

Bok delights local audience

By Jennifer Kelly

For the Valdez Vanguard

I've been listening to Gordon Bok's music for more than 20 years. His has been a voice of comfort and inspiration to carry me across the Atlantic and Pacific. His voice, as much as the maritime legends he sings, carries the sounds of the sea.

Bok, whose sailing songs recall his native Maine coast, arrived with Carol Rohl on Saturday night from Cordova via an Alyeska Ship Escort Response Vessel System boat.

The performance finally began. Bok chose a traditional favorite, "Johnny Todd," to open the evening. His voice was lilting, round and rich. His accompaniment on the 12-string guitar brought a joyful sparkle to the melody.

Bok's voice, his most exquisite

[The Washington Post]

Style

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1999

Gordon Bok's Sea Stories

Gordon Bok is a throwback to the days when performers carrying acoustic guitars seemed much more interested in the world outside themselves than the world within. Which is one of the reasons the Saturday night performance by Bok and his wife, harpist Carol Rohl, at the Washington Ethical Society proved so refreshing. Free of even a hint of self-infatuation, the concert was devoted to songs rooted in history or sparked by the imagination.

For decades now, Bok has been writing and collecting songs inspired by life in Maine and the Maritime Provinces, so it wasn't surprising to hear well-crafted tales of loggers and river drivers and battles between American natives and French settlers. A superb storyteller equipped with six- and 12-string guitars and a mellifluous baritone voice, Bok unfolded each narrative

with the care it deserved, then relied on the audience to help gently underscore the choruses in hushed harmony. Because many of the songs, including one inspired by the swift clipper ship *Marco Polo*, needed to be placed in historical context, Bok frequently punctuated the evening with anecdotes that were both entertaining and enlightening.

The evening's revelation came when Bok accompanied Rohl on a few instrumental, sparkling and haunting by turns. Though Rohl was playing a Celtic harp, she frequently demonstrated her affinity for Paraguayan harp music, which sometimes used different time signatures simultaneously. The shimmering weave of harp tones and supple guitar rhythms cast a spell unlike anything else the duo performed.

—Mike Joyce

A Review: GORDON BOK

Gordon Bok: A legend. I heard him seventeen years ago, and then again just recently, when he performed in concert on July 21 at the Congregational Christian Church in Lubec, at the concert sponsored by QRLT.

In my opinion he hasn't changed; he is ageless. There are certain vital relationships in the scheme of things: pebbles to beach; raindrops to ocean. We could add: Bok to folk music.

If what they say is true—that the human body is made up of ninety percent water—then Mr. Bok's must be mostly seawater. He grew up on the sea. He has soaked it up and gives it back through the imagery in his songs, stories and dreams. These songs express many aspects of human experience from

singing to a baby to logging down a river, to what it feels like to deal with a boat, to shipwreck. His versatility as a story-teller extends to comic songs about dogs, even to songs about cops.

But most folk songs seem to be sad. They are about loss (of love, of life, of meaning) and about longing. Mr. Bok's voice is unusually suited for this genre, being rich, mellow, and somehow capable of expressing deep pathos.

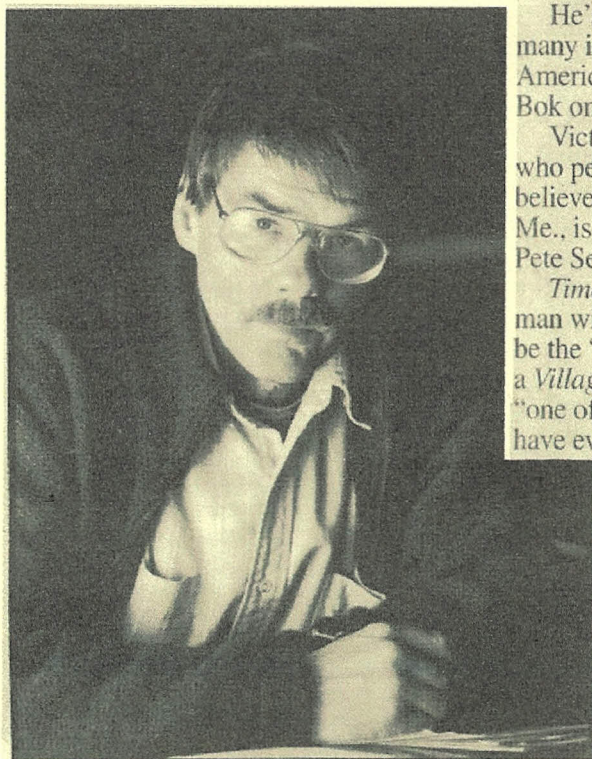
Time called Bok poet laureate of seafarers

BY ADRIAN CHAMBERLAIN
Times Colonist staff

He's hardly a household word. Yet many in the music world consider American singer/songwriter Gordon Bok one of the grand old men of folk.

Victoria musician Bill Gallaher—who performs with Bok tonight—believes the musician from Camden, Me., is the heir apparent to folk god Pete Seeger.

Time magazine once deemed this man with the rich, mahogany voice to be the "poet laureate" of seafarers. And a *Village Voice* critic touted Bok as "one of the most moving performers I have ever seen."



Solitude vs. Solitude

The Music of Gordon Bok

by Scott Alarik

(from Sing Out! Magazine April '92)

Folk legend returns

Revered singer Gordon Bok delivers his gift of music

BY STEVE KLEIN

LAURENCE, Vt. (AP)—Gordon Bok, a folk singer and songwriter, is performing at the Vermont State House on Friday night.

Bok, 68, is a Maine native who has lived in Vermont for several years. He is known for his songs about the sea and his work as a woodcarver.

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Gordon Bok is not an easy man to know, which makes people want to know him all the more. It is not so much that the singer-songwriter-instrument builder-woodcarver-sailor from Maine is reclusive, although he is a private man. The mystique is more in what he does offer; vivid and telling glimpses of his edges are sketched into his lyrics. Could he be as bold an eccentric as the old sailors who people his ballads? As tender, ethereal and wise as the sea-creatures about whom he ponders with wonder and affection? There is something deeply rooted, ancient and timeless to his songs, yet he is an utter original. From the instruments he plays to the myths he explores, the music is indelibly his own.

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with the care it deserved, then relied on the audience to help gently underscore the choruses in hushed harmony. Because many of the songs, including one inspired by the swift clipper ship *Marengo* (Bok needed to be placed in historical context, Bok frequently punctuated the evening with anecdotes that were both entertaining and enlightening).

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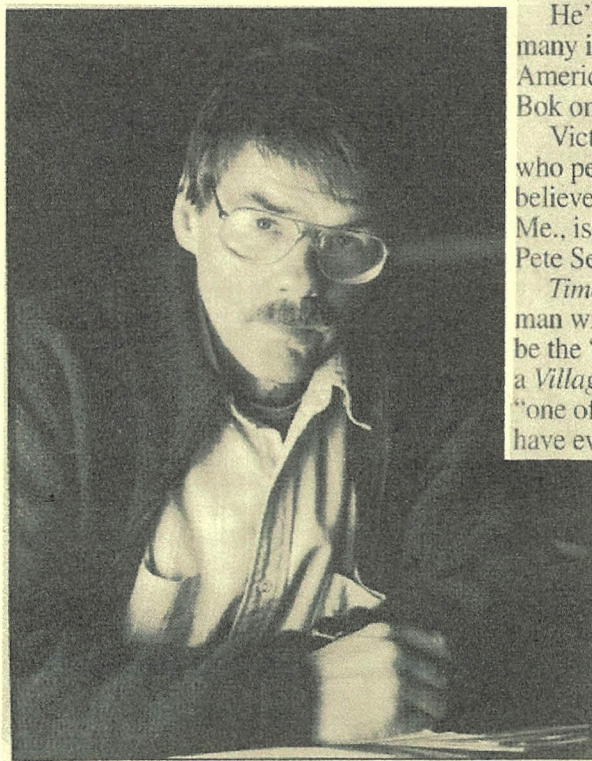
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BY STEVE KLEIN
Lewiston Sun-Journal

There's no telling what songs Gordon Bok will choose to sing Friday night at the Ten Pound Island Collection.

But whether he chooses the 50-year-old folk songs from the Camden, Maine, area or the 12-string guitar and the old-timey tunes that Bok has collected from the Maine coast, he will be singing to a deep and lasting effect on his audience.

Bok, who has been singing for the last 30 years, will perform at 8 p.m. at the Ten Pound Island Collection.

Bok, the 64-year-old singer and songwriter, is a true folk legend. He has been performing for 30 years.

He can recite an entire song with a voice that is deep and

On music

Gordon Bok

8 p.m. Friday

at the Ten Pound Island Collection

Camden, Maine

Admission: \$10, \$5 for 12th graders

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loves to sing. I do with people. Learning to sing is a great joy, but so is writing and creating.

One reason Bok is happy to perform is that he is surrounded by people who love music. He is surrounded by people who love music.

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