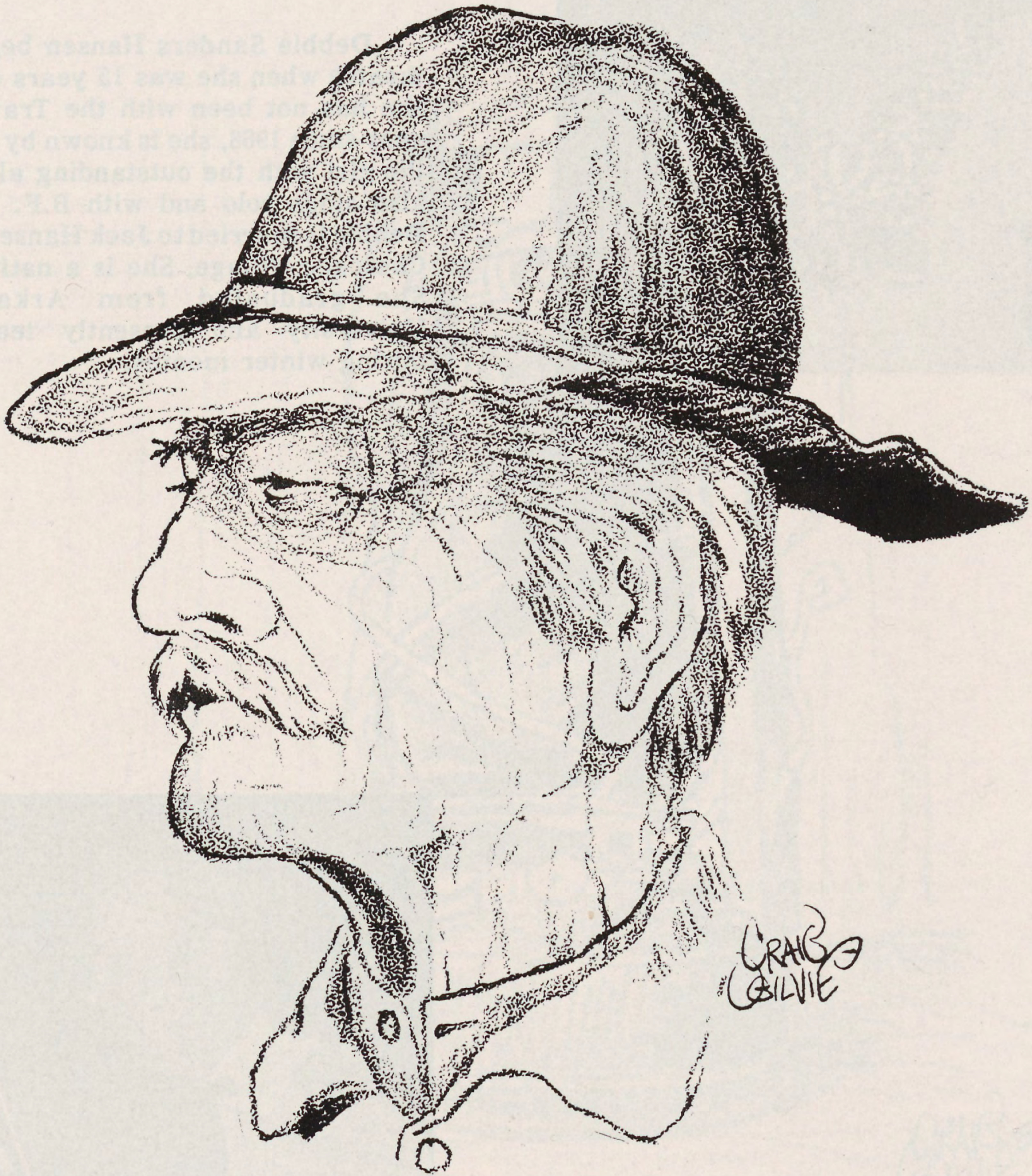




Debbie Sanders Hansen began with the theatre when she was 15 years old. Although she has not been with the Travellers every year since 1968, she is known by thousands as the girl with the outstanding alto voice. She also sings solo and with B.F. or the girls. Debbie is married to Jack Hansen and lives in Cherokee Village. She is a native of Hardy. She graduated from Arkansas State University and presently teaches school during winter months.

The Traveller Theatre is fortunate to have two top notch fiddlers who can fulfill the requirements of the role of Sandford Faulkner. Abe Weaver of West Plains, Missouri is another one of the extraordinarily talented musicians. He often appears with the Travellers and is an alternate for Ralph DePriest. Abe is employed as a Veteran's Service Officer in Southern Missouri.





The Traveler Theater is fortunate to have two up and coming actors who can fill the shoes of the late Mr. Weaver. The Traveler Theater is fortunate to have two up and coming actors who can fill the shoes of the late Mr. Weaver. The Traveler Theater is fortunate to have two up and coming actors who can fill the shoes of the late Mr. Weaver.

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Nancy Rainey, a graduate of Batesville High School, plays the autoharp, dulcimer and also is a waitress each night. She acts the role of "Granny Woman", making her entrance each night to give the kids a little taste of Ozark superstitions. She is the daughter of Leo and Martha Rainey.

Barbara Peebles has grown up with the Travellers. She serves in several roles: waitress, "Widder Brown" and singer. Barbara lives with her parents at Poughkeepsie, Arkansas. A sister, Ann, sang many years as part of the cast. Barbara knows several of the old British ballads that have been handed down. She also plays the dulcimer and operates the dancing doll. Mr. and Mrs. Earl Peebles, her parents, have been an important part of the theatre for many years.





CRAIG  
SILVIE

Barbara Fessler has grown up with the  
Lipshutz. She serves in several roles  
with her parents at the opera. She is the  
daughter of the late conductor and opera  
lover, and opera lover. She also gives the  
duchess and opera the dancing doll. Mr.  
and Mrs. Earl Fessler her parents have  
been an important part of the theater for  
many years.



Jack Estes and Iris formerly lived at Batesville, Arkansas with their two children, Stephanie and Randy. Jack is a master on the tub. He now lives at Jonesboro where he works for General Adjustment Bureau as Manager of the office there.

Old Blue, the squatter's talented hound, is beginning her fifth season as a member of the Traveller cast. She is the second Old Blue, a granddaughter of the original who appeared in 145 performances and never failed to bark at the appropriate time. The second Old Blue is just as much a star as the first.







The "singing waitresses" always add a lot to the show and they do a fine job of serving you before the show each night. They are, from left to right, Lisa Hill, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Hill; Tina Huxman, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Huxman; Deanna King, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth King, and Konnie Sublett.

**Cast members not shown:**

Hilary Davis, Jill Richardson  
Steve Fernimen, Myra Fernimen  
Mark Goings, David Mays.

Mrs. Esther Crow is the wife of "squatter" Neal Crow. In fact his Neal and Esther live on a 14 acre farm south-east of Cave City, Ark. Mrs. Crow likes nothing better than to show each night and enjoys visiting with people from other areas. Mr. and Mrs. Crow are hard workers and two of the most lovable personalities in the District.

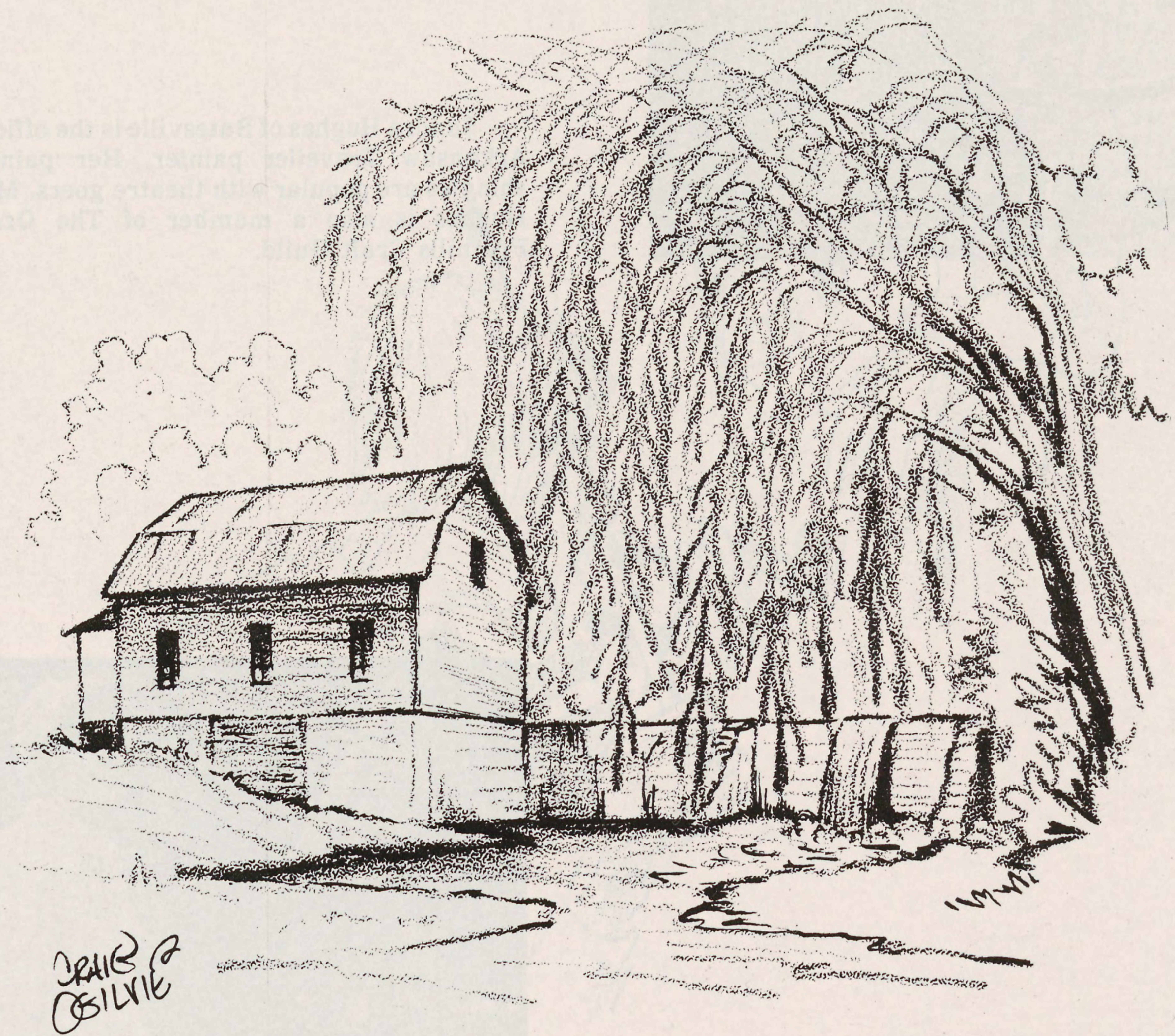




Sandra Hughes of Batesville is the official Arkansaw Traveller painter. Her painted shingles are popular with theatre goers. Mrs. Hughes is also a member of The Ozark Foothills Craft Guild.

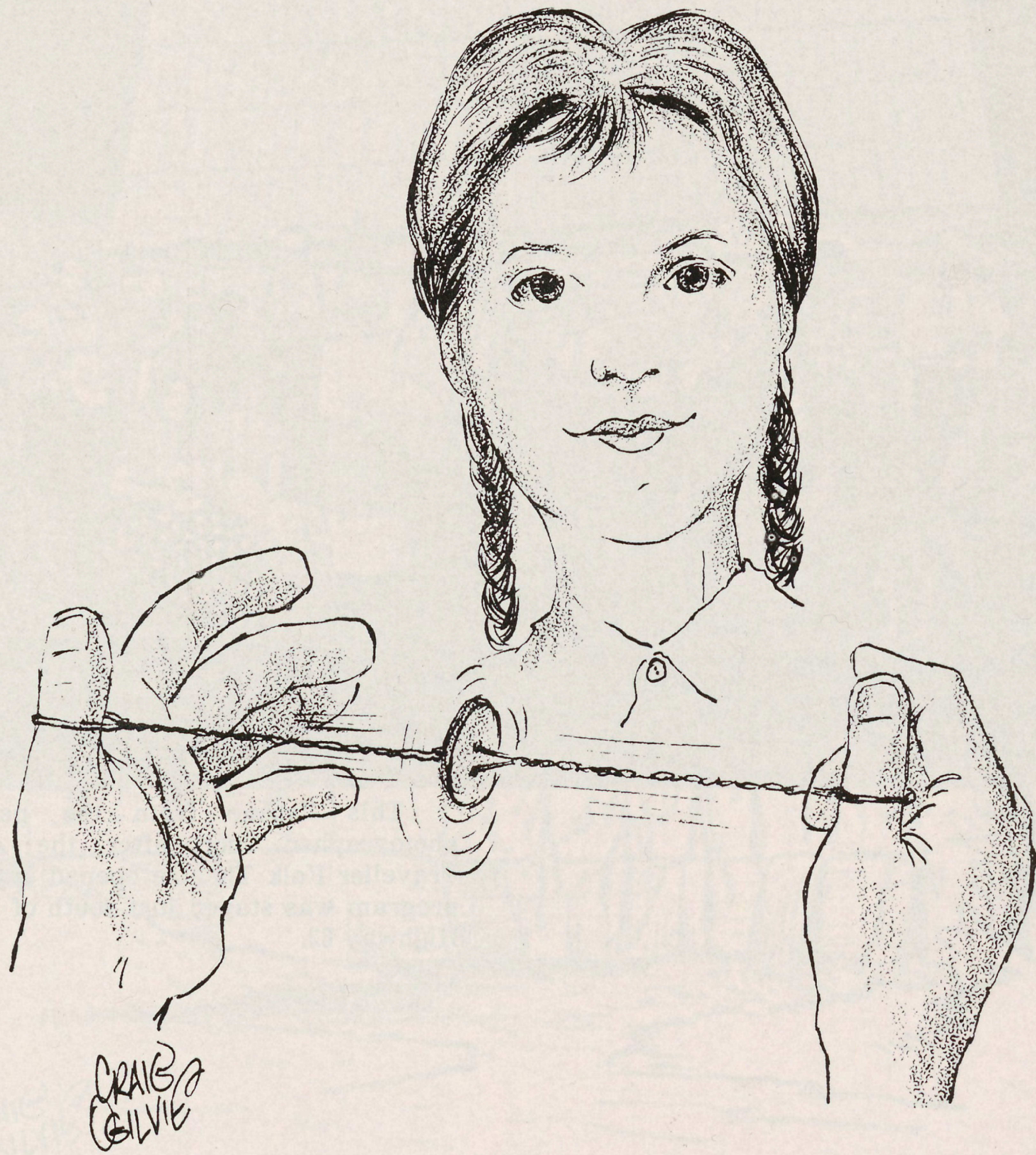
Mrs. Esther Crow is the wife of "squatter" Neal Crow. In real life, Neal and Esther live on a 120 acre farm southeast of Cave City, Ark. Mrs. Crow spins cotton before the show each night and enjoys visiting with people from other areas. Mr. and Mrs. Crow are hard workers and two of the most lovable personalities in the 'Ozarks.







This "scene from the past" was photographed soon after the Arkansas Traveller Folk Theatre opened in 1968. The program was staged just south of Hardy on Highway 62.



# ILLUSTRATOR

Drawings featured in this section



Dale Huddleston, on guitar, backs Jim Buchanan on a tune in this 1975 photograph. Dale was an important part of the musical production for three years.

## Credits:

Photography - Jim Buchanan, Leo Rainey

Staging - Leo Rainey

Printing - Murray Graphics, Halesville, Ind.

APC



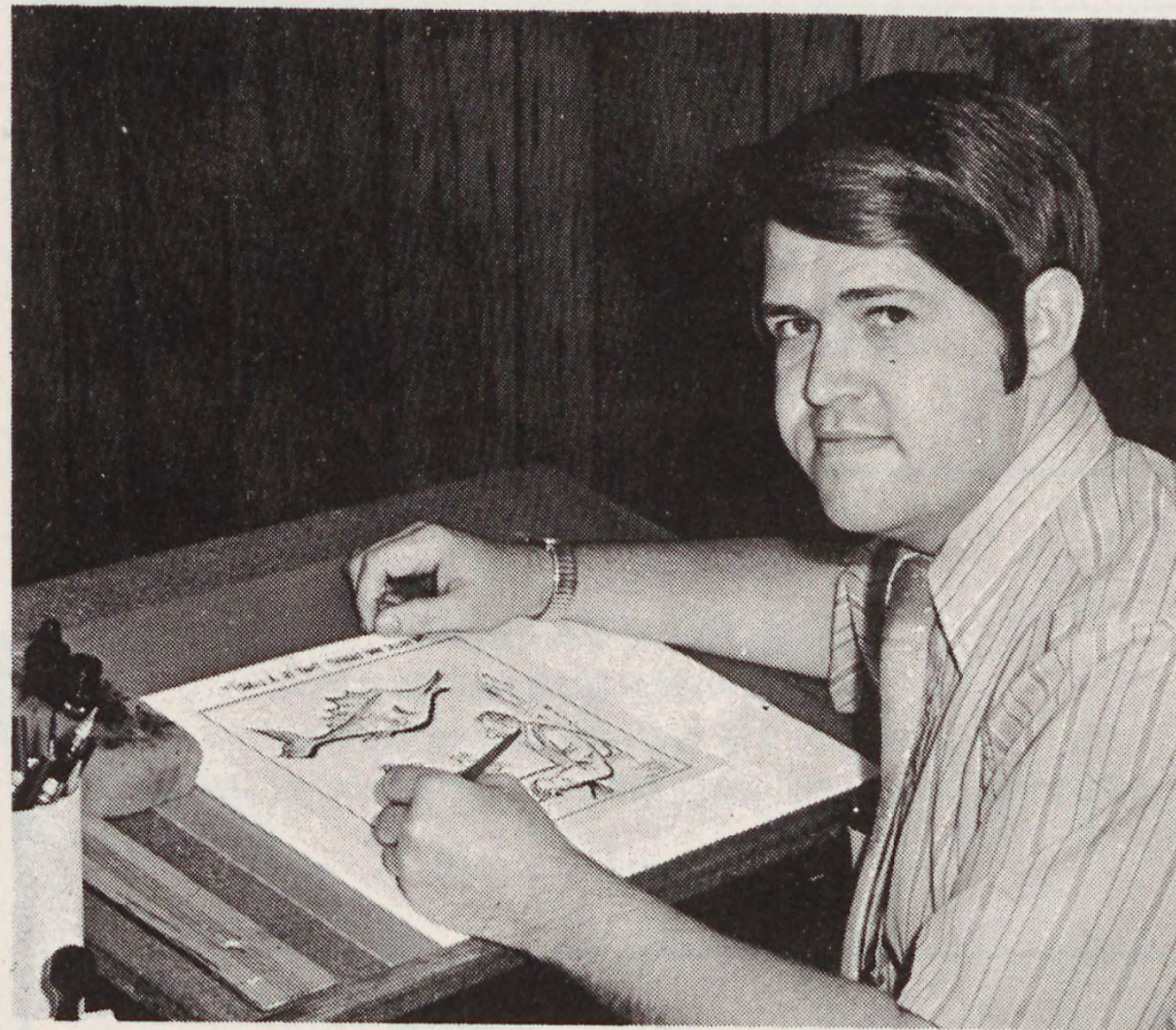
# ILLUSTRATOR

Drawings featured in this souvenir program were sketched by Craig Ogilvie of Batesville, Ark. A professional newspaper cartoonist and commercial artist since the age of 17, Craig has served as "staff" artist for the Arkansas Traveller Folk Theatre since it opened.

Craig spent his early years on a Sharp County farm then lived a few years on a dairy farm near Batesville before his parents moved into the city.

He opened a commercial art business in 1963 and started cartooning for several Arkansas newspapers including the Arkansas Gazette. Two years later Craig joined the editorial staff of the Batesville Daily Guard and since then has served as editor of that publication and four others.

Craig is now a writer and staff artist for the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism. An avid historian, he researches and draws a weekly newspaper series on Arkansas history and his feature travel stories appear in publications throughout the United States.



## Credits:

Photographs - Jim Buchanan, Leo Rainey  
Script - Leo Rainey  
Printing - Riverside Graphics, Batesville,  
Ark.

ILLUSTRATOR



CRAIG  
SILVIE

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