May Nichols gave this song to Margaret MacArthur in Guilford, Vermont, in October 1961 and said she had it from her husband’s mother, Nellie Nichols. Although a few Southern folksong collections have different versions of a related song (most with drunken husbands), none contain these final two stanzas. Thanks to Bob Coltman, it seems that Mrs. Nichols’ “Single Girl” is most like “I Wish I Were Single Again”—a song popular in the late 1800s and printed in a Wehman’s Songster. Margaret’s recording of May Nichols appears to be its only collection in the folk tradition. Now both Margaret and her granddaughter, Robin, have recorded “Single Girl,” or “Single Again” as they title it, for their own CDs, although this song remains a little-known treasure.

Contra Dance:  
Half Mad  
by Beadle

Author’s note: This dance uses the notation L to refer to the person dancing the gent/lark/left role and R to refer to the person dancing the lady/raven/right role. Specific role terms have deliberately been left to the individual caller’s discretion.

Becket (clockwise progression)

A1 Circle left ¾  
Neighbor swing

A2 R’s chain across (8)  
R’s mad robin (8) while L’s “half mad” (4)*  
and right shoulder round in the center (4)**

B1 Hey for four (pass partner by the left shoulder to start)

B2 Partner right shoulder round and swing  
Slide left along the set to progress

*“During the “half mad,” R’s essentially perform an entire mad robin, starting by moving counterclockwise in front of, then around, their partners and coming back to the place they started the move. L’s start by moving/sliding counterclockwise behind their partners, then passing in front of their partners to the center of the set facing the other L, with whom they right shoulder round 1x and end facing their partners (L’s back-to-back in the middle facing out; R’s facing in) ready to start the hey for four.

**This is the figure previously known as “gypsy.” Though CDSS has not jumped into the fray to endorse another term, we are aware that some communities and callers have made a substitution for this figure. See page 24 of the Summer 2019 News (available online) for more information on this topic.

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Read more inside this issue!  
Turn to pages 18–19 and learn additional details about the life of Margaret MacArthur and her dedication to the preservation of American folk song.