

## THE FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL PROGRAM

*by S. Dillon Ripley*



*Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution,  
S. Dillon Ripley.  
Smithsonian photo.*

The Festival of American Folklife again this year presents for your enjoyment and study a few examples of the diverse oral and material cultures of the United States. The great public response to this Festival stems in part from the fact that all Americans share to some extent in the traditions represented by these grass root artists and craftsmen. The personal culture which we keep within our family reflects our most basic and immediate aesthetic expression. Our own personal folkways may be represented by proverbs, or superstitions, or a recipe for preparing food, or a song, or a joke. It may be reflected even in the manner in which we plant our gardens or decorate our homes.

Those who participate in the Festival come from many backgrounds and regions, and each participant is carefully selected by a system of field research which is conducted throughout the year. Field researchers are like cultural detectives who seek out the evidence of cultural retentions with trained eye and ear and evaluate what is discovered through reference and consultation, and who document these discoveries with written reports, tape recorded interviews, photographs and craft samples. The Festival itself is the public presentation of this research and documentation. But there are other purposes for the knowledge gained through field research. By the evaluation of this information, we can perceive social attitudes and beliefs, determine aesthetic values, develop increased historical perspectives, and study the little known cultural geography of our country.

Great cultural riches, with which we are only partially familiar, abound in the United States. The discovery of these treasures required vastly more research than we are presently able to undertake; therefore, we hope that your enjoyment and enthusiasm will lead to increased support for and interest in a more comprehensive program of research, the products of which will add immeasurably to our educational materials, our social understanding, and the quality of our lives.