

FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

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FOLKLIFE AND THE ELDERLY

In retrospect 1981 was a year in which the role of the elderly in society and particularly their role in the maintenance of the country's cultural heritage was a focus of national interest and a reiterating theme of Folklife Center activities.

The 1981 White House Conference on Aging officially opened at the Sheraton Washington Hotel on November 30 with a keynote address by Richard S. Schweiker, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to a plenary conference session attended by some 2,200 delegates and 1,200 official observers. The four-day program consummated a series of activities—community forums, mini conferences, and technical committee meetings—set in motion by congressional legislation passed in 1978.

The delegates and official observers assembled in Washington to participate in committee meetings to discuss a wide range of topics such as the economy of an aging population, housing alternatives, and older Americans as a continuing resource. Although cultural issues were not highlighted in the formal agenda, cultural events complemented the program. Over a

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Leisurely conversation near Windsor Locks, Conn., 1942. Farm Security Administration photograph by John Collier, Prints and Photographs Division. From the "Generation to Generation" exhibit.

GRANT TO FEDERAL CYLINDER PROJECT

The American Folklife Center has been awarded a grant of \$15,000 by the L. J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation of Oakland, California for the continuing work of the Federal Cylinder Project.

The L. J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation is the first private foundation to designate Folklore/Folklife as a separate funding category. The category was set up in 1980, and, since that time, the foundation has awarded approximately a dozen grants under the heading. Seven grants

were awarded for calendar year 1982, totalling \$70,500. They went to such institutions as the Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology at the University of California, Los Angeles for the continuing work of setting up a Visual Media Archive; the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco to fund the position of a staff folklorist to coordinate all folklife programming for the Federal Parks Department in the area; and the Los Angeles organization Saving and Preserving Arts and Cultural Environments (SPACES) for their project to locate, document, and preserve American folk art

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DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Back in the 1960s I frequented a number of oldtime fiddlers' conventions in Virginia and North Carolina. They offered prizes for fiddle playing, usually decided upon by two or three judges selected from an informal roster of local devotees (generally not performers themselves) who were willing to take on the onerous responsibility. When the awards were announced at the end of the fiddlers' convention, it was not unusual for the prize to be awarded to someone from the immediate community, which inevitably engendered intense grumbling on the part of other fiddlers who entered the contest. I suppose I grumbled, too, since I was sometimes a contestant as well as an observer, and the standards

of judging seemed inconsistent if not downright biased. So I should have been delighted when, as I began to correspond with people interested in fiddling and fiddlers' contests from other parts of the country, I found that there was a strong movement to make the judging for the contests more systematic, using point systems for specifically defined characteristics of "good" fiddling, and more objective, using devices such as sequestering the judges so that they could not see who was playing. Far from being delighted, however, I found the trend toward this kind of systematic judging disquieting. Would the new and rigorously applied standards foster only one kind of fiddling style? Would regional variety be eliminated under the guise of objectivity? I now wished sentimentally for the old hit-or-miss system, complete with flagrant favoritism for the local musicians. At least with the old system nobody's artistic integrity was fundamentally challenged; if you did not win, you just blamed the crooked judges!

These thoughts came to mind recently when I was shown a list of local folk artists which had been prepared for use by community cultural agencies, and which was presented with a cover sheet explaining that all the artists listed were certified as authentic folk artists. All of us who work closely with folk culture fret from time to time that public programs presenting folk arts fail to locate and present the best representatives of folk tradition available in their locality, or that things are presented as folk arts which are not folk arts at all. Yet when I saw a list which labeled particular artists as certified, I felt that uneasy sense coming over me that I recalled regarding the objective systems for judging oldtime fiddling. Half of me longed for the guidance of a formal list, but the other half rebelled against any system that certified some at the expense of others.

The same uneasiness seems to overtake me when I am told in glowing terms about the Japanese system for designating certain master artists as "living national treasures." The idea of honoring them, encouraging them, and rewarding them for their maintenance of traditional arts seems wonderful; indeed, the Folk Arts Program of

the National Endowment for the Arts has instituted a series of National Heritage Awards which accomplishes these same purposes. But our American version of the idea, while emphasizing the honor, tends to play down the certification, particularly insofar as it might seem an exclusive certification. It is wonderful to honor a blues singer, for example, but problematic to suggest that any particular blues singer is formally designated as more worthy than another blues singer. Furthermore, most Americans would squirm at the idea that blues as an artistic form is being given formal certification as more important than, say, spirituals. Nor should it be suggested that any one ethnic group or region has permanent claim to a certified artistic slot. We love to honor an artist, an art, a skill, or a way of life, but we balk at the idea of giving any person or any form of cultural expression permanent hierarchical ranking in our civilization.

Yet another form of this curious and murky issue has surfaced for us at the Folklife Center with the undertaking of a formal study in cooperation with the Department of the Interior which addresses the question of "intangible elements of culture" within the context of Federal historic preservation responsibilities. Since one technique in the historic preservation movement is the employment of systems of designation, complete with a formal apparatus for nomination, evaluation, and certification, the question naturally arose whether such systems might not be applied to intangible cultural traditions. If there can be a National Register of Historic Places, why not create a parallel National Register for distinguished storytellers, oldtime fiddlers, quilters, or whatever? It has been interesting to me to discover, in the process of soliciting ideas and reactions from a broad range of consultants, that there is virtually no support for instituting such a formal, hierarchical system of designation for arts and artists. Apparently many other Americans share my sense of disquiet when the idea of honoring begins to verge into permanent, official designations.

All these instances seem to point to a dilemma of sorts which we face in trying to encourage folk culture and

deepen the awareness of it with the wider American public. We work in a nation which in its expression of national consciousness uses hierarchical ranking as a means of praise: I think of "We're Number One!" and Miss America and the Top Forty as manifestations of this inclination. Yet none of these designations has governmental sanction, and none of them is permanent. The very reason for shouting "We're Number One!" is a nagging uncertainty about the truth of the matter. Applying ranking systems, with all their measurements and weighted categories, to humane values is something Americans seem to enjoy—but only so long as everyone understands that the declared results are both uncertain and impermanent. You can rank fiddlers on the smoothness of the bowing, but ultimately you must yield to the possibility, not only that smoothness is not the only important criterion, but even that scratchiness may be a positive virtue in some styles.

Humane values are neither finite nor infinite, but simply spiritual, and thus do not lend themselves well to systems of quantification and systematic ranking. When I read recently in the *Washington Post* about the Federal government's efforts to quantify and rank segments of the California coastline for aesthetic values—with points scored for such criteria as visual variety—I could not help thinking that such efforts, though inevitable in the world we live in, are also inevitably inconclusive. If visual variety is an incontestable aesthetic virtue, how shall we rank the majesty of the Plains, where the opposite quality seems to call forth a comparable aesthetic response?

I shall venture no further philosophically, but practically speaking Americans seem to solve these dilemmas with an artful democratic vagueness about honors and designations in the cultural sphere. We want our national honors and designations, but we don't want them to be taken too seriously. In 1927 Henry Ford tried to organize and systematize the grassroots phenomenon of fiddlers' contests by setting up local contests which led in an orderly progress through state playoffs to a final national contest to determine the champion fiddler. The champion finally

selected—by chance a favorite of Mr. Ford's—was no more thought of as *the best fiddler than I am*, yet the process itself was quite stimulating to the world of fiddling and probably contributed in some measure to the revived interest in oldtime fiddling in the earlier part of this century. A grayer civilization might have concluded that one cannot select "world champions" in a nation where cultural diversity is a preeminent fact of life. But that's no fun: instead, America has generated dozens of competing fiddlers' contests all of which proclaim the winner to be world champion. Democratic vagueness, full of the pretense of orderly and scientific deliberation but without any permanently conferred status, allows us culturally to have our cake and eat it, too. We certify and select and designate and confer honors on our fine folk artists and the cultural traditions they bear witness to, but at the same time we take care not to make the system too systematic nor the results too incontestable.

As for me, I love fiddlers' contests, but I have sworn off accepting requests to be a judge.

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CYLINDER PROJECT

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environments. As Philip M. Jelley, Secretary and Foundation Manager, explained, the foundation has not seen the award of grants in this category as a vehicle for preserving specific folk cultural landmarks or artifacts; rather, the grants are made to projects that help to delineate the Folklore/Folklife field, contribute to scholarship on American folk culture, or further the production of publications, festivals, or other folk cultural presentations of high quality and professionalism.

Organized in 1967 by Mr. and Mrs. L. J. Skaggs, the foundation is a source of funding mostly for innovative, smaller projects. Grants are made to tax exempt charitable organizations under eight program categories. Preference is given to projects "involved with the alleviation of social problems and concerns, as well as the enrichment and preservation of our cultural and historic heritages, both here and abroad." For further information write: Jillian Steiner Sandrock, Program Officer, The L. J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, 1330 Broadway, Suite 1730, Oakland, California 94612.

GIFTS TO KEGAN FUND

The Center received several generous year-end gifts to be used for its work supported by the Elizabeth Hamer Kegan Fund. Lawrence Kegan of Washington, D.C., who has regularly supported the Fund since his wife's untimely death in 1978, contributed \$1,000; Myron Coler of New York gave \$5,000 in memory of his parents, Marcus and Bertha Coler; and Mrs. Irvin McCreary of Temple, Texas, whose daughter Raye Virginia Allen is a member of the Center's Board, contributed 100 shares of Ashland Oil.

Elizabeth Hamer Kegan, former Assistant Librarian of Congress, actively assisted the Center in its early years, providing strong guidance and counsel. The memorial fund named for her was created with the goal of assisting the Center in its publications program. It is a revolving fund, authorized to receive gifts and income from sales.

FOLKLIFE AND THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

If a researcher were investigating a topic such as the origins of the log cabin in North America or the religious observances of slaves through the collections of the Library of Congress, the quest might well begin in offices of the American Folklife Center and its Archive of Folk Culture. The Center and the Folk Archive serve as the focal point for the Library's collections pertaining to folklife and folk cultural traditions. But the Library's collections include nearly 80 million items—books, pamphlets, newspapers, microforms, manuscripts, maps, motion pictures, sound recordings, music, prints, photographs, posters, and so forth—in over 400 different languages. Clearly, the folk cultural portion of this mammoth collection will not fit into two offices.

In fact, nearly every Library division houses resources with folk cultural content. For instance, among the four million maps, charts, atlases, and globes in the Geography and Map Division are numerous older maps decorated with colorful illustrations from mythology and early lore, as well as the 750,000 insurance maps published by the Sanborn Map Company which record the location and construction of buildings in American cities and towns from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries. The Manuscript Division contains the personal papers of many well-known and lesser known scholars, including Margaret Meade, Sigmund Freud, William McGee, the first president of the American Anthropological Association, and Rodolfo Schuller, a specialist on Central and South America. Other collections of interest to folklorists are organized under subject headings such as Black History Miscellany, Religion Miscellany, and the Indian Language Collection. Among the extensive holdings of the Prints and Photographs Division are photographs taken in the rural upland South by Doris Ulmann, images of folk-singers and folk musicians made by John and Alan Lomax, and Edward S. Curtis's famous photographs of North American Indians. The division houses



The trade card from Seth Norwood & Co., Beverly, Mass. will be included in the Folklife Center's American cowboy exhibit.

several major collections of architectural photographs as well. Some of these are the Pictorial Archives of Early American Architecture (PAEAA) which document both architect designed and vernacular buildings in all parts of the country, the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), and the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER). The HABS and HAER collections result from a joint effort begun in 1933 by the U.S. Department of the Interior, the American Institute of Architects, and the Library of Congress to record buildings across the nation. The collections include architectural drawings, photographs, maps, floor-plans, site descriptions, and annotations of the history and significance of the buildings.

The Folklife Center engaged Holly Cutting Baker to survey this vast amount of material and write *Folklife and the Library of Congress*. The 42-page booklet offers an overview of the collections of the Center, the Folk Archive, and 18 other Library offices. It gives examples of the folk cultural materials to be found in each, suggests some of the primary reference tools offering access to the materials, mentions lead times and other factors related to research of the materials, and includes Library locations and public hours for the collections. The publication is available at no charge from the Library of Congress, American Folklife Center, Washington, D.C. 20540.

AMERICAN COWBOY RETROSPECTIVE

The Library of Congress recently received the first portion of a generous gift of \$200,000 from United Technologies in support of the Folklife Center's upcoming exhibition on the American cowboy. The gift will be used to develop the exhibit which is scheduled to open in early 1983 at the Library and travel to three other North American museums thereafter. In addition, United Technologies has agreed to publish in cooperation with the Center a fully illustrated accompanying publication.

The display will survey the cowboy from his origins as a migrant agricultural worker to his status as an international mythical hero. It will explore the cowboy image in literature, cinema, music, and fashion, presenting him as he was and as he is today. The installation will include photographs, manuscripts, books, posters, artifacts, films, and fine arts from the Library's collections and lent by other public and private institutions.

Exhibit curator Lon Wood Taylor of Santa Fe, New Mexico visited the Library in January to work with the Exhibits Office on the final selection of items to be displayed and to complete editorial work for the publication.

The American Folklife Center will sponsor several workshops and symposia at the Library pertaining to the American cowboy during the course of the six-month exhibit.

THE TRUMAN MICHELSON COLLECTION

With the copying of the Truman Michelson collection of 123 wax cylinders onto tape, the Federal Cylinder Project has now concluded the preservation of all known cylinder holdings in Federal agencies covering the north-eastern United States and western Woodlands areas. Michelson's Fox, Sauk, Kickapoo, and Shawnee material can now be added to the already preserved collections of Ojibwa, Menominee, Winnebago, Iroquois, and Passamaquoddy. Documentary information related to all of these tribes and the recorded collections will be incorporated into the first of 11 projected Federal Cylinder Project Native American catalogs.

Following the general organizational principle of the Smithsonian Institu-

tion's *Handbook of North American Indians*, the tribes recorded on the cylinder collections have been grouped for the forthcoming catalog according to their earliest known locations. By the time they were actually recorded, however, many had moved or had been relocated by the government onto reservations far from their original homelands. Thus, while most of the Michelson collection is contained in the Northeastern catalog, he actually recorded the Kickapoo in the Southwest, possibly in Mexico, where a band of them migrated from their original location in present-day Wisconsin, and the Shawnee, once living in the Ohio Valley area, were recorded in Oklahoma.

Truman Michelson (1879-1938) was one of the most prominent scholars specializing in Native American languages; his particular contribution was comparative studies of Algonquian speaking peoples. He published widely in such journals as *American Anthropol-*

gist, *Journal of American Folklore*, and *International Journal of American Linguistics*. The topics of his publications range from linguistic technicalities ("Two Proto-Algonquian Phonetic Shifts") to general ethnology ("The Punishment of Impudent Children among the Kickapoo").

The Michelson collection includes several groups of cylinders which offer important insights into the language, history, and culture of the tribes he studied. Because of his linguistic interests, the collection is about equally divided between spoken narratives and music. This distinguishes it from most other cylinder collections, such as those of Alice Fletcher or Frances Densmore, which focus almost exclusively on the songs of Native Americans.

Michelson had an abiding interest in the culture and language of the Fox tribe. His Fox cylinders recorded in

Continued on overleaf

Alfred Kiyana of the Fox tribe with Truman Michelson (Photo courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution)



MICHELSON COLLECTION

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Tama, Iowa, the present location of the tribe, include Bill Leaf giving a speech, "Kishko's Words," which lasts more than six minutes, and Alfred Kiyana telling the story of "[How] Wisakea Greatly Strengthens the Ducks and Was Not Met by His Grandmother." Such narrations should be of particular interest to linguists as well as tribal people wishing to preserve their spoken language and traditional tales.

The ceremonials of the Fox tribe are well represented by a corpus of more than 100 Drum Dance songs performed mostly by Bill Leaf. This quantity far exceeds the number of songs of the same ceremony collected by Densmore from the Lac du Flambeau Ojibwa and the Menominee. Drum Dance songs, which Michelson calls "Religion Dance songs," belong to an important central Algonquian revitalization movement which began sometime in the 1870s through the vision of Tailfeather Woman, presumed to be a Santee Sioux. She was told by the Great Spirit to build a special large drum (the so-called Dream Drum), how to decorate it, and what songs and rituals to use in the ceremony. The drum was meant to be copied and passed from tribe to tribe to promote peace and brotherhood between them. The Sioux gave the drum to the Ojibwa, who in turn transmitted it to the Menominee, thence to the Potawatomi and Winnebago, and so on. The Fox received some drums from Wisconsin tribes, although the appearance of Sioux words in a few of the songs Leaf recorded suggests a parallel transfer from the Sioux. In the early 1900s the Fox, in turn, presented drums to the Prairie Potawatomi in Kansas, to keep the path of the drum traveling.

The portion of the collection recorded by Leaf is valuable not only for its size but for its depth, including, as it does, most of the sub-genres of songs used by the Drum Dance Societies. There are a number of common songs, the general congregational dance songs interspersed throughout the day-long drum ceremonies. Officers' songs also figure in this portion of the collection.



The large "Dream Drum" at an Ojibwa Drum Dance at Lac Courte Oreille in 1899. Similar drums were transmitted to the Fox. From author's forthcoming "The Ojibwa Dance Drum: Its History and Construction." (National Anthropological Archives photo by A. E. Jenks)

These songs were for individuals holding the special positions, such as Keeper of the Drum or Dance House Keeper (called Janitor or Sweeper by other tribes having the Drum Dance). Traditionally, during the performance of his special song, each officer in turn rises, dances, and is afterwards obligated to present a gift to someone in attendance.

Because the Fox Drum Dance songs are roughly contemporaneous with the early collections from other tribes, and include many of the same songs recorded by Ojibwa and Menominee singers, they considerably enhance the possibility of a broad comparative study of the music of this central Algonquian ceremonial. Such songs are ritually rehearsed when drums are passed from

tribe to tribe, even when the recipients may already be familiar with them. A cursory comparison of Bill Leaf's songs with those published by Densmore in some of the Bureau of American Ethnology bulletins and others I have collected at Lac Courte Oreille in Wisconsin show a close affinity and attest to the accuracy of oral transmission.

While the Drum Dance cylinders comprise by far the largest musical corpus in the collection, there are also Fox recordings of sacred songs from a few of their other religious fraternities which probably predate the Drum Dance—bundle songs from the White Buffalo Dance, for example. The "Sacred Bundle Song When Four Dogs Are Used" must date from the time

when the ritual eating of dog flesh still held high ceremonial value for the Fox, among other tribes.

Although dates are not attached to the Fox cylinders, it is possible to learn of Michelson's movements by following the Smithsonian Institution's reports of his fieldwork. For instance, we know that he witnessed a drum presentation from the Wisconsin Potawatomi to the Fox in 1916 (*Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 66:130), which conceivably sparked his interest in recording Leaf at that time. Such information, combined with informants' names, has led the Federal Cylinder Project to assign tentatively a date of 1916 to the cylinder recordings. This would be supported by the fact that Alfred Kiyana, a key informant in the Fox case, was providing much information for Michelson on Fox ceremonials in 1917.

Another portion of the collection documents the Shawnee tribe. Following settler contact the Shawnee people split up, ultimately forming three larger social aggregates—the Eastern Shawnee, the Cherokee Shawnee, and the Absentee Shawnee. Michelson recorded 45 cylinders of Joe Billy, an Absentee Shawnee, reciting legends of his people. The legends concern such deities as Pabothkwe (Cloud), the female supreme being of the Shawnee pantheon. One series of recordings is devoted to Abotchkilawetha (Rounded Side), the grandson of Pabothkwe. In Shawnee legends, Abotchkilawetha “does various things, some good, some wilful; he is responsible for releasing impounded water and thereby causing the first world to be flooded; he slays powerful giants and monsters; he even creates the progenitors of one or two of the Shawnee political divisions” (C. F. Voegelin and E. W. Voegelin, 1944, 371). On the recordings he addresses, through Joe Billy, a number of other Indian tribes one by one, among them the Creek, Choctaw, Wichita, and Caddo. All of these groups shared Oklahoma territory with the Shawnee. Each tribal address is contained on one cylinder lasting approximately six minutes, except for the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Comanche, who are addressed jointly on one cylinder.

Abotchkilawetha has more to say to two peoples who were actually sub-

groups of the larger Shawnee tribe. Three cylinders each are taken up by addresses to two of the five divisions that originally made up the Shawnee—the “Kishpogos” (= *kis̄poko*) and the “Kila” (=presumably, *᠐awikila*). Concerning them, Charles Callender has written, “Each was a descent group whose members patrilineally inherited their affiliation. A division was conceived as a distinct territorial unit centering on a town that bore its name” (1978, 623). There is some speculation that of the five descent groups, the *kis̄poko*, the *᠐awikila*, and the *pekowi* formed the basis of the Absentee Shawnee. A translation of Abotchkilawetha's address to two of these groups may help shed light on this supposition.



Truman Michelson. (Photo courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution)

In addition to legendary material, Joe Billy recorded discourses on subjects ranging from whiskey to peyote, the white man's churches and schools, and land frauds.

Michelson's collection also includes 14 cylinders with songs and spoken words of the Northern Cheyenne and Piegan. Their singers provide good examples of music enjoying wide popularity on the northern Plains at the time, such as Grass Dance and Owl Dance songs. Two cylinders from this part of the collection have been a great source of amusement to the project staff and certainly deserve a place in the history of early sound recordings. Michelson appears to have used them as test cylinders, perhaps to check out his recording equipment. The contents of the recordings suggest this, as they consist of

a series of fragmentary takes with the voices of the collector and (presumably) a Piegan Indian presenting, among other things, a short history reading on Charles II, a prayer (“Dearly beloved brethren. . .”), religious readings (“Our egress from this world. . .”)—one each from Michelson and the Indian in English, a speech in Piegan (?), a biographical sketch of Michelson's field journey to Montana (“Left Washington on June 13. . .”), an Indian tale in English, and a fragment of an Indian song followed by its repetition at a higher pitch. For anyone who has experienced recording in the field, unquestionably the most amusing point occurs halfway through one cylinder when a sudden outburst of Michelson, cursing in blunt language the recording equipment he has been provided and threatening to ship it back to Washington, is recorded for posterity. This is followed by the Indian's slowly articulated rejoinder in English that, in effect, it does the collector no good to fret and fume over his predicament.

Thomas Vennum, Jr.

Callender, Charles. “Shawnee.” *Handbook of North American Indians* 15:622–35. Edited by Bruce G. Trigger. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978.

Voegelin, C. F. and E. W. “The Shawnee Female Deity in Historical Perspective.” *American Anthropologist* 46:370–75.

Further Reading

Callender, Charles. “Fox.” *Handbook of North American Indians* 15:636–47. Edited by Bruce G. Trigger. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978.

Michelson, Truman. “Contributions to Fox Ethnology—II.” *Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin* 95. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1930.

Vennum, Thomas, Jr. “The Ojibwa Dance Drum: Its History and Construction.” *Smithsonian Folklife Studies*, No. 2. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, forthcoming.



Graduation day program of Saturday Polish School held at St. Ladislaus Rectory, Chicago, Illinois, May 31, 1977. (Photo by Jonas Dovrydenas)

ETHNIC HERITAGE AND LANGUAGE SCHOOLS STUDY

The process of maintaining cultural values and traditions is one that concerns groups from all ethnic backgrounds and from all economic levels of society. It is a selective process whereby certain traditions are maintained while others perish; the traditions that continue combine with other values and change in such a way that they remain relevant to the group that adheres to them (see Director's Column, *Folklife Center News*, Vol. IV, Nos. 3 and 4, July and October 1981). Cultural maintenance often results from an unconscious process of tenacity, selectivity, and change, or it can be encouraged in a more conscious and systematic manner. One example of the latter are the special classes organized by ethnic groups outside of the standard educational system, through which they have tried to instill in their children a knowledge of the language, history, literature, and religious traditions of their cultural heritage.

The name we have given to such schools—ethnic heritage and language schools—is rarely used by ethnic groups themselves. Often members of a group refer to them as Hebrew School,

Armenian or Latvian Saturday School, or Greek Sunday School. Although such schools were established as early as the last quarter of the 19th century and continue to function to the present, they have received little attention from scholars studying ethnic groups or from educationists. Yet these schools often have a central role in the life of their community and might be considered true "folk" schools. They are organized and maintained by voluntary community effort and express important values shared by all community members. The curriculum materials for the classes are also generated and approved by the ethnic community and constitute tangible data for the group's collective sense of their ethnic heritage. Researchers could learn a great deal by analyzing the phenomenon in its entirety.

In order to facilitate scholarly investigation of ethnic community schools, the American Folklife Center is planning to launch a special research project to draw attention to the history and current status of these schools. The Center has consulted with socio-linguist Joshua Fishman from Yeshiva University in New York, who has studied heritage and language schools for a number of years and has compiled an extensive directory of such community institutions. His 1979 listing named nearly

5,000 schools, and he estimates that there may be over 1,000 remaining to be located.

Fishman's research identifies three categories that describe the majority of ethnic schools: (1) *all-day schools*, often affiliated with parochial schools, which incorporate ethnic language or culture instruction into the regular school day; (2) *weekday schools* which are in session during two or more weekday afternoons and are supplementary to attendance at regular public or private schools; and (3) *weekend schools* held on Saturday or Sunday. Some schools are affiliated with religious institutions, others are strictly secular. Some are part of a larger network administered by umbrella ethnic organizations spanning the country, others operate independently within a close community.

Ethnic schools exist nationwide, and recent statistics indicate that their number is increasing. When collecting data for his study, Fishman relied primarily on questionnaires inquiring mainly on aspects of language use which were sent out to the directors of the schools. He did some preliminary probing into other aspects of ethnic heritage, but notes that there remain many questions about ethnic schools that need research. He strongly recommends study of the school curricula, and urges field documentation of

schools in their community context. Teachers, parents, founders, members of the boards that run the schools, and children who attend them need to be interviewed in person. Site visits to observe classes in session could yield valuable information both for documentary purposes and for cross-cultural comparative studies.

The Center wishes to solicit the help of professional folklorists throughout the country to assist us in a documentation project to further investigate ethnic heritage and language schools. By the end of March we hope to have contractual agreements with those individuals who wish to participate in a fieldwork phase of the project which will last twelve weeks. Any professional folklorist who is interested in studying one ethnic school in his or her area should send a resume and cover letter to the Center, stating the target ethnic group and including any available information about a specific school. For those who wish to participate but are unaware of ethnic schools in their area, the Center will try to locate a school from the listings on hand. Responses should be addressed to Elena Bradunas, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 (202/287-6590) before March 22, 1982.

Simultaneously with the fieldwork phase, the Center will be gathering curriculum materials used by different ethnic groups in their schools, by contacting national ethnic organizations and publishers of ethnic materials. The Center looks forward to receiving both past and present-day materials which document continuity and change in a particular group's curriculum. Once a significant collection is assembled, specialists will be contracted to analyze the content of the materials. Samples from different ethnic groups may provide data for much needed cross-cultural studies.

The Center anticipates that the documentation of the schools themselves and the collection of curricula materials will lead to a number of products, including forums, conferences, and publications. But the first step is to collect as complete a body of information as possible.



Mary Hufford interviews participant in Smithsonian's "Tools for the Harvest" project.

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hundred commercial and educational displays were mounted in the main hall exhibit area, and exhibits such as "Patina," a display organized by the National Council on Aging of visual arts produced by older citizens, were spread throughout the massive convention center.

The American Folklife Center assisted in the development of two conference exhibits and presentations which demonstrated the role played by the elderly in the traditional life of the country. "What stories are you most commonly asked to tell about your life?" queried the introductory display panel for the Smithsonian's conference project "Tools for the Harvest: Oral History, Storytelling and Tradition in the Aging Process." The project was sponsored by the Smithsonian's Office of Folklife Programs and the National Institute on Aging, and incorporated photographs and resource materials from Folklife Center's fieldwork. Artifacts produced by older citizens to record and share their past were dis-

played. In addition, a group of folklorists led by Steve Zeitlin and Amanda Dargan interviewed conference participants. The interviewing was intended to inform them about oral history documentation, while recording their own memories, narratives, and traditions.

Folklife Center staff also was consulted on the exhibit mounted by the Celebration of American Heritage Committee. It included a display of photographs and objects highlighting the cultural richness provided by older members of ethnic communities. Certain portions of each day were programmed to feature musicians and artists from different ethnic groups, and a small booklet of essays on some of the major ethnic communities in the United States was distributed.

On December 3, coinciding with the final day of the conference, the Folklife Center explored the topic of folklore and the elderly through a symposium and film presentation, part of its 1981/82 Winter Program. The presentation began and ended with a showing of the 1977 film *Number Our Days*, produced and directed by Lynne Littman and based on the fieldwork of anthropolo-

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FOLKLIFE AND THE ELDERLY

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gist Barbara Myerhoff. The Academy Award winning documentary film examines the role that a community center in Venice, California plays in the lives of Jewish retirees. Myerhoff appears in the film as an observer, participant, and student of how to grow old gracefully. As she says on camera near the beginning of the film, one thought that drew her to spend so much time studying the lives of those living in that retirement community is that she too will inevitably be a "little old Jewish lady" someday. Her identification and interaction with the elderly men and women of Venice Beach add immeasurably to the nuances of the portrait presented.

A one-hour symposium followed the film screening. Participants included University of Pennsylvania folklorist Mary Hufford, Edmund H. Worthy, Jr. and Jane M. Deren of the National Council on Aging's Senior Center Humanities Program, and Center direc-

tor Alan Jabbour. Staff member Elena Bradunas coordinated the discussion.

Mary Hufford opened the symposium with comments on the film and examples of stories from her interviewing for the Smithsonian's "Tools for the Harvest" project. One point made clear by the film and the interviews is the value of personal life narratives for older people as a means of self-definition and social integration. In recounting their lives, she said, older members of society pull the threads of their experiences together into a unified whole that becomes more meaningful for them and for others.

Edmund Worthy next described the Senior Center Humanities Program which also works with memories and recollections to enhance the lives of the elderly and encourage their continuing contribution to the cultural fabric. The vehicle used for assisting older adults in the study of the humanities is a series of nine anthologies or educational units—compilations of poems, short story excerpts, and autobiographical sketches—on such subjects as *Exploring Local History*, *Work and Life*, and *The Remembered*

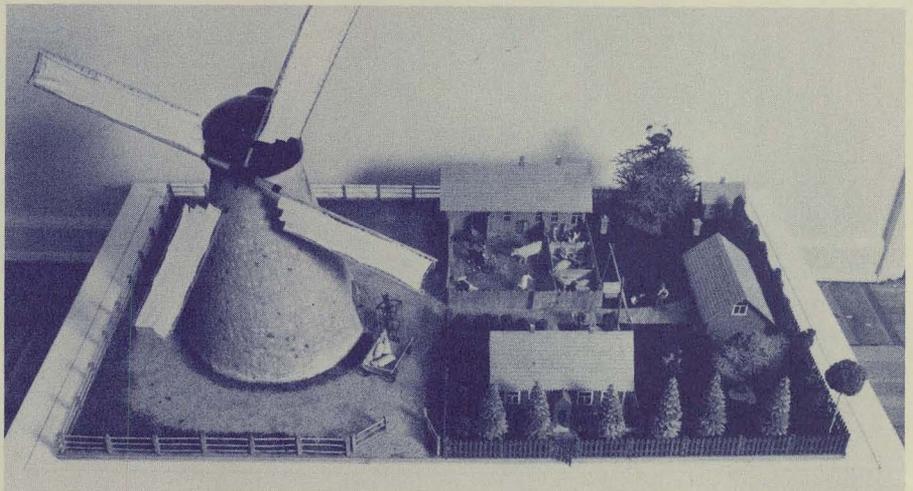
Past 1914–1945. These have been made available to some 1,400 community centers subscribing to the program, church groups, social clubs, and other organizations.

Jane Deren went on to say that the program has elicited a tremendous response which can be measured both by the number of groups eager to participate in that program and by the spin-off products that previous study sessions have inspired. Since the program's inception in 1977, study groups have developed an array of recipe books, books of folk remedies and lore, and compiled reminiscences. They have also influenced the modification of the current anthologies and subject matter of those being developed. For instance, the topic of the forthcoming anthology *The Heritage of the Future* was suggested by the program's constituency who thought it would provide a balance to the tendency to focus all attention on the past.

As the closing speaker, Alan Jabbour developed some of the points alluded to earlier about the essential role played by the elderly—both in relationship to

FOLKLIFE IN MINIATURE

The model pictured on these pages, part of the Smithsonian's "Tools for the Harvest" project display, was made by Vilius Variakojis, who was born in 1903 in a small village near the city of Birzai in northern Lithuania. He left his country in 1944, when the Soviet army invaded, and after staying in displaced peoples' camps in Germany came to America in 1949 as a refugee. He settled and still lives in a Lithuanian neighborhood in Chicago, where he makes wood carvings and miniature models of what he remembers about the Lithuanian countryside. These are displayed in his basement, which is a self-styled museum, open to anyone who cares to visit. Team members of the Folklife Center's Chicago Ethnic Arts Project first visited Variakojis and his museum in 1977. Since then, the Folklife Center has found that home "folk" museums created by individuals as a testimony to their cultural heritage are phenomena



Model of Vilius Variakojis's family homestead and a nearby windmill.



Detail of model.