

April Photo Challenge

Contributed by Mary Hammer, with additional information from Barney McClure, Ralph Munro, and Steve Shipe

Who is the gentleman facing the camera? What is the purpose of his visit? What does he have to do with Washington history? Well, the gentleman is Arlo Guthrie. The photograph was taken on April 24, 1985, right before Arlo performed "Roll on Columbia, Roll on" atop the Capitol steps at an event to promote it as contender for state folk song. The song was written by Arlo's father, [Woody Guthrie](#).

From left to right in the challenge photograph: Karen Hansen Munro, Ralph Munro, Arlo Guthrie, and Barney McClure (who hired Arlo to perform).



Several people emailed with their memories of this event: David Elliott was singing along behind Arlo, Ralph Munro summarized the historical events leading to Arlo's performance, and [Barney "jazzbones" McClure](#), who arranged Arlo's visit, gave a remarkable account of how this event played into a larger issue: funding for the Arts Commission. Finally, Steve Shipe recalls an even earlier, related event. Read on for their remembrances!

Ralph Munro, Washington's Secretary of State at the time of this photograph, remembers:

"Helen Davis, of South Bend, had written the state song many years before ['Washington, My Home'] ... So along comes 'Louie Louie'. A bill was introduced to make it the state song. George Barner, local singer, political leader, etc. was recruited to sing 'Louie Louie' on the Capitol Steps. The crowd was big, the sun was out and it was FUN...

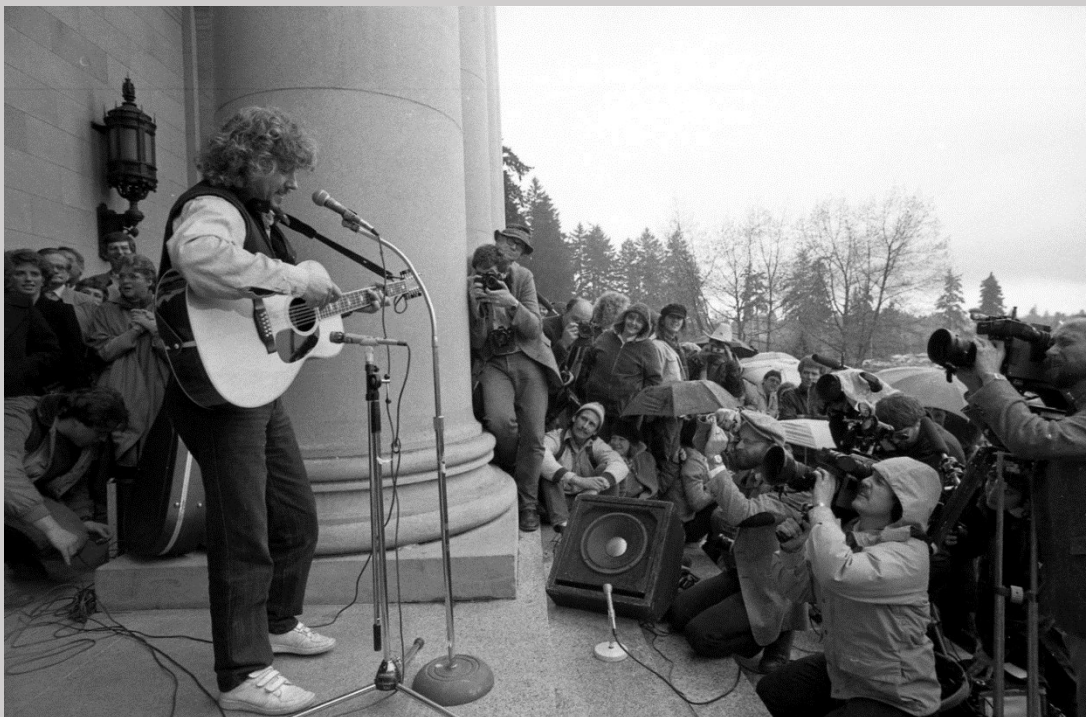
Then Rep. Joe Tanner jumped in with a proposal to make 'Roll on Columbia' the State song. And he recruited Arlo Guthrie to come play. That was a BIG crowd and lots of fun. And that's when the picture was taken on the porch outside the Secretary of State's office."

Ultimately, Guthrie suggested making "Roll on Columbia, Roll on" the state folk song, so as not to offend "Louie Louie" or "Washington, My Home" supporters.

Barney McClure, a jazz pianist who served a term in the Washington State Legislature (1983- 1985), gives a remarkable account of how this event played into a larger issue: funding for the Arts Commission. At the time of the photo, McClure was Executive Director of the Washington Arts Association, advocating on behalf of arts issues. He arranged Arlo Guthrie's visit, and remembers:

"... in the 'you never know what to expect' department, one event bears noting. I was requested by Representative Joe Tanner of Vancouver to handle the details of having Arlo Guthrie appear at the Capitol on April 24th to introduce "Roll On Columbia, Roll On" (Woody Guthrie) as a contender for state folk song. During a very crowded and well-attended noon performance on the capitol steps, Rep. Grimm - House Ways & Means Chairman - sent word to me that he would double the Arts Commission's budget request if I could get Arlo to sing his famous 'Alice's Restaurant,' a song he (Arlo) made clear he would not do and had not done in ten years. The selection is a half-hour long. I verified the promise immediately.

That evening, toward the end of a long concert, Arlo said to the audience "This is for a good



cause" and launched into the piece. Next day when Rep. Grimm saw me coming, he acknowledged his pledge and gave his word to try. Knowing he would never get a double budget out of either house, I encouraged him to help settle the differences in the two house budgets by settling a problem created by Rep. O'Brien with Rotunda Artwork dollars that the House was attempting to take away from the Commission's operating budget.

Whatever the cause (however the solution occurred), the next House budget had solved the problem and placed the Commission's budget in agreement with the Senate version. This ultimately became the final, approved version. Stranger things have happened on The Hill."

To bring the state song theme full circle, **Steve Shipe** (an Environmental Tribal Coordinator for the Transportation Department) remembers *meeting* Helen Davis, the aforementioned writer of the official state song, "Washington, My Home". In 1967, his 6th grade class participated in a Spring Concert:

"Several of us dressed as former Presidents (I was George Washington), and recited extracts from their famous speeches. The school choir sang "Washington, My Home". Afterwards, me, Abe Lincoln, John Kennedy, and Uncle Sam had our picture taken with Helen Davis herself and it appeared on page three of the Seattle Times the next day! My one brush with fame!"

And here's the photograph!



I've really appreciated reading everyone's stories around the various state songs. Keep them coming!

Images:

Karen Hansen Munro, Ralph Munro, Arlo Guthrie, and Barney McClure, April 24, 1985, House of Representatives Photograph Collection, Washington State Archives.

Arlo Guthrie performs on the Capitol steps, April 24, 1985, House of Representatives Photograph Collection, Washington State Archives.

Louie Louie for State Song!, 1985, Muriel Little Scrapbooks, Washington State Archives.

Barney McClure, Ralph Munro, Arlo Guthrie, April 24, 1985, House of Representatives Photograph Collection, Washington State Archives.

State Song Composer Honored, April 19, 1967, The Seattle Times, from the scrapbook of Steve Shipe.



Barney McClure, Ralph Munro, Arlo Guthrie, April 24, 1985, House of Representatives Photograph Collection, Washington State Archives.