



An important part of CB lore is the CB name or handle, worn here on a vest with the owner's club patch.

like the shared knowledge of radio technology, gives members of the CB community a sense of group identity. Badges with handles or names of jamborees on them, as well as distinctive T-shirts and club uniforms, are outward signs of CBers' inner sense of community.

Many people think that technology destroys folklore. But the CBers' folklore thrives precisely because of two-way radio technology. Folklore is apparently more durable and enduring than we might think and exists as surely in the CBers' world as in the more traditional rural community or ethnic neighborhood.

Suggested Readings

Houston, Albert, et al. *The Big Dummy's Guide to C.B. Summertown, Tenn.: The Book Publishing Co., 1976.*

Street Cry!

Steven Zeitlin

The fish stare glassy-eyed from trays. The crabs, pulled from a swarming basket, lock pincers and entwine with one another. Lincoln Rorie, street crier, lifts the gills of a bluefish to show you how good it is. "If it's slimy, it's fresh," he says.

Like all the vendors at the fish wharf in Washington, D. C., he gives 14 crabs to the dozen. His rapid fire fish chants seem to pack almost as many rhymes in every line: "A Big Mac attack/ain't nothing but a snack/compared to the jumbos on sale right here/right here in the back."

Huckster Walter Kelly, with a different approach to the art, can stretch a single word to fill the melody of a whole blues line. On a brightly painted horse-drawn wagon crammed full of cardboard boxes and overflowing with produce, he hollers the name of a fruit, savoring each isolated sound so that an improvised blues languorously pours from a single term.



WAT-ER-MEL' WA-TER-MEL-HO!

The places where cultures meet to do business with one another produce some of our most vital folk expression. At markets where Italians sell to Jews, where blacks sell to Chinese; in streets where itinerant peddlers make their neighborhood stops, vendors combine talent, tradition, and business sense to sell their goods.

In many marketplaces from New York to the Carolinas street vendors share a "hollering" tradition. Certain calls or hollers have been collected many years apart and in different places. When the 1930s Harlem fish peddler Clyde "Kingfish" Smith was a child in North Carolina, his father talked of a peddler who called, "Bring out the dish pan/here's the fish man." The younger Smith brought the line with him to New York, and it was heard until recently in Baltimore. Stanzas like the following illustrate continuity in this huckster tradition:

Baltimore, 1925, caller unknown:

*Ah, I have 'em hot.
Ah, I have 'em brown.
Ah, I have 'em long.
Ah, I have 'em round.
Dey's nice 'en fat.
Dey weighs a pound!*

Washington, D. C., 1977, Lincoln Rorie:

*I got 'em red.
I got 'em dead.
I got 'em green.
I got 'em mean.
It got the fightenest, bitenest
crabs
This year has seen!*

Harlem, 1939, Clyde Smith, from a WPA recording by Herbert Halpert in the Library of Congress:

*I've got 'em large.
I've got 'em small.
I got 'em long.
And I got 'em tall.
I've got 'em fried.
I got 'em boiled.
And I can't go home
Till I sell 'em all.*

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1 Snookie Bagwell "legging" at the Washington, D.C. fish wharf. "Legging" is the fish seller's term for hollering to customers and waving them to the boats. Photo by Jack Santino for the Smithsonian

2 The calls of Lincoln Rorie and his father Abe, who was also a fish crier, are documented on film by Smithsonian folklorists. Photo by Jack Santino for the Smithsonian

Washington, D. C., 1977, Jerry Williams, crier influenced by rock and roll and other pop forms:

Yeah, they fightin'.
 Yeah, they bitin'.
 Yeah. they green.
 Yeah, they mean.
 Yeah, they bad.
 Yeah, they red —
 Red hot —
 Hot in the pot.
 Captain White's got 'em hot to trot!

Although callers borrow rhymes and formulas from each other's performances, no two hollers are ever exactly the same. Criers draw from a standard stock of epithets, chants, and rhymes, but each rendition is an improvised, creative act. Street cries are meant to attract attention, to be distinctive, and to convince customers to buy from the caller and not from the next stall or the supermarket. Street criers innovate almost by necessity. On the fish wharf in Washington, D. C. Lincoln Rorie delivers his calls at a tongue-twisting pace with a subtle sense of humor and rhythm. He calls:

"People walk on down
 If you want to see
 the largest crabs in town
 Fresher fish can not be found

Scallops, crab meat, lobstertails
 seasnailsturtleeggsfrogslegs live
 alligators and fillets
 Yes if it swims in the sea
 you can believe me
 I got it on sale right here
 at the back boat today.
 I got trouts, crocus, porkus,
 rocks, blues, mullets, spots,
 Yes the largest variety
 the back boat
 most has definitely got,
 I got sea snails
 turtleeggsfrogslegs
 lobstertailsfillets
 Yes, I got the largest variety
 in the nation's capital on sale
 Right here right here
 at the back boat today.
 People I know talk's cheap
 but I know action's where it's at
 If you walk on down
 you'll see for yourself the largest
 crabs on sale
 right here in the back.
 They're mean and they're green
 They're the fight'n'est, bit'n'est
 crabs I've ever seen
 And I'm twenty nine years old.

No brag, no bull:
 nothing but the facts,
 Yes, the crabs are much much
 larger
 right here in the back.
 People, I'll put a smile on your
 face and a jingle in your pocket
 Because I know
 we have the absolute lowest
 prices on the market.
 Walk on down
 and eyeball the largest crabs
 to be found."

Walter Kelly is an "Arabber," a Baltimore merchant who sells fresh fruit and vegetables from a horse-drawn wagon. He conveys his meaning in a different way. To an improvised blues melody, he sings:

Well I hoop and I holler
 Till my soul got sore.



Street peddlers and hawkers have been the subject of drawings and illustrations since the early 16th century.

*If it wasn't for that fruit
I wouldn't holler no more.
Got watermelon,
Got 'em red to the rind.
If you want black seed watermelon
Com to this wagon a mine.
Watermelo-o-o-o-o
Watermel, Watermelo-o-o-o-o-o*

"One of the first things I learned about peddling . . ." Clyde Smith said, "to be any success at all, you had to have an original cry. I know several peddlers that started out and they hollered "Old Fish Man!" but it doesn't work." Mr. Smith changed the cries to suit particular audiences. "In the white and Jewish neighborhoods I feature the words, but in the colored neighborhood I feature the tune."

Clyde Smith also adapted fish hollers to the popular tunes of his day. He changed Cab Calloway's 1931 hit, "Minnie the Moocher" (Now here's a story about Minnie the Moocher/She was a low down hoochy-coocher) into a fish song. This is part of one performance:

*Hi di hi di hi di hi
Hi di hi di hi di ho . . .
(6 lines sung in scat)*

*Now if you want my nice flounders
I got flounders taste like shad.
So come on down you scoundrels,
And get 'em fore I get mad.
Hi di hi di hi di hi
Hi di hi di hi di ho . . .
Now some time when you ain't got but a dime—
You can't eat pork chops all the time—
Come on down and get around
Cause my fish ain't but five cents a pound.*

*Hi di hi di hi di hi
Hi di hi di hi di ho . . .*

Although we might wish to romanticize, the huckster does what he does for money. The connection between creative expression and financial reward is probably as high in street peddling as in any of the arts. Clyde Smith claims his calls get customers laughing, and laughing "loosens the pocketbook." Jerry Williams on the D. C. fish wharf howls the line, "talk the trash for the cash."

Out of this economic enterprise grows a vital form of oral folk poetry. Street callers sing their wares, but, artistically, they sing themselves. "You gotta be in the mood," Clyde Smith said, "you got to put yourself in it. You've got to feel it."

Suggested Reading

Bartis, Peter. "An Examination of the Holler in North Carolina White Tradition." *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 39 (Sept., 1975) 209-217.

Simon Bronner. "Street Cries and Peddler Traditions In Contemporary Perspective." *New York Folklore*, Summer, 1976, 2-15.

Tuer, Andrew White. *Old London Street Cries and the Cries of Today*. London: Field and Tuer, 1885.

Suggested Recordings

Folkways FD5558, New York 19. Tony Schwartz.

Library of Congress Recording of Clyde Smith. AFS 3645-3656. Herbert Halpert.