stuff didn't particularly interest me, but I was fascinated that modern life could be looked at as folklore. The basket makers, on the other hand, fit my expectations about the subject matter of folklore. I was struck by the insights that were offered by the presenters. They explained what the traditions meant for these people and why they continued practicing them. While such a discussion now seems old hat, at the time it opened a door for me that was closed in other academic disciplines. I continue to think that folklore delves into significant and profound issues that are at the heart of people's lives.

These initial impressions have been reinforced many times over the years, and they continue to guide my approach to folklore. I work today in both academia and the public sector, and I find that the field has a great deal to contribute to academic and public discourse. It offers a perspective that is grounded in the realities of actual individuals and groups who live in actual times and places, and it allows for the multiple interpretations and manipulations of those realities. By addressing the aesthetic, the personal, and the social as well as the political and economic dimensions of human interactions, folklore speaks to the essence of how individuals make their lives meaningful.

Battling the Tide: Folklore in Action

Nancy Solomon, Long Island Traditions

Charlie Wertz, a longtime dragger fisherman I had interviewed for a maritime folklife survey in Freeport, New York, called me. He had just completed reading a draft of the village's Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan that would provide policy direction for the future. "Nancy, you've got to help us. They want to kick us out of Freeport!"

The Freeport plan called for the removal of all commercial fishing boats on its main waterfront dock, where hundreds of baymen and fishermen had traditionally docked their craft. The docking would be replaced with restaurants and condominiums. For years, canal residents—most of whom had built their homes in the preceding twenty years—had bitterly complained about the noise the fishing boats made and how the smell of fresh-caught fish was "obnoxious" and "dirty."

I quietly thought to myself: "But that's what makes Freeport different from most of the towns on Long Island. They were here first. Where will they go? I will miss them." With Charlie's call, I knew that I could no longer be an observer—I must become an advocate. I quickly called some newspaper reporters.

I also called everyone I knew to come before the village board and protest the plan. People from all walks of life came to the fishermen's defense. Several teachers who were part of our maritime folk-arts-in-education program showed up. So did many of the fishermen I had interviewed. Two days later the headlines blared, "Freeport Waterfront Plan Makes Waves."

Two months later the mayor lost her re-election bid, in part because of the plan. It has lain dormant ever since.

Making a difference in people's lives in ways that matter; preserving a traditional occupation; saving a traditional bay house from destruction. These are the reasons I became a public sector folklorist. Using the tools of historic preservationists, environmentalists, and union organizers, we can help preserve ways of life that are meaningful, but jeopardized. Those I interview often caution me "not to turn them and their culture into museum pieces." Following in the footsteps of activist folklorists like Archie Green and Steven Zeitlin, I do not gain satisfaction through mere documentation. Through working with communities, I believe we can stem the tide of standardization and bring recognition to those places that foster cultural nurturing of the individual human spirit.

The Art Gallery as Sacred Space: Folklife Need Not Appear

Kristin G. Congdon, University of Central Florida

I was an assistant professor of art education in the School of Art at Bowling Green State University in Ohio in the mid-1980s. Doug Blandy, also an assistant professor at the time, and I decided to coordinate an exhibition in the School of Art Gallery. We were exploring the idea that art and aesthetic representations should present more than a so-called fine art perspective. Since fishing is ubiquitous in the area, we decided to represent the local fishing culture and the aesthetic dimensions that went with it.

We wrote a proposal to the Gallery Committee that was promptly rejected. We rewrote it attaching supporting theory from journals that studio artists would recognize. We were rejected again. Still, we persisted, and were finally told that if we could get an outside grant to support the project, they would accept our exhibition. When the Ohio Arts Council Folk Arts Program enthusiastically funded our grant, the Gallery Committee had to give us the go-ahead to plan an exhibition that some faculty members vehemently disliked.

We hired Lucy Long to do folklore fieldwork while Blandy and I coordinated the project. She identified experts in various endeavors such as fly tying, rod wrapping, and taxidermy. These individuals curated sections of the gallery. Often reluctant to let prized possessions out of their homes, fishers were insistent that their pieces be well insured.

"Boats, Bait, and Fishing Paraphernalia: A Local Fishing Aesthetic" opened in February 1987. People came early and stayed late. Artists demonstrated their talents and a fisher-in-residence gave context to the art and aesthetics. Participants