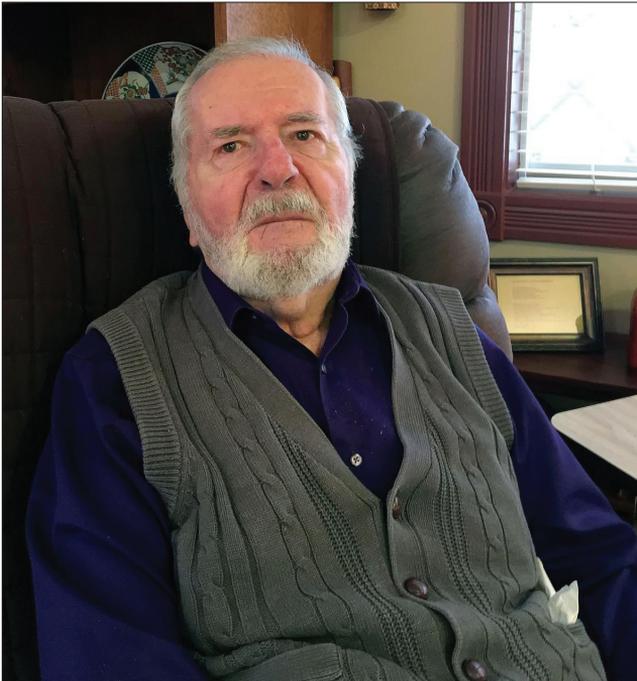


IN MEMORIAM

BARRE TOELKEN

15.06.1935 – 09.11.2018



Barre Toelken, a distinguished and colorful scholar in American folkloristics, passed away on November 9. Toelken was widely known as a recorder of Navajo folklore and healing traditions, researcher into ballads and Japanese folklore, captivating lecturer, and author of many books.

John Barre Toelken was born in Massachusetts and grew up in an ordinary family. He studied natural resources at Utah State University, yet after spending two years on the Navajo Reservation, he continued his studies at the graduate school of the University of Oregon, where he received his PhD in medieval literature in 1964. The professorship in the English language (1966–1985) was followed by the professorship in the English language and history at Utah State University. He was also director of the folklore program at this university in 1985–2002. During his career he was president of the American Folklore Society (AFS), and editor of the journal published by the AFS as well as the journal *Western Folklore*. The annual conference of the American Folklore Society in Miami in 2016 awarded him with the lifework prize.

Barre Toelken's passion and openness both in research and in his personal life made him exceptional. He was a groundbreaker and innovator of folkloristics, who never hesitated to make his own decisions and stand up for his own worldview. As a passionate traveler and collector of folklore, he recorded different traditions. Toelken was accepted into the Yellowmans' Navajo family and showed great respect for his American Indian kin. His gesture to return to his Navajo family his entire collection of tape recordings he had made during scores of years provoked heated argument; however, he opined it was the least he could do for a living culture. Toelken married a Japanese-American, Midori (Miiko), in 1957, although interracial marriages were forbidden by law until the 1960s. Barre and Miiko Toelken had six children.

Barre Toelken's classical works include *The Dynamics of Folklore*; *Morning Dew and Roses: Nuance, Metaphor and Meaning in Folksongs*; *Ghosts and the Japanese: Cultural Experience in Japanese Death Legends*; *The Anguish of Snails: Native American Folklore in the West*. A characteristic specimen of his fieldwork classics is "The Yellowman Tapes, 1996–1997", which was published in the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1998, and in which he recounts his decision to return the tapes to the Yellowman family (see https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1711&context=english_facpub).

Mare Kõiva

You can listen to Barre Toelken singing at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgqF8OjFaRU>.