

Edward D. Ives. **George Magoon and the Down East Game War: History, Folklore, and the Law.** Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988. (Publications of the American Folklore Society) Pp. xiv + 335, two appendices, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

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George Magoon (1851-1929) is a complex character whose status in folk history combines elements of the folk hero and the local character. Ives' work offers us a good read in the presentation of stories about Magoon, as well as a discussion and exemplification of the value of folk history.

The setting is an area in eastern Maine, where neither farming nor lumber provided an adequate living to the rural population in the latter half of the last century. Accordingly, people depended on hunting to supplement their incomes. Thus the series of increasingly restrictive game laws imposed in Maine in the last quarter of the nineteenth century deprived local backwoodsmen of a significant part of their livelihood, and from their point of view were imposed by outsiders for the benefit of outsiders—namely urban sportsmen. Local acquiescence to the laws therefore was grudging at best, and poaching was not uncommon.

George Magoon and two of his neighbors were men whose defiance of the game laws became legend, and whose stories, especially those about Magoon, are still told in the region today. Ives presents a detailed historical reconstruction of their lives, based on newspapers, court records, and selected oral accounts of family and friends. Counterpoised to these biographies are the stories about them, collected by Ives and his students from oral tradition. The stories show the three poachers defying game laws, escaping from the wardens and showing them up as fools. The Magoon stories are also humorous, whether at the expense of the wardens or depicting Magoon himself as a clown.

Ives is refreshingly candid about his role and that of his students in the construction of this account. For example, he admits that he neglected to tape some performances of one Magoon story because it was personally distasteful to him. He also ponders the possibility that by assiduously asking for stories about Magoon, he may have had a role in creating the cycle. These reflexive moments are not signs that the author is wallowing in postmodern angst, but are part of his careful presentation and scrupulous documentation of oral texts.

Ives' credo is that folk history is not a poor relation of the history constructed by professional historians since all history involves the reconstruction and hence interpretation of the past. His book is a convincing demonstration of this belief. Magoon's official biography would encourage one to view him as a social bandit of the type defined by E.J. Hobsbawm, a type whose rebellion against authority offers vicarious defiance to his neighbors.

However, the folk history of Magoon, and Ives' careful analysis of it, show this explanation to be simplistic. While the folk version celebrates Magoon's defiance, it also contains distancing mechanisms by means of which tellers stop short of whole-hearted endorsement of law-breaking. Chief among these is the

comic treatment which Magoon receives in many stories. Magoon is not simply the superhuman hero but also the clown and local character who shares the frailties of his neighbors.

Another benefit of looking at folk history is that one gains a new perspective on old topics. I for one will never look at conservation issues and game laws in quite the same way again, after being introduced via Ives and the Magoon stories to the poacher's eye view. The poacher here appears partly as a criminal, more importantly as a Robin Hood-type rebel, and above all he appears as his neighbors see him—an ordinary man trying to make ends meet.

In its thorough research and documentation, its exceptionally well-written style, and its thoughtful yet restrained conclusions, this book will be valuable to students, folklorists, historians, and others. It is a worthy addition to the Publications of the American Folklore Society, and one that I highly recommend.

Alan Dundes and Carl R. Pagter. **When You're Up to Your Ass in Alligators . . . More Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire.** Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987. Pp. 271, introduction, abbreviations, illustrations. \$9.95 paper.

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As the subtitle indicates, this volume is the sequel to Dundes and Pagter's *Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire*, first published in 1975 and republished in 1978 as *Work Hard and You Shall Be Rewarded*. In terms of its aim and scope, the sequel is very much a repeat of the first collection.

Dundes and Pagter have overcome the considerable reluctance of publishers to present a collection of 138 texts of "office copier folklore," that is, folklore transmitted primarily by photocopy machine. The texts are grouped into eight categories, apparently based upon the format in which texts are presented. Six categories are the same as those used in the first collection, namely: definitions and wordplay; greeting cards and letters; notices, mottoes, and awards; instructions and tests; cartoons; and double entendres. In addition, this collection has two categories not used in *Urban Folklore*: traditional wallet cards, and parodies.

While the compilers have presented a few additional variants to texts previously published in *Urban Folklore*, most of the material in *Alligators* is new. As in the first collection, each text is preceded by a note which contains some analysis, references to parallel texts, and the date and place where the text was collected. The texts are reprinted in full without expurgation. The quality of reproduction in the folk cartoons is excellent, considering the faint and almost illegible state to which repeated photocopying reduces much xeroxlore.

Like its predecessor, *When You're Up to Your Ass in Alligators* is a collection of folklore, not a study. The authors have suggested what some texts