The multi-cultural richness of such a traditional dance as clogging has rewarded Greg Roberson with an exciting and desirable life. Greg has been dancing as a member of the Green Grass Cloggers for fifteen years. He has been able to travel, meet a lot of people, enjoy great music, and pass on a piece of history that is obviously a major part of his life.

On December 17, 1993, we had the pleasure of interviewing Mr. Roberson in Ayden, N.C., which is where the Green Grass Cloggers practice their clogging once a week.
Clogging is a type of dance that is rhythmic and full of energy. There are high kicks, fast twirls, flashy steps, and very rhythmic steps that mainly evolved from the many cultures that combined in the United States.

The Green Grass Cloggers are a group of cloggers that dance traditionally to the music and squares that first initiated this type of dancing. Not only is clogging rich in its history, but the Green Grass Cloggers have invented steps and moves that are used all over the country, making them, too, a part of history.

**Life:** How old is clogging?

**Mr. Roberson:** I'd say it precedes the Civil War. It depends on what you want to call it at the time. I mean, it's a melting pot dance and represents this country in that it's representative of English, Irish, Scottish, French, American Indian, African, slave. Anybody that thinks that it's just purely a music-city Nashville type arrangement is sadly mistaken. It has as much African and native American Indian influence, probably, as it does English and Irish and Scottish in the rhythms. In the Appalachian region, it's just kind of a melting pot of the people. They were just not too "citified." You did things on your own--simplified. But it's definitely a melting-pot dance; and the black culture in this country really doesn't even realize the influence that was there. There were black buck dancers from the old plantations of the Old South, and there are still old black buck dancers running around today, even in this state. But things cycle and change over the years, and they just continually evolve.

**Life:** So what's the difference between black buck dancing and clogging?

**Mr. Roberson:** Well, I don't know that I'd differentiate any. I don't really make any differentiation. In other words, dancing in both the American Native culture and the African culture is very strong, more on a ceremonial pastime enjoyment type basis. The Europeans, when they came over, added a little bit more culture. But as far as Southern black buck dancers, from the 1800's [it was] just dancing just to dance rhythms.

**Life:** Was it more of an expression of feeling and pleasure?

**Mr. Roberson:** Yes, right, rather than a festive occasion, then a "Come over to the castle at 8:15." You know what I'm saying? A little bit different environment. But it has a rich history and one which most people really aren't aware of. You get tied up in the present, and you kind of forget about the past.

**Life:** How did you get into clogging?

**Mr. Roberson:** I went to Union Grove one time. Of course, there is a funny story about Dudley Culp and Tony Jordan and several other people who were given the credit for starting the Green Grass Cloggers. They had also been to Union Grove back in the early, early '70's and probably late '60's. The music was pretty infectious, and then we saw people dance. They just had to do it. And pretty much same thing happened to me. In 1974, I went to Union Grove and just kind of couldn't help myself.
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Life: Did you perform with these other gentlemen?

Mr. Roberson: No, actually I was a late comer. I didn't actually start dancing until '78. The group had started way back in 1971. So it was well established, and they had become quite well known in the United States and had already made a big mark on clog dancing in the country.

Life: So where did the Green Grass Cloggers start dancing?

Mr. Roberson: They started in Greenville, N.C. Dudley Culp is given credit for starting the group, and it was started more or less as a group that liked the string-band music and liked square dancing. So there was a little bit of a square dance revival: the figures, the Texas Star and the Grand Squares, and things like that. And then as they traveled around and went to festivals like Union Grove and saw people doing rhythm dances, [clog dancing], then they definitely went wild after that. So it began in Greenville, and it's credited as beginning there around 1971.

Life: You were mentioning a few steps there and a few dances. Are there any specific steps and types of things in the clogging that you do, that you teach when new members come: and do you say, "Now this is your basic, and we are going to move you up to intermediate"? Do you have that differentiation, or is it all evolvement?

Mr. Roberson: Yes, well, it just evolves as the person can grasp what you're teaching. Especially as a group, we have never considered people as being beginners or intermediates or advanced. We don't have that kind of structure. The very first thing that you probably learn is called the "basic step."

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We cut it short whenever somebody says, "Well, what should we do to take up this piece of time in the music?" And somebody might say, "Well, just do the basics." So "basic" is actually a term for a particular step.

Life: Do you have some other steps that have names too?

Mr. Roberson: Over the years the Green Grass Cloggers were a pretty wild bunch, with a lot of the enthusiasm and a lot of creativity in a group of people like that in their late teens early '20's, college students. They were very excited about the dance form, and even today we do dances or choreograph routines that involve steps that have old Green Grass Clogger names: Eddie, Earl's, Karen's kicks, Hunt Mallette's. And they are actually calls within the course of the dance. When it's time to do that particular step, that person's name is used, and that person may have not actually danced with the group in 15 years. So a lot of the steps are by the person's name who actually created the step. Now, you can probably go to Seattle or Albuquerque or somewhere, and you may actually find somebody who is teaching another person a step and they will say, "Now, this is the Earl." And Earl is one of the early Green Grass Cloggers.

Life: Was clogging difficult for you to learn?

Mr. Roberson: It seemed so at the time, I guess. But I don't really think so. I'm fairly coordinated, and I just enjoyed the dance. Of course, the theme was so well established at that time that their proficiency was very high and they were encouraging new members all the time. There was never in this group of us being a limiting factor: "Well we don't want
any more dancers; we have enough dancers." When I joined
the team, there were probably 25 Green Grass Cloggers
actively dancing at the time, and that cycles up and down
with time. As you well know, sometimes right now we can't
find enough men to dance. But at that particular time, it was
going real strong in Greenville, and Greenville was aware of
it. There were a lot of local jobs that we did and had a lot of
good times. I didn't pick it up immediately. It took some
time, I guess I'm still picking it up. I don't think I've got it
figured out yet.

**Life:** So if it's continually evolving, you're learning,
everyone's learning new things every time you practice and
dance and go out.

**Mr. Roberson:** Every time I go to practice, I spend a little
time off in the corner creating new sequences of steps.

**Life:** So to the average person would you say that this is a
fairly simple dance to learn?

**Mr. Roberson:** I would say it wouldn't be simple. It would
require some time. It's like anything else: if you really like it,
you'll progress with it; it's pretty infectious. I've never met
anybody who didn't like it. But you can tell a real dancer
when you see one.

**Life:** So what are some of the things that you're proud of as
a clogger? Some of the neat things that you have
accomplished during your clogging years?

**Mr. Roberson:** I guess the thing I first think about more
than anything else is the fun I've had, the travel that has
been available to me through dancing. I probably would
have never been any of the places that I've traveled to. It has
been a very good avenue for traveling all over the United
States and other countries. We recently did a job in
Chicago. We were hired by the Toyota Corporation to
perform and entertain at their National Dealers Convention.
It was a lot of fun and we were treated very nicely and we
gave them a good show. But I've traveled mainly as a part-
timer. I've never danced professionally or with the road
team. Back in the mid '70's, a group that loved it so much,
within the overall group of Green Grass Cloggers, decided,
well, working for a living is getting kind of old in the usual
sense, so enough to make a group of eight moved to
Asheville and from there made contact with booking agents
and actually began doing it full-time: school jobs, festivals,
special larger civic events, anything that would pay to have
good dancing. That's how they made a living for quite some
time. Didn't ever make much money at it, but you needed to
be single, needed to be young, needed to be a little bit crazy,
and you needed not to mind where you were going to get
your next meal or where you were going to sleep next.
Road life is kind of tough. But just filling in part-time when
they needed a guy, I've been to Denmark and Sweden and
Holland and Germany and Belgium and all over the United
States and done a lot of really good festivals and had a big
time, a good time. It's been more of a family than anything
else. It's made up such a large part of my life since the late
'70's that if I had the opportunity--you know, people like to
say, "If they knew what they knew now back then they'd go
back and do things differently"--I'd go back and do it just
the way I did it. I wouldn't change a thing. I guess there
were a few flat tires and [times of] sitting on the side of the
road and wondering if we were ever going to make it; but,
yeah, I'd go back and do it just the way I did it before. So the traveling and the friends I've made and the enjoyment I've had, I'd say that marks the high point.

*Life:* You were mentioning being in other countries, dancing in other countries. Could you tell a difference between the American audience and, say, the European or Danish audience? Was either more receptive to you or more interested, or were they about the same?

*Mr. Roberson:* There were times that they [other countries] seemed to be even more receptive. We were in Sweden, and it was very humorous and very enjoyable to find that the Europeans have become very Westernized. We live in a very
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mobile society at this point. There are square dance clubs and clogging clubs. We found a gentleman in Holland, who, himself, collects and sells string-band music and all kinds of American folk music. He had a selection of records and tapes and CD's that would be the envy of any American. We went to square-dance clubs in which they dressed up in what they assumed to be period dance outfits. The caller at this one particular dance was wearing a rhinestone shirt with frilly leather hanging down. He had cowboy boots and a big Swedish accent, and he was saying "Doe-SEE-Doe-ooo." It was very enjoyable. You find people in another country who are so hungry for what for me was very abundant. As far as how it was received, it was received very well, a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of enjoyment. Pretty much wherever we've been, people were either astonished at something they'd never seen, or they were very uplifted by seeing what they figured was probably the best example of that particular type of dance, and, of course, the old time fiddle tunes too. We have been well received wherever we have been. I've never been hit by a tomato yet!

Life: How does your clogging team compare with a lot of the other clogging teams?

Mr. Roberson: Well, we go back far enough that we tend to more or less remain the same. We have a feeling of associating with the past. Clogging is a melting pot dance. We understand and cherish the concept of it being a dance that has manifested from black-African influence, Indian, Scottish, Irish. Today's dance form seems to be more glitzy, more contemporary. You don't have many conversations with people that are doing clog dances now that can really associate with the past. It's almost like some of the history
has been forgotten. Clog dancing has changed in terms of the music that is available to dance with, dancing with rock 'n' roll or music that for the Green Grass Cloggers seems a little bit foreign. So what we prefer is simply old-time fiddle music. We have to assume that things change. Nothing stays the same; and, as a result of that, we're finding out that, I guess, we are old timers now because we still adhere, more or less, to an older style. And as things change, we find that we're trying to preserve folk dance and clog dancing as it had been twenty years ago or maybe even one hundred years ago. So I guess there is a little conflict there.

Life: I understand that you were talking about the music that you listen to. I had heard, talking with Julie, that you play and you dance only to live music.

Mr. Roberson: That would be true. We really feel uncomfortable doing it any other way. First of all, I don't think performing is our main goal anyway. We dance because we dance individually; together, we dance because of the music. We dance because we have a live band playing music. It's just part of the euphoria involved. We don't want just to cut it up into bits and pieces. We like to keep it in its whole sense. A live band playing old time tunes and dancing, it all evolves into a performance. When you take away any large part of it, you have demolished it quite a bit.

Life: Do you feel it's just tradition that you have a hard time getting men to dance because men have always wanted to be more stern? Or do you feel like this is a particular style of dancing that is not well received by men?

Mr. Roberson: I think it's a genetic defect! I think somehow God created men to be insecure, self-conscious, and inhibited somehow. I think women somehow have a little rhythm box built right in. Women really enjoy the dance, and finding women dancers has really never been a big problem. And there are plenty men that like to dance too, but over the years as far as when you're putting together a group to dance, it's generally harder to find enough men, and usually you have an excess number of women, which is okay too. A couple years ago when we were re-forming the team here in the eastern part of the state, we finally had to give up on the idea of being stuck in the mode that you just had to find two or three more men or you couldn't dance at all. So we just simply took an excess number of women and recreated the routines. You can consider women dancing as men or however you want. We just kind of rechoreographed it and decided not to give it a gender aspect rather than say we need four men and four women to do a set. If we had six women and two men, it still equaled out to eight to make a set, and we just took off and went with that.

Life: And once again it evolved? You were able to take it and evolve with it?

Mr. Roberson: We had to adjust. We had two choices. We could either complain about not having enough people as you traditionally had choreographed the dance and not danced, or take what you've got and don't worry about it and just go ahead and have a good time.

Life: So men and women are able to do all the same steps? A lot of times in dancing, men tend to take a more athletic role. Does clogging have any aspect of that, where men do a more athletic step that the women are not able to attain?
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Mr. Roberson: I think women have the greater burden. The women traditionally, as we choreograph our routines, have to do the spins and twirls. Now it's up to the gentleman to be very articulate in the way he provides his hand or helps a lady twirl. I think clearly that the women have to be more acrobatic because of the fact that as a couple may be moving forward through a routine, she may constantly have to spin while the gentleman is just simply moving forward as a brace or as a post to give the woman a center of balance. I think more is required of the women because of doing the spins and twirls. Other than that, most everybody's doing the same dance form and the same steps, but if you suddenly started making men do all these twirls and ins and outs, you'd probably have a huge heap of flesh sitting on the floor! The women, I think, enjoy the participation in the dance more, but a little bit more is required of them.

Life: I have noticed here in the pictures that you have, the costumes are all very similar. All the ladies may have a different color, but the styles are all the same. Do you supply these costumes, or as members of the Green Grass Cloggers, do they have to do that themselves?

Mr. Roberson: Generally, the ladies or a couple may have more artistic tastes in a perfect costume. We try to make them colorful. We try to be very visual. When we perform, we want to be very visual to the audience. The group within itself makes up its own costumes and either has them made, or some of the ladies are very proficient and just make the dresses and the men's shirts themselves.

Life: It looks fantastic, it truly does! In these pictures--and these are black and white photos--they look incredible.

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Mr. Roberson: Well, the group, as crazy and wild as it is, which is where the enthusiasm comes from, which has kept the group together for so many years, can provide its audiences with so much wonderful entertainment. There has always been a very strong personality pull within the group.

Life: Yes, from these pictures it looks like everybody is smiling and have a great time.

Mr. Roberson: But what has held the group together is the fact that each individual has a right to play a part in the group. Discussions, choreography, ideas, opinions--it's never, ever, at any time been under directorship of one person. It is not a result of one person's ideas. It's actually the result of over three hundred people's ideas. Probably in the last twenty-three years there have been over 300 Green Grass Cloggers. And since there's never been someone who owned the group or controlled the group, at times it would kind of break out into, we'd say, a domestic nightmare. But at the same time the creativity that each individual was allowed to put into it is what has made it grow and evolve into such a dynamic group of people. I find that when you limit yourself to the ideas of one leader, you're limited to the level of expertise or innovation that that one person can provide, and that's never what's happened with the Green Grass Cloggers.

Life: In all these pictures, it is very festive. This is a very festive, very quick-minded activity-like dance. Are there any slow-step tunes? Does it have an aspect like, where there's a sad or ominous type of step or dance? I mean, this is very high energy, very moving.
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**Mr. Roberson:** That's all it is.

**Life:** It's just a celebration dance?

**Mr. Roberson:** It's a spine tingler, and that's all it is. There is nothing incorporated into it of the blues. It is a high energy, spine-tingling, chill-bump arrangement. It has nothing to do with the blues. It's a very enthusiastic combination of motion and rhythm. Many people look at clog dancing simply as a visual art form, but the Green Grass Cloggers, as individuals, many have become excellent dancers over the years, and we find that if a person in the audience were blind, for example, that person obviously has missed the visual stimulation, but we feel that so much of the clog dancing is involved in rhythms, which, as far as I can tell, I don't know the history of tap, but tap dance is very visual, but at the same time, it's a very audio-sensory type of experience. So for someone that would be visually impaired in our audience, [he or she] could have a great amount of enjoyment just from the rhythms and the sounds that we create. It's not just purely a wild acrobatic jumping around. We prefer to keep it in its truest form, an expression of emotion and sound and feeling and just wrap it all up into one.

**Life:** Where exactly do you know the word clogging came from? If it's in a melting pot of all these dances, how was it termed clogging?

**Mr. Roberson:** Clogging, I would say, is a longer term of the word "clog." I would suppose that clog is a European word; shoes worn by the Dutch, for example, were wooden, and they were clogs. Even people in this country today wear shoes that are termed clogs. Typically the first clogs were wooden, and as you walked down a cobble-stone street, they were very loud. And if you wanted to stop and dance, you could hardly make any motion at all without quite a sound being produced. I don't know for a fact, but I would assume that the term clogging is probably a European derivative, the result of the type of shoes worn by Europeans when any dance was performed. It would certainly not be just a visual but very much an audio sensory type thing, and I'll have to assume that it's a good possibility. If anyone wants to offer another idea, we'll throw it right in there, but I'd say that that's probably as good as any.

**Life:** So once again, someone coming in, picking up the dance, that maybe a European brought over and this was brought into it?

**Mr. Roberson:** Right, the word "clog" itself, we would probably have to do some historical study to find out where it is, but the clogging is probably a good definition also of the dance. The chugs, the steps, the stomps--it's very much a physical dance. A lot of it is a heel dance, a stomp. It's not meant to destroy the house if you're dancing, but it has its articulate nature. It's not quite as refined as tap. It has a heavy sound to it, but very rhythmic and very pleasant. It's a lot of fun.

**Life:** What mark would you, as a member of the Green Grass Cloggers, like to leave? Do you feel it would be the history or step or style that you want to leave so that it's remembered?
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**Mr. Roberson:** It would be very necessary, first of all, to maintain the music form that seems to accompany it so well. Old-time fiddle tunes go way back, many of the fiddle tunes now that are played all over the world, especially all over the United States. It was kind of a sad event, but the Civil War during the 1860's took young men thousands of miles away from home. Many would have never traveled more than twenty miles in their whole lives. There was a regiment of soldiers from Alabama, the Alabama Infantry Regiment. Out of one hundred members, ninety of them were fiddle players; it was a whole regiment of fiddle players! As a Civil War soldier moved all over the country going further from home than he would ever normally travel, the songs got passed along. It even went across battle lines, so the history of the music is the most important aspect. As far as clogging has evolved, I think it's very important to remember and value the roots of any art form, the different cultures that play a part. I think it also is very necessary to remember and still convey some of its original form. Again, it plays back to its combination with the music. If you'll keep it with the music, which comes from the 1800's, the dance itself has evolved since the 1800's. The concepts of dancing in square-dance figures, much of this has been forgotten. Contemporary clog dancers are not even aware of many of these aspects between the style of the dance, the history of the dance, and the involvement and history of old-time fiddle music. All three of those are a necessary part.

**Life:** If someone were to read this article and become interested in learning clogging or seeing it performed, how would he/she have to make contact with it? How can you make contact with clogging? Do you have dances, monthly dances, or anything?

**Mr. Roberson:** Contra dancing, which is definitely a European derivative, and square dancing, which is kind of an offshoot from Contra dancing, European dancing: there are monthly square dances and contra dances in Greenville, and you really do need to go to some location where dancing is taking place. And if you have any love for it or any interest in it, believe me, it will overtake you.

**Life:** Do you know of anything that maybe we've missed or something that you'd like to add that you think is important or that you would like for people to know?

**Mr. Roberson:** You know, it's probably been said a thousand times. We've become an extremely mobile society; we've become extremely electronic; and we are constantly being molded and, I think, more or less controlled as our culture and civilization moves on. [Clogging] is something that holds a great attraction of the past. It comes from a time when people created their own things. They came together as a group, large or small, and they wanted to share and have fun and have fellowship. They wanted to move; they wanted to express themselves. They wanted to make joyful noise; they wanted to have fun; they wanted to dance! The combination of the music and dances are inseparable. And again that's why we generally won't dance to tape music. We feel one is as important as the other. The people playing in the band are off to the side playing music, but without them you don't have much. The music itself is a wonderful art form, being able to play instruments and gather all the time just solely to play the music. But if you really wanted an uplifting and soulful experience, you'll just never know what you'd miss, and I would encourage anybody not to be inhibited. If you haven't done it before,
I'd say do what you fear until you fear it no more. I don't view it as an accomplishment; I view it as a gift and as a blessing. It is something that has played a part in my life for going on twenty years, and I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world. Green Grass Cloggers have always, no matter where they've gone, attempted to pass it along and encourage other people to get involved. We have never, as a group, been stuck in an egotistical performer concept. We are the performers; you sit down and watch me perform. We have always encouraged everybody of any culture, where ever we have gone, to participate because our goal is to pass it along for two reasons: One, it's a blessing to share something with other people that is so good, and we are interested very much into preserving it as an art form.

*Life:* This [picture] here of your father. How long has he been dancing?

*The Ladies Take the Spotlight.*
Mr. Roberson: Phil Jameson, who's an old Green Grass Clogger, I think everybody's a Green Grass Clogger. Every time I mention somebody, they've danced with us sometime. Phil Jameson is an excellent musician and a good dancer. He joined the team also back in the '70's or early '80's and Phil plays a strong part in the old-time music community. He was a writer from the Old Time Herald and a lot of people have gotten to know my father, as the article says, though, rather than the traditional since of him learning from his father. The article indicates that he learned from his son. My father had been more involved in his life with ballroom dancing and things like that that were obviously available at the time. But as I danced and traveled and I would come home to visit, he would be very interested in what I was doing and the dance itself, and he would encourage me to show him steps. Since he's been in a retirement status for quite a few years, he has unlimited amount of time to travel and go. So whereas I have an extreme love for dancing and music, I more or less am in a controlled responsible environment of kids and work and everyday responsibility. He goes to more festivals in each twelve month period of a year than I probably ever go in my whole life time. He probably goes to fifty festivals a year. He dances pretty well nonstop. He's quite a trooper. He more or less hangs around with people my age because everybody his age is dead.

Life: So clogging transcends all ages?

Mr. Roberson: Absolutely! There are no cultural barriers. There are no age barriers. A lot of times I think more people aren't involved because they just haven't had an opportunity to be exposed. The Green Grass Cloggers have always concentrated on sharing and exposure and encouraging
more people to become involved, as opposed to being just the stars and keeping it all to themselves. This group as a whole, as I said before, has probably numbered over three hundred people over the last twenty-three years. I have not known anybody yet that didn't want to share it and pass it along and just get everybody dancing.

Life: Do you give workshops?

Mr. Roberson: We've done workshops. In fact, when the road team, the segment of us that was working professionally, most of the income and the work that they were able to secure came from school jobs. Larger school systems in some of your more metropolitan areas of the country are eager to fund performances, especially of American folk culture. So the Green Grass Cloggers have done school jobs in major school systems all over the country, and that again has been a large part in helping them to survive financially and is a very integral part of their work.

Life: I see here it says there's a Green Grass Clogger Day observed in Greenville, one day each year.

Mr. Roberson: It is history now. But Persie Cox literally proclaimed December 1st an Annual Green Grass Clogger Day for all the achievement and contributions to folk arts. In the '70's it was outrageous. It turned Greenville up on its head. I mean, the mayor comes out and proclaims the first day of December Green Grass Clogger Day, and it's put down in the annals of Greenville history. That was a wild thing!

Life: That was great!

Mr. Roberson: The group was still large and strong in Greenville. And with the participation of the public and everything, you know, it was moving; it was chugging along. We would actually get dancers in groups and musicians from all over the country. They traveled to Greenville, and they literally put on a performance. All during the day there would be music, instrument workshops, dance workshops, and then there would be an evening performance and then after the performance we'd stay up all night. Green Grass Clogger Day was an annual event, and it was a big time. It's gone by the wayside.

Life: What is free-styling?

Mr. Roberson: During a hour segment at a civic function, typically the band comes out, plays a tune and we dance. It gives us a break and also highlights the band as performers too. They get to do their own stuff with songs they choose. Generally the last thing we always do is a free-style. The band will strike up, and we, from a line, will come out individually and do some flat footing. So free-styling has always been an integral part. It also encourages people that it's you that can dance. You don't have to somehow have eight Siamese twins here to dance. You can dance. I can dance. I want to show you that you can dance. So free-styling has always been an integral part; we are trying to convey it as an individual form. You want to dance, dance! It's very rhythmic. It has a lot of tones and sounds. As I said, somebody that's visually impaired could go to a performance that we would give and go away saying, "Man,
I'm glad I went." I can't call it tap, but it has a lot to do with sounds and rhythms and motion.

*Life:* Tap is more on the upbeat of a song?

*M. Roberson:* I suppose. Some Green Grass Cloggers have even gone up and spent some time with Philadelphia hoofer on the corners and stuff like that, and, as a result, there are a few Green Grass Cloggers that are exquisite, articulate pros. We're talking dance. They can rattle out some rhythms that will make your eyeballs quiver. And there has just been a lot of exposure with people all over. Some Green Grass Cloggers have even gone off and formed new teams and groups and diversified the group. But as far as the line dancing and stuff that's going on now, the line dance clogging and dancing to Neil Diamond and all this kind of stuff, I'd be an old fart when it comes to that. I ain't gonna get into all that! The main thing is they've lost the music.

*Life:* That's sad to me.

*M. Roberson:* Then they've lost the figures: the squares, the turns, the twirls. There is some loss going on and we just don't know how to do it any other way so we continue to evolve and choreograph and we still create new routines. But it's all oriented towards a combination of couples, individuals, and a lot of rhythms. Syncopation, timing, rhythms, foot work—it's audio sensory as well as physical. We were kind of invited to a North Carolina Clogging Association meeting in Goldsboro a couple years back, and we went and did not even recognize it as the art form. We didn't know what they were doing. Now Buck Swamp Cloggers from Goldsboro are a good traditional group like ourselves. They're the ones that sponsored it, but all these other little preteens and teenagers, very young, I mean you have to be kinda young and strong to move it, kick it, pluck it, cluck it, chug it. But they who sponsored the gathering were the only ones that danced to more traditional music with the figures and the squares and the motions and the movements and the rhythms and the clogging steps. All those other groups that attended that now represent the North Carolina Clogging Association, the art form itself to me was not even recognizable, and I'm not being extravagant; I'm not exaggerating. I'm being factual. I didn't even recognize it as the same art form, and this is the same group that sent an individual to state legislature to request that the North Carolina State Legislature put it down on paper that it be the North Carolina State Dance. We've got state birds, state trees; the request was being that this be the state dance, and the people who were requesting it are now evolved into an art form that is not even recognizable.

*Life:* Do you know if it was ever accepted as the North Carolina State Dance?

*M. Roberson:* I don't know. I didn't even recognize it as the same art form.

*Life:* What group was this?

*M. Roberson:* Well, Buck Swamp Kick'n Cloggers sponsored it, but it's the North Carolina Clogging Association. It's just evolved beyond the point where it's even associated with what would be considered traditional. I'm not opposed to evolving and change and innovation, but it's gone to the point now that anybody who might get
involved as a teen, I just feel they would miss out on a lot. It would be kind of like a young black man never having known slavery or Martin Luther King or anything that would be a part of his rich past. It would be kind of like dropping in the planet having no awareness of anything beyond the day before yesterday, and I think there is a lot to be missed, especially the music. Old-time bands are hard to come by, and now it's all records. It's all boogie woogie, Neil Diamond or whatever is current. You know your term is to what your caller was and when you start making comments like "you call that music"; well, course we hear that ad on the radio all the time, but it's true in the sense that you only know what you're exposed to. Kids like that are joining these little clog teams. The figures are gone, the precise, articulate footwork seems to be gone, the music is gone. It's like a man going to buy a suit and he comes out naked because they're just all gone. It's kinda sad.

*Life:* Well I'm certainly glad that you were able to do this interview with us and share it.

*Mr. Roberson:* Just remember the name of that song, "Let's go down to the rock quarry honey and get a little bolder." A lot of the guys on the road team, especially the older ones, Doug Baker, Hunt and Brian, they go back to the early '70's, so watch them work a crowd. It was not a natural thing. A lot of us are kind of shy. The dance is one thing; the music is something else, the free-style, the workshop, but to go to the "mike" and communicate with the audience can be a little bit of a strain.

*Life:* Greg [Roberson] does that good though. He really does.

*Mr. Roberson:* But to see Brian and Hunt work a crowd, it was good. And they were just entertainers, complete from A-Z. They'd go in, they could bring them up, they could take them down, and they'd go off the stage and leave them wanting more. I mean they could work a crowd. So they evolved as entertainers as well as dancers. It's a rich history; it really is - a lot of fun!

**Conclusion**

*By Leiza Manning*

In an age of cellular phones, fax machines, and ever increasing mobility of people, Greg Roberson is preserving a piece of history. A quiet, demure man, Greg comes alive with the sound of old-time fiddle music. Whether clogging or just simply talking about clogging, Greg has an excited willingness to share with whoever will listen a rich and colorful history of an energetic, vivacious dance.

"All three of those are a necessary part," stated Greg, as he referred to the music, style, and history of clogging. In life, there are constant changes. If left up to Greg Roberson, clogging will never lose its history; it will simply be preserved and passed down.
Leiza Manning (left) and Julie Lang with Greg Roberson