

ARCHIE GREEN

While "the folk" really are most of us, "folklore" usually suggests the arts and crafts of rural life. Or it did before Archie Green pioneered the study of new areas of vernacular culture and greatly enhanced public appreciation of all folk art.

As a young man in the 1930s he worked in the shipyards of San Francisco, took part in union affairs, and began to collect music, pamphlets, and books relating to the life of laborers like himself. That material became a source for his current study of early labor culture, Wobblies, Pile Butts, & Other Spinners of Laborlore (1991). He was also among the first to notice the folk and country music recorded from the 1920s onward and to see its importance for an understanding of America. In the 1960s he began a massive effort to bring together those old records; and from them and his own notes and field recordings in the southeast, he wrote Only a Miner (1972), a ground-breaking study of coal-mining songs. Now he has put the records (nearly 40,000) plus related books, manuscripts, films, and photographs into our Southern Folklife Collection and made it one of the deepest in the nation for the study of Southern music.

He has done field work also in the halls of Congress. Between stints of teaching at the Universities of Illinois and Texas, he spent the early 1970s lobbying senators and representatives on behalf of the American Folklife Preservation Act, and its passage in 1976 created the American Folklife Center. Now we have our first national institution charged with preserving and presenting the art of the common people.

North Carolina has a tradition of cherishing the life of its people from the mountains to the coast. Today we salute one who champions that tradition nationally as we confer on Archie Green our degree of Doctor of Letters.