OCTOBER CONFERENCE ON AMERICAN FOLK CUSTOM

On October 3–5 the American Folklife Center will host a Conference on American Folk Custom, cosponsored by UCLA and the University of Pennsylvania. The conference, made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, will be convened by its coordinators, Wayland Hand and Don Yoder. This two-and-a-half-day event will bring together leading scholars in the field to address subjects relating to the life cycle, rites of passage, the customs of domestic and social life, occupational and industrial folklife, law, games and pastimes, and calendrical customs.

Wayland Hand noted that the conference is part of a proposed long-range effort dealing with folk customs in this country. It will be used to encourage further research and publication on folk customs in America and as an opportunity to compile a bibliography of resources for the study of American folk custom and usage.

The conference will be held in the meeting rooms of the Library's new James Madison Building. A program is available from the Center upon request.

Ritual artifacts for Serbian Orthodox wedding: crowns, Bible, common cup, and candle. Marriage ceremony of Mitriann Popovich and Carl Oreskovich at Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church in Butte, Montana; September 1979. (Photo by Gary Stanton)

PERSPECTIVES ON ETHNICITY

Ethnicity in the United States today is increasingly a subject for inquiry and a focus of attention. The following articles examine the subject from various vantage points: as a reference and resource question, as a wellspring of material for publishing, presentation, and collecting activities carried out by the Center and the Library, and as the primary focus of programs undertaken by other government agencies and private institutions. They are intended to provide a brief introduction to some of the ways in which the Center, the Li-

Continued page 6
What, indeed? Ethnicity is serious business, as all parents know who have faced the agony of fundamental decisions about the shape and principles of their children’s education. In the politically charged atmosphere of Washington today, such issues as bilingual education are being debated with some heat. It is worth wondering whether the current national indulgence in ethnic pride, which flowered in the 1970s and gave a special character to the Bicentennial celebrations of 1976, will last. The maintenance of ethnicity in the United States, not simply as a vestige of immigration history but as an active ingredient in the creative development of a complex civilization, is certainly encouraged by ethnic pride; similarly, it is discouraged by ethnic anxiety, which characteristically surfaces in times of joblessness, economic recession, and national uncertainty.

If the debate quickens about the virtues of encouraging ethnicity, it is sure to be cast in simple terms. Should your children’s language be Spanish or English? Should they maintain ethnic customs or shed them for “mainstream” behavior? The question is always framed as an either/or proposition. Even the advocates of “pluralism” and “cultural diversity” often fall into the trap. To hear the case for pluralism as put forth by some, one would think that individual citizens are either one culture or the other, while the national plural character is derived from the juxtaposition of these various simple components.

But the reality of cultural diversity is surely otherwise. The diversity of America is not simply the result of juxtaposing the monochrome cultures of various citizens. Rather, individual citizens themselves are culturally complex. An American can be—and, as often as not, is—many things at once. Ethnicity is but one kind of cultural attribute available to Americans, complemented by other attributes provided by one’s region, occupation, religion, or other factors. And in ethnicity alone many Americans are complex, combining in their lives more than one ethnic tradition.

Perhaps those terms “pluralism” and “diversity” are a bit too passive, exhorting us merely to tolerate differences when we should be thinking of a principle for encouraging multiple options. For the parents fretting about the language dilemma in their children’s education, it is worth reflecting that the choice is not English vs. another language as the medium of communication and personal expression, but English vs. English and another language. Put another way, ethnic diversity at the national level should translate into versatility at the personal level.

If there are current anxieties about the ups and downs of ethnicity as an American characteristic, one may take comfort in history. Spectrum, the maga-

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STATE AND REGIONAL
FOLK CULTURAL
COORDINATORS MEET
AT LIBRARY

There is a growing network around the United States of folk cultural coordinators working with state agencies or regional organizations to develop public programs involving folklife. About half of the states of the union have instituted programs or positions within a state cultural agency which deal directly with folk culture, and a few states have enacted formal legislation for folklife programs. The third meeting of these state and regional folk cultural coordinators was hosted by the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress June 26-28. The meeting, co-sponsored by the Folk Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities in cooperation with the Folklife Center, was designed to address a broad spectrum of topics relating to the work of folklorists involved in public programming at the state and regional level throughout the country.

The June meeting was launched with a reception that gathered representatives of many Washington-based agencies involved in folklife programming, professional colleagues, and friends. During the two days which followed, participants discussed a panoply of issues; sessions focused on the interrelationship of their activities and concerns with those of local citizens, other state agencies, the academic sector, and federal support programs.

These meetings have provided participants with the opportunity to share information, concepts, and successful ideas, while meeting with individuals from all parts of the country whose interest in working with traditional culture mirrors their own. The participants at the third meeting of state and regional folk cultural coordinators were Robert Baron, N.Y.; Jane Beck, Vt.; Hal Cannon, Utah; Charles Camp, Md.; Dennis Coelho, Ga.; David S. Cohen, N.J.; Rhoda Gilman, Minn.; Jim Griffith, Ariz.; George Holt, N.C.; Lynne Ireland, Nebr.; Suzi Jones, Alaska; Michael Korn, Mont.; Carol Kulig, N.Y.; Tim Lloyd, Ohio; Ormond Loomis, Fla.; Richard Lunt, Maine; Margie McClain, Ill.; Bill McNeil, Ark.; Linda Morley, N.H.; Blanton Owen, N.C.; Charles Seeman, Calif.; Steve Sipurin, Oreg.; Paula Tadlock, Miss.; Nicholas Vrooman, N. Dak.; and Philip A. Werndli, Fla. Also participating in the meeting were staff members of the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Council for the Traditional Arts, and the Folklife Center.

The Center maintains a current listing of state folk cultural programs and program coordinators which is available upon request.

BOARD MEETING

The summer meeting of the Center’s Board of Trustees was held at the Library of Congress on June 5 and 6. Board members Edward B. Danson and St. John Terrell have been reappointed to full six-year terms by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; David Draper and Ronald Foreman were reappointed to full terms by the President pro tempore of the Senate.

The Board’s standing committees met on June 5 to discuss appropriations, reauthorization, legislation relating to folk culture, Center publications, and activities of the Archive of Folk Song.

Richard Thill of the University of Nebraska at Omaha spoke about his interest in submitting a proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities to fund a conference at the Library to discuss archiving and outline development procedures for a multi-discipline automated cataloging system for folklore and related materials. The fall meeting of the Board will take place in Washington on October 1 at the Library and on October 2 at the Smithsonian Institution.

OUTDOOR CONCERT SERIES

The concluding concerts of the Center’s 1980 Outdoor Concert Series will feature Blena Bii (Children of the Ancient), eight tribal drummers and singers from Ghana, on August 14; Las Estrellas del Son playing Music of Cuba and the Caribbean on September 11; and traditional music of Viet Nam and Laos on October 9.

Exhibitions

Inside Our Homes, Outside Our Windows: Photographs of Chicago Ethnic Communities, an exhibit of 118 photographs taken by Jonas Dovydenas during the Center’s 1977 Chicago Ethnic Arts Project which document aspects of contemporary ethnic life in Chicago is on display through mid-August in the ground-floor corridors of the Library of Congress. The exhibit will be on view at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield, Illinois from September 7 to October 19, 1980.

A multi-media exhibit entitled Buckaroos in Paradise: Cowboy Life in Northern Nevada will open on October 1, 1980, at the National Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Cosponsored by the Folklife Center and the Smithsonian, the exhibit will feature “Coyote” John Schneider’s frame bunkhouse transported from Paradise Valley, artifacts representing the material culture of the valley both historically and in contemporary life, still photographs, and a short film of a roundup, trail drive, and branding on the 96 Ranch. An extensive catalogue with an essay on aspects of valley life in the context of the region’s history will accompany the exhibit. Ranchers and citizens from Paradise
THE SIDNEY ROBERTSON COWELL COLLECTION

The name Sidney Robertson Cowell designates for some the wife of Henry S. Cowell, known as an innovator of 20th-century American music. Others associate the name with field recordings of Finnish, Gaelic, Swedish, Armenian, Irish, and Portuguese folk music, as well as British ballads and other song forms, made in this country and abroad between 1937 and 1957.

In one chapter of the Center’s forthcoming book Ethnic Recordings in America: A Neglected Heritage, Joseph C. Hickerson writes that prior to the recordings made by Sidney Robertson in 1937, it is almost impossible to find examples of ethnic folk music except from peoples long established in this country: Anglo-Americans, Afro-Americans, Native Americans, Spanish, and French. The extensive Sidney Robertson Cowell collection housed in the Library of Congress is important from two perspectives—it contains some of the earliest documentation of ethnic folk music in the United States, and it is a testimony to a long relationship of cooperation and support between her and Harold Spivacke, Chief of the Music Division, as well as several Archive heads, including Alan Lomax, Duncan Emrich, and Rae Korson. The collection includes field recordings, information on government agencies she worked for, a file of correspondence which spans nearly four decades, a collection of manuscript materials, fieldnotes, some personal papers, photographs, published articles, and books. The materials portray a talented, productive, capable woman, with a highly original personality and a lively sense of humor.

Sidney Robertson’s first experience with recording equipment followed sporadic notation of songs from vaqueros in California, her home state, and elderly Jews at the Henry Street Settlement in New York. At the request of Charles Seeger, then in the Special Skills Division of the Resettlement Administration, John A. Lomax took her along on a two-week trip to western North Carolina in 1936; she was 33. There she assisted Frank C. Brown in recording examples of unaccompanied melismatic singing, a singing style that was to be the chief attraction for her in any folk or traditional music she heard thereafter, and helped Lomax record Afro-American music in chain gang road camps. During 1936 and 1937 Robertson worked for the Resettlement Administration, later the Farm Security Administration, principally under Seeger. Fieldwork done by Seeger and his staff resulted in 159 disc recordings, now part of the Library’s collections.

Sidney Robertson’s initial work for the Resettlement Administration was in Appalachia and the Ozarks, where many Resettlement clients originated; it was hoped that recording their music would encourage them not to leave their cultural traditions behind when they were moved to other parts of the country. She was on hand in Chicago in May 1937 to record the fourth National Folk Festival, which presented Swedish, Lithuanian, Norwegian, and Finnish musicians, as well as a group of lumberjacks from Michigan and some fine Ozark singers. Through September 1937 she worked in the Great Lakes states among Finnish, Serbian, and Gaelic communities in Minnesota, and made her first recordings from the large repertory of Anglo-Irish ballads in the Ford-Walker family of Wisconsin. Her correspondence from this period with Alan Lomax at the Archive of Folk Song reveals what he was later to call the “tall tale quality” of her letters. She mentions that she became known in the village of Crandon, Wisconsin, as “the girl friend of the hired man of the undertaker” (the hired man being Warde Ford) because she spent so much time with him, encouraging him to recall more and more of his extensive repertory. One adventure with this rich informant continued through an all-night trip in the hearse to bring back an old lady who had died away from home. Long drives were
conducive to fluent ballad recall, and a singer from the region might claim that he could sing from Rhinelander to Green Bay and back without singing the same song twice. She also reports in that letter that doing fieldwork in the Finnish community required taking many steam baths, a matter-of-fact form of immediate hospitality which she found to be a great boon for the weary traveler.

Late in 1937 Sidney Robertson began to do fieldwork in California, receiving WPA encouragement to organize a pilot statewide project. The California Folk Music Project got underway in Berkeley in November 1938, sponsored by the University of California with the WPA, the Library of Congress, the Society of California Pioneers, and the New Music Society as cosponsors. Sidney Robertson supervised the project, which employed an average of 20 people through March of 1940. The Library’s assistance, negotiated by Harold Spivacke, included providing acetate discs, blank index cards, and professional guidance on indexing procedures. In exchange, the original recordings became part of the Library’s collections. Documentary materials from the project now in the Library include 237 original disc recordings, a catalog of the recordings, 149 photographs, photostats of scale drawings for 25 folk instruments, and fieldnotes. The Department of Music at Berkeley has a duplicate archive, including the original instrument drawings.

Some especially interesting recordings made during the project are referred to by Sidney Robertson Cowell in an article she wrote for California Folklore Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 1, Jan. 1942. One group of songs she terms “extraordinarily beautiful” were recorded by Reuben J. Baboyan from the large Armenian community in Fresno, California. He sang and performed 16 songs from the mountains of Van, and in a 1971 letter granting permission for copies to be made of these recordings, Cowell says that they are “perhaps the finest vocally and musically I ever made in the U.S.” She was also particularly pleased with the recordings made with the Molokan community in the Potrero Hill neighborhood of San Francisco. The Molokans, a breakaway sect from the Russian Orthodox Church, believe that the entire congregation should participate in the church service, conducted in Russian. Their singing uses psalm texts and other biblical passages. As with “lining-out” hymns in Anglo-American and Afro-American traditions, Molokan songs are intoned by a precentor, after which the congregation joins in.

Following her marriage to Henry Cowell in 1941, she still made occasional field trips. Between 1950 and 1954 she continued her 15-year study of songs from members of the Ford-Walker family, recording them in Wisconsin, California, Wyoming, and, by proxy, in Germany; songs recorded by three generations of family members are included on Wolf River Songs (Folkways FM-4001) issued in 1956. Other trips took her among Portuguese fishermen in Provincetown, Massachusetts.
library, the government, individuals, groups, and institutions have responded to the growing interest in American cultures.

**Resources for Ethnic Studies**

In recent years there has been a proliferation of published materials dealing with ethnicity. A glance through Wayne C. Miller's *A Comprehensive Bibliography for the Study of American Minorities*, Vol. I and Vol. II (New York: New York University Press, 1976) will provide some idea of the large body of publications available on the subject. To date, Miller's work is perhaps the most comprehensive, providing references for publications appearing from the early 1900s to the mid-1970s about almost every ethnic group in the United States. The volumes are divided into sections corresponding to the parts of the world from which the peoples emigrated to populate this continent, with a separate section devoted to Native Americans, divided into the American Indian and Mexican-American experiences. Each section provides an alphabetical listing of separate ethnic groups with a narrative introduction about their history and immigration to this country, followed by bibliographic references listed under sub-headings such as Dictionaries, Politics, Biography, Folklore, Religion, and Sociology.

One fertile and relatively untapped area for research in ethnic studies is the materials and activities generated by and for the ethnic communities themselves. Ethnic newspapers, periodicals, and other publications have been documenting daily community life for many years, in some cases for a century and more. Ethnic organizations such as fraternities, mutual aid societies, and various religious and social associations have been active in sustaining ethnic identity. For a long time few individuals outside the community network knew about such organizations and their publications; consequently, there are scant references to them in many scholarly works. A few guides and directories have appeared in the last few years, however, which list ethnic presses and organizations. One of the most useful series of guides has been prepared by Lubomyr R. Wynar, director of the Program (Center) for the Study of Ethnic Publications at Kent State University. The series includes:


These directories provide important sources of information on the cultural heritage and historical development of ethnic groups in the United States.

If an ethnic group has its own archive, museum, or institute, research into primary sources can begin there. The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (1048 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10028) is a good example. Archives and institutes of various groups can often be located in Wynar's *Guide to Ethnic Museums, Libraries, and Archives in the United States*.

There are also institutions whose activities have a multi-ethnic scope. These centers are excellent resources for comparative research. Wynar's guides provide leads to where such centers can be found. One multi-ethnic research center, the Immigration History Research Center (826 Berry Street, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minn. 55114), contains published and manuscript materials relating to over two dozen ethnic groups originating in Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe and the Near East. The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies (18 South Seventh Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19106) is a museum, library, and educational facility which collects materials related to the immigrant experience and ethnic life and presents and interprets the information for the general public.

The study of ethnicity in America remains a challenge for researchers, librarians, and public agencies. The resource guides, study centers, and institutions mentioned above are just a few examples of useful aids for those who wish to do either initial probing or in-depth research on the history and development of American ethnicity.

—Elena Bradunas

**Ethnic Publications in the Library of Congress**

"The Library of Congress needs assistance in collecting sample copies of publications issued by and for the many ethnic groups in the United States." That is the opening sentence of a press release recently issued by the Library's Collections Development Office. Composed in English and translated into a dozen languages, including Chinese, Polish, and German, the press release was sent to publishers of ethnic newsletters, newspapers, and books in all parts of the country, to organizations dealing with ethnic matters, and to selected libraries and academic institutions.

The call for sample copies is viewed by the Collections Development Office as a prelude to the re-evaluation and orderly development of the Library's collections of ethnic materials, carried out in conjunction with a current review of the Library's overall acquisitions policies. As a national library, the Library of Congress has a responsibility...
for maintaining collections that reflect the history and culture of the American people and the many ethnic groups that compose it. John Finzi, Director of Collections Development, says that his office's present interest in ethnic materials reflects the country's changing outlook on the subject, and bespeaks the Library's growing awareness that if its collections are to provide a true portrait of American culture as it develops, ethnic materials are a vital component.

The broad concerns governing the collections development policy are to see that the Library's collections contain the most important and basic research materials in every field, while establishing selection criteria to insure that the collections will grow within reasonable and manageable bounds. Bearing these concerns in mind, the Collections Development Office has worked out preliminary selection criteria and a plan of action for acquiring ethnic materials, in consultation with Folklore Center staff members and representatives of other Library offices working with ethnic materials or involved in the acquisitions process. The general consensus was that the plan of action should stress the national focus of the publications sought.

Materials will be selected from works of scholarship, ethnic newspapers and weeklies of national coverage, newsletters and periodicals, pamphlets, journals, musical and spoken-word sound recordings, and other documentary forms. Finzi feels that the ideal approach to collecting these materials would be for the Library of Congress to assume responsibility for housing major publications produced by particular groups, and examples of their periodicals, newspapers, and other informational materials which reflect nationwide concerns; other institutions across the country could acquire comprehensive collections of materials of local and regional interest for specific ethnic communities. Were such a division of labor to develop, the Library's reference resources might include a full index to ethnic materials found in other institutions.

Two complementary devices will be employed in the initial steps towards achieving the goal of central and regional distribution of the materials: the press release and a questionnaire survey. The function of the press release is to generate examples of a broad range of ethnic materials from which to make selections for the Library's collections. The questionnaire will be used to canvass selected libraries and institutions to determine the nature and extent of their ethnic and local history materials, as well as their collecting responsibilities. By these means it is hoped that the Library will be able to enrich its national collections of ethnic publications and provide reference information on valuable local and regional collections in the months and years to come.

Ethnic Broadcasting

Ethnic Broadcasting in the United States, a 171-page study written by Theodore C. Grane for the American Folklife Center, is now available from the Center. The study, conducted by Grane in 1977 and 1978, involved extensive examination of printed resources and recording trips to different parts of the country.

In the selection of recording locations an effort was made to cover all regions of the country, except for Alaska and Hawaii which were not included because of economic considerations, and to secure a sampling of radio programs from large cities like New York and San Francisco, medium-sized cities such as Columbus, Ohio, and some small towns such as Ignacio, Colorado and New Britain, Connecticut. The resulting sound recordings, now at the Center, include over 150 radio programs broadcast in over 50 languages. In addition to recording radio programs, Grane interviewed some of the men and women who produce the ethnic broadcasts, learning about their commitment to ethnic programming, their problems, and the role that the programs play within the community.

The first part of the study presents an overview of ethnic radio in its historical context, discusses its cultural and intellectual setting, analyzes economic parameters, describes program contents, and provides a bibliographic survey. In the second part Grane describes findings from his fieldwork.

The study looks at a phenomenon of American community life that has long been overlooked by scholars, government agencies, and other observers of American folklore. A wealth of information can be discovered by listening to ethnic broadcasts: one can gain insight into the aesthetic preferences of the listeners, learn about the small ethnic businesses that support the programs, and hear community interest announcements which help maintain the communications network that nourishes people's identification with the community. It is hoped that the publication will encourage further study of ethnic broadcasting, especially studies of specific communities and metropolitan areas carried out in greater depth.

Ethnic Heritage Studies Program

Within the Federal Government one program which focuses solely on ethnic culture is the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program, now within the newly formed Department of Education. Through this program approximately 50 proposals a year receive up to $60,000 for the development of curriculum materials which foster greater awareness of one's cultural heritage and that of others, the training of instructors in the use of the materials, and the dissemination of the materials. Grants are made to public and private nonprofit educational agencies, institutions, and organizations.

Initiated in 1974, the program has funded over 300 projects to date. This year more than 600 applications...
Dress Colors

Column published by the Immigration History Center at the University of Minnesota, recently noted that the history of foreign language press in this country begins in 1732, when Benjamin Franklin published Philadelphische Zeitung. The encouragement of ethnicity is certainly as old as America itself, and we can be sure that an early promoter like Franklin saw what we call "pluralism" as a boon to individual versatility.

Exhibitions

dise Valley are expected to attend the opening of the exhibit, a product of the Center's Paradise Valley Folklife Project.

Perspectives

reached the office by the March 5 deadline, and the program expects that of those approximately 50 will receive funding. One group to receive funding recently is the Ethnic Heritage Clearinghouse in Boulder, Colorado, which is developing a catalog of materials developed by previous projects.

At the end of June Lawrence Koziarz, the new director of the program, convened the first meeting of the twelve-member Ethnic Heritage Studies Program National Advisory Council. Council members were introduced to program activities and discussed current program goals which include an emphasis on dissemination of previously developed materials.

For further information write the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program, United States Department of Education, Room 3928, ROB #3, 400 Maryland Avenue S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202.

Cowell Collection

and to Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, to record Gaelic songs from Hebrides Islanders.

For 14 months in 1956-57 the Cowells traveled to several Asian countries to assess grant requests made to the Rockefeller Foundation; the trip enabled them to hear music first-hand that they had experienced only through commercial recordings or as played by elderly immigrants. Armed with a letter of introduction from Harold Spivacke to get her into or out of sensitive situations, Sidney Robertson Cowell made recordings throughout the trip. Her consideration for the Library's collections led to the Archive's acquisition of some of its first recordings of Iranian, Thai, Pakistani, and Malaysian folk or classical music.

After Henry Cowell's death in 1965, Sidney Robertson Cowell continued to live in what had been their second home in Shady, New York. Recent Archive heads have corresponded with her as requests for copies of her field recordings have come in. She leads a busy life responding to requests for information about her husband's work as well as her own, and remains a zestful woman of indomitable spirit.

—Brett Topping

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