

FROM THE FAMILIAR TO THE UNKNOWN:
A FIELDWORKER'S PROGRESSION

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It was an unbearably hot, sweltering day at the end of July 1975 in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania, so hot, that I decided to abstain from fieldwork in order to organize my notes, which kept flying off the table every time the fan swung in my direction. That same day I received a letter from Dr. Richard M. Dorson inviting me to be one of the fieldworkers for the Gary Urban Folklore Team Project. In the letter he listed the other fieldworkers and explained their assignments: "Adrienne Seward will work with the blacks, Richard March with Serbo-Croatians, Phil George with the Latinos, Sherry Sherman with filming, John Hasse with folk music. I would like you to work with other ethnic groups and with southern whites as a kind of fieldworker at large. How does this strike you?"

I remember it struck me as a challenge I could not refuse, even though it meant that my own plans for an intensive buckling down to finish my requirements for the Ph.D. would have to be altered.

Now two years later, almost to the exact date, I am sitting in another hot, sweltering room, this time in Bloomington, Indiana, still with no degree in hand, but rich indeed in wealth of experiences. I am sitting here trying to write a description of some of those experiences, but I feel extremely frustrated, knowing that even if I wrote a book, I would still have to leave many things unsaid. Although I have no fan, my thoughts and reminiscences are being blown about as I strive to organize them into a coherent form. A pox on this summer heat!

I suppose I should start by explaining that the "work with other ethnic groups and southern whites as a fieldworker at large" became more

specifically redefined as the project progressed. I never really worked with southern whites, and as far as the other ethnic groups were concerned, I did intensive fieldwork only among two of them, the Lithuanian, a group to which I claim my own ethnic affiliation, and the Greeks. On a few occasions I also interviewed some Poles, Armenians, and even two Pakistanis. My ability to perform as a "fieldworker at large" was tested by my third area of concentration, which involved chasing after elusive legends about a local character in East Chicago named Martin Piniak. Although I started my investigations at the time when Martin was still a walking legend in the neighborhood, his death in the fall of 1976 forced me to change tenses and accept the realization that I would never get Piniak's version of the stories about him.

My trips to the Region were quite sporadic over a twelve-month period, but I clustered my schedule so that I actually focussed sequentially on each of these three areas. In retrospect I recognize a certain logic in the progression. First, I worked among my own ethnic group, through whom I gained confidence and familiarity with the Region and delineated a bit more clearly my research goals among ethnic groups in the city. Next, I ventures out among the Greeks and tested my ability to talk about ethnicity from an outsider's perspective. Could I do it in a manner comparable to that which I used with fellow Lithuanians in our own native tongue? Third, after acquiring a journalist's kind of talent for approaching strangers, I found myself brave enough to strike up conversations with people on the street, in restaurants, and in libraries, and even to walk into bars almost exclusively patronized by men, to pursue the legend of Martin Piniak.

Fieldwork among the Lithuanians

When I first agreed to do fieldwork among the ethnic groups in the Calumet Region, I did not think any Lithuanians lived there. Furthermore,

if they did, I presumed that their cultural and social life would be oriented toward Chicago, the American capital of Lithuanians. I had lived in Chicago during my high school and college days and remembered vividly the weekends packed with a variety of Lithuanian community activities--from art exhibit openings to musical recitals to lectures to folk dance practice sessions and performances. Anyone who lives within an hour's drive of Chicago, I assumed, automatically attended those functions.

Quickly enough I found out I was wrong. Richard Dorson first alerted me to the error of my assumptions when he informed me after one of his first visits to the Region that he had seen a Lithuanian display at the Hammond Ethnic Festival and had brought back names of possible leads. Unfortunately, the list of names disappeared, so on my first trip to the Region I side-tracked to Chicago to peruse several back issues of the Lithuanian daily newspaper, Draugas. Sure enough, every now and then articles chronicled the activities of two Lithuanian parishes in the Region: one, St. Francis in East Chicago, and the other, St. Casimir's in Gary. On that same weekend I attended the annual banquet of the Region's Lithuanian Hunter and Fishermen Club held at the parish hall in East Chicago and while twirling away on the dance floor, I made the acquaintance of several of its members. After this first contact, I had my entry into the Region Lithuanian communities pretty well guaranteed.

Both the St. Francis and the St. Casimir parishes were established by Lithuanians who came to America before World War I. Immigrants in the true sense of the word, they planned their departure from Lithuania well in advance and deliberately chose America as their final destination, in order to seek a better economic life and to avoid conscription into the czar's army. Many of them were illiterate, but once in America they rejected the farm to flock instead to the mines of Pennsylvania, the stockyards of Chicago, and the steel mills of Pittsburgh and northern Indiana.

In 1918 Lithuania regained its independence and emigration almost ceased. A few of the earlier

emigrants returned, but many more stayed in America to support the newly formed state with their hard-earned dollars. In 1940 Lithuania was invaded by Russian troops, who were temporarily ousted by the Germans in 1942. The Soviets marched in again, in 1944, this time, to stay. Thirty thousand Lithuanians now fled the country with little more than a suitcase in hand. Most of them were ardent nationalists who had grown up in a free Lithuania and whose lives were threatened if they remained. They remembered only too well the first Soviet occupation, when in one weekend over 10,000 Lithuanians were deported to Siberia, on little more pretext than their ownership of an extra calf or pig, or because of their interest in native culture and history. These refugees lived in displaced persons' camps in Germany until 1948, when Truman signed the Refugee Act enabling many of them to come to America.

Clearly, this second wave of Lithuanian immigrants in America was quite distinct from the first. Their departure was a desperate, unplanned act; their destination, a matter of chance, for they settled wherever their sponsors arranged jobs for them. In the majority of cases, the older immigrants or their children acted as sponsors, and the new jobs were mostly manual labor. For many of the refugees this resettlement meant a drop in their previous socio-economic status, as former professionals ended up working on assembly lines or as janitors and cleaning women.

Being a child of just such refugees, I was familiar with numerous case histories and the general situation in America. Long before it was popular to stress appreciation of one's ethnic background, Lithuanian refugees all over the United States and Canada established Saturday schools for their children, organized summer camps, and maintained a viable social and cultural ethnic community life. For a long time they viewed America as a temporary home and

consequently instilled in their children a deep concern for Lithuanian freedom and an anguish for its current plight. Even today, when life in America is accepted as permanent, parents persist in imparting an ethnic consciousness to their children.

While doing fieldwork among the Lithuanians in a mining town in Pennsylvania, I had a chance to become better acquainted with the older immigrants and their children. Immediately, I noticed a difference in their disposition toward ethnicity from that which I had experienced in my growing-up. Many factors explain this variation: the differences in ethnic or national consciousness in Lithuania at the time of departure, the differences in the educational level, and finally each group's personal assessment of the role of immigration in their lives. I had always hoped to study the two groups in order to disclose the subtle distinctions between separate waves of immigrants from one country. Social scientists too often lump American ethnics under the monolithic concept, "immigrants," with the result that the post-World War II refugees have rarely been researched.

Soon after my visits to the two parishes in the Region, I realized that I now had my chance, for the parishes represented both waves of immigration. Even the pastors of the two parishes belonged to separate groups: Reverend Vichura of St. Francis in East Chicago was a son of older immigrants, whereas Reverend Urbonas of St. Casimir's in Gary was a refugee.

As I mentioned earlier, I had no problem gaining entrance into the Lithuanian communities. Reverend Urbonas was especially helpful. He had read about my folklore collecting projects in Pennsylvania and he respected my chosen field of study. I explained that I was not interested in "hunting" or "extracting" survivals of folklore genres among the Lithuanians, but in the ways immigrants and refugees viewed their ethnicity and related to it in their everyday lives. I was especially alert to instances where folk traditions played a role in either marking or embellishing ethnic consciousness. Also I was

interested in how the ethnic identity was transmitted to the second and even third generations of both the immigrants and the refugees.

How did I go about doing this research? For almost the entire academic year I made regular weekend trips to the Region, usually about two each month. I attended various functions organized by the two communities, spent several Saturdays at the Gary Lithuanian Saturday School, and paid many visits to peoples' homes. When arranging for appointments, I usually explained that I simply wanted to visit and talk about their lives. People were always willing to oblige, and what is more, even thrilled by my interest. Once in their home, I spent hours recording their personal histories and discussing a variety of subjects. I felt I established a personal rapport with my informants and that my visits resembled social calls more than information gathering and recording sessions.

After a number of such visits and several detailed personal histories, I grew confident I could substantiate my hypothesis about the differences between the members of the two immigration waves. The older immigrants spoke the Lithuanian language, prepared Lithuanian dishes at home, and even remembered songs they sang as newly-arrived greenhorns at weddings and picnics in this country. They continued traditions such as the family-based Christmas-Eve dinner, but they retained these elements of ethnicity as familiar customs learned in the Old Country; they did not insist that their children follow their example, nor did they buy or read Lithuanian books or decorate their homes with ethnic art.

The refugees, on the other hand, spoke the language and continued the ethnic traditions and commemorations of national events almost as if from moral duty, so their children would grasp a sense of ethnic consciousness. They prided themselves on the number of their Lithuanian books. They decorated the shelves and walls in

their homes with colorfully painted Easter eggs, with minitures of the traditional wooden crosses that once stood all over Lithuania's countryside, with such symbols of Lithuanian statehood as the flag and national emblem, with wooden plaques inlaid with amber often sent as gifts by relatives in Lithuania. Refugee women showed off their amber jewelry with especial pride. The refugees constantly described these objects with possessive pronouns, stressing "our crosses, our folk textile design, our amber, our Easter eggs." Through such linguistic indicators I began to grasp the importance of the way these objects related to their cognition of ethnic identity.

I was able to engage on long conversations with the first generation of both immigrants and refugees because I conversed easily in Lithuanian. This ability not only helped me to establish rapport, but it also enabled the informants to express themselves with greater ease and eloquence. I am sure that had they tried to state their ideas in English, many nuanced and innuendoes would have been lost. Answers to my questions probably would have been terse and to the point, entirely without the free association of thoughts and reminiscences that embellished their answers in Lithuanian.

For similar reasons, I spoke mostly English to second-generation Lithuanians in the Region, since I noticed their stiff and stilted Lithuanian. The children of the pre-World War I immigrants explained how they spoke Lithuanian to their parents who never learned much English. But once the parents died, or the children married and moved away, they forgot their native language. I also learned from that the immigrant parents did not instill in their children a consciousness of their ethnic background, partly, as I have already mentioned, because they left Lithuania before its independence, and with little or no education, their knowledge of Lithuania's history and culture was minimal. Many were almost illiterate but carried a very high regard for education. Once their children started American schools, the parents often felt inferior and consequently shy of giving directions on such matters as what language to speak,

what traditions to celebrate, and whom to marry. Their primary concern was that their children get a good education, a good job, and a good Catholic mate, no matter the ethnic background.

Conversely, the refugees tried--and are trying--as hard as possible to rear their children as conscientious Lithuanians. To this end, they enroll them in Saturday School, where they learn Lithuanian language, history, geography, literature, songs, and dances. When I asked how they felt about coming to Saturday School, the majority of the children immediately responded that they hated it. The only class considered bearable was folk dance instruction. I myself remembered attending a similar Saturday School in Baltimore. I too hated the loss of free time and envied the American kids who slept late and played while I spent yet another day in school. Simultaneously, I remember I enjoyed being with Lithuanian friends, some of whom I met only at Saturday School. Encouraged by my insider's point of view, I probed a bit deeper. A few more questions revealed that many of the children were in fact as ambivalent as I had been about Saturday School. They expressed a positive feeling about the extra social interaction, while some of the older children even noted that with the current surge of interest in ethnicity, they were proud to learn something about their parents' country.

The refugee parents hope that their children will share a love and commitment to Lithuania similar to their own, but they are realistic in assessing this as an impossible goal. The children identify themselves as Americans and only when they attend Saturday School or perform songs or dances in national costume do they claim to feel "Lithuanian." Some of them speak Lithuanian to their parents, but in many cases the conversations are bilingual: parents speak Lithuanian and the children respond in English. All the conversations with siblings and other Lithuanian peers in the Saturday School are in English.

This discussion should make clear that my fieldwork among the Lithuanians had a broad sociological focus. Indeed some of it might not seem very relevant to folklore studies. Yet I maintain that it absolutely necessary for a folklorist first to do a general ethnography of ethnic community life before making any statements about how the folkloric traditions of these people fit into their lives. As an insider with considerable historical and cultural knowledge about what I observed, I was especially motivated in my relentless probing. I doubt I would have asked the same questions or given the investigation such a structured approach had I not shared with my informants the same ethnic identity. Sharing my findings with other scholars, however, presents me with a difficult task. Not only do many of these tapes have to be carefully translated, but much of the recorded data needs to be supplemented with my own notes, explaining information which my informants and I shared in common. I must admit that very few scholars could make immediate use of my raw data.

Fieldwork among the Greeks

With the Greeks I was an outsider with no personal credentials to present to anyone in the community, without the language and with only a minimal understanding of Greek history, culture, and folklore traditions. I read as much as possible before going into the field, but still my questions remained basic and sometimes quite naive. I relied on a few contacts in Bloomington to give me direct leads, but even these were slow in developing. At length I broke through the barrier when I interviewed a third-generation Greek-American student, Anthia, in Bloomington. She helped arrange my visit to her parents who one lived in Gary but now had moved to the suburbs. Another contact arose through one of Richard Dorson's students at the Indiana University Northwest campus in Gary--a recent immigrant, whose home I also visited and talked there with other members of her family. In both cases the visits and interviews did not lead to other individuals, and in the first case, I could not even get Anthia's parents to introduce me to the grandmother, who lived in the same household.

One problem of which I seemed to be acutely aware and which possibly stifled any initial success was the nagging feeling that my research among the Greeks lacked direct focus. Oh yes, I could (and did) ask questions about belief in the evil eye (the mati), about saints' legends, about historical heroes and their brave resistance to the Turks. I asked about Greek foods, crafts, and music, but the discussions seem to short circuit. The people I interviewed usually wanted to know my specific reasons for seeking them out. I answered in a general way about our research in the Region and my interest in what ethnicity meant to them and how folklore traditions related to their ethnic identity. Their replies were quite terse, usually running along the lines of, "Yes, they did consider themselves Greek-Americans and were proud of their identity, but as far as folklore traditions were concerned, I should probably visit Greece or at least visit the Greek Festival in Merrillville where I would see Greek culture on display."

One interview technique that proved fairly successful was the inquiry about personal histories. Individuals obliged gladly, but even so their accounts were less detailed than those I recorded from the Lithuanians, probably because I was unfamiliar with the Greek and Greek-American culture and social history and could not follow up on cues that might have stimulated lengthier dialogues.

When the five-day Greek festival rolled around in July of 1976 on the St. Helen and Constantine's Parish grounds in Merrillville, I attended daily, observing, videotaping, and recording as much as possible. I found it quite difficult to handle the video equipment all by myself and truly impossible to videotape while simultaneously conducting an interview. From this I deduced a fieldwork axiom for the rest of my life: videotaping should always be at least a two-person team effort. Using an audio

tape recorder proved equally difficult because of the constant noise level and my prevailing sense that people wanted to enjoy themselves, not be interviewed by a stranger. Consequently, I mingled with the people, engaged in short discussions without the tape recorder, and simply took notes.

This ethnic extravaganza offered much to observe. Inside the parish hall, booths displayed imported Greek artifacts and various ethnic paraphernalia such as sweatshirts and pins with inscriptions proclaiming, "Oozo drinkers make better lovers!" Greek pastries, which I was told the women of the parish had been preparing for months in advance, filled another room. Outside, the Taberna served flaming cheese and octopus and next to it the bar tent sold not only beer and other drinks, but also racina and oozo. Hundreds of lambs were roasting in huge ovens to feed the hungry throngs. In the evening electrified bands played greek music, while on the asphalt parking lot Greeks and non-Greeks joined hands in the traditional chain dances. All in all, ethnicity oozed from all sides, providing an excellent opportunity to observe what Greeks from the Region chose to present to outsiders for everyone's enjoyment.

Only on my third day did I realize how the festival functioned for the Greeks of the parish. Since many people had mentioned what incredible amounts of money the festival raised for the parish's treasury, I had assumed the financial aspect to be its primary function. Gradually I became aware that many more subtle and complex factors motivated the staging of this festival.

I was sitting in the Taberna drinking my Coke when I noticed a young boy about eight years old collecting the litter from the tables. I recognized him as the same boy who had faithfully carried out his task on the previous days. When I started talking to other people working behind the counters, I learned they were all volunteers and that the organization of their tasks was highly structured. Year by year one could ascend the very real hierarchy of job assignments to more responsible

positions. Aware of this possibility, even children worked their hardest so as to earn a more responsible assignment next year. The most prestigious job was held by the men roasting the lambs, a task considered a real art. My talks with the workers revealed their enormous pride in this collective venture. Many bragged about how much money they helped raise and how the crowds at the Greek festival exceeded those at the annual county fair.

Ostensibly, the festival displayed ethnic food and music, but my observation of the events suggested that the true essence of urban Greek-American ethnic identity lay behind the scenes--in the strong communal esprit de corps that made the festival possible. As soon as this festival ends, several people reported, planning starts for next year's event. Pride in the success of the current festival and hope for the future motivates even the very young to learn what is needed to ensure the persistence of these Greek traditions. Yet the festival was only five years old.

Shortly before one a.m., when the festival was scheduled to close, I had an opportunity to interview some of the younger Greek-Americans at greater length. I brought to this discussion my own experiences in Lithuanian community activities in Chicago as well as my first-hand understanding of how various organizations and communal events imbue the ethnic community with a vitality that attracts high school and college age individuals. When I mentioned my Lithuanian-American affiliation and recounted similar aspects of ethnic community life, such as Saturday schools, summer camps, memberships in youth organizations and dance ensembles, I immediately sensed I had established a common denominator. The young Greek-Americans spoke wholeheartedly about their own involvement in such ethnic affairs.

Yet because I remained an outsider, much of the basic information about their Greek

organizations and activities had to be explained to me. Consequently, the data I collected from them can be listened to or read by anyone. Little is taken for granted by either myself or my informants, and therefore, in contrast to the data I recorded from the Lithuanians, the Greek interviews do not require supplementary, explanatory comments.

I don't want to pass judgment on which fieldwork was more successful. At this time, all I can say is that I felt more relaxed and "at home" among the Lithuanians, and a bit more nervous and formal with the Greeks. The Lithuanians talked willingly about their inner feelings and discussed ambivalences toward--even criticisms of--some of their ethnic organizations and affairs. The Greeks seemed to concentrate on giving me general descriptive information, without exposing any dirty linen, and were quite reserved about personal information. If I had had more time to continue fieldwork among the Greeks, possibly I might have established closer relationships. Primarily because of this lack of personal rapport, I feel my work with the Greeks is incomplete. When I look at my lists of Greek names, I am somewhat ill at ease, for I do not always have a sense of the individual behind the name. The impression I left behind in their minds is also, I am sure, very vague. I think of our interaction as analogous to a Greek shadow pupper show.

Fieldwork on Martin Piniak's Turf

My third area of concentration took me out of the ethnic realm and set me on the streets of East Chicago, chasing after an elusive walking legend named Martin Piniak. I first heard of "the old man who lived underneath Indianapolis Boulevard bridge" from a student in Bloomington, who volunteered to show me the haunts of the "old hermit" whenever we could arrange a rendezvous at her parents' home in East Chicago. In the summer of '76 she accompanied me on my first expedition to what I later called "Martin Piniak's turf." It was on that first trip that I found out the old man's name from the locals at Krupa's Tavern, saw the old man, and even managed to speak to him briefly, by feigning confusion and asking him for directions. Later on, I

spoke to him at greater length and found him intelligent, polite, and very informative about the neighborhood. He did have a strange way of ending conversations quite abruptly by excusing himself and saying he must be getting on his way or that he must take a walk downtown. Considering that he had walked that neighborhood for over thirty years, at a sauntering pace, seemingly with no appointments or commitments, I found his urgency puzzling, but I never questioned it.

With time I hoped to be able to persuade him to allow me to photograph or even videotape him. I planned to do this in the fall, after my summer vacation, but I never had a chance. In late October I was informed by those who read the Region's papers that Martin Piniak died of an apparent heart attack while walking through Kosciusko Park. I realized that I would never be able to verify the different stories about him, which I already had started collecting from neighborhood residents.

When I went up to the area the weekend after his funeral, colleague Cathy Swanson accompanied me, toting the video equipment. We filmed the empty shack next to the bridge where Martin Piniak had lived. The inside was relatively neat, with an old easy chair and a mattress covered with tattered blankets. The old mattress was ripped open as if someone had checked whether there was in fact truth to the claim that Piniak was rich and kept money stashed in his humble abode. A heavy black coat hung in a nail in the wall. Old boxes, clothes, shoes, and rags cluttered the path leading to the shack.

From there we proceeded to the Dairy Queen and the College Inn, where Martin Piniak used to stop for his daily hamburgers and coffee. We had no trouble getting the waitresses and customers to tell all they knew, speaking at first into the tape recorder and then in front of the camera. His unexpected death was a real "news item" in the area, and people were anxious to have their feelings, opinions, and sorrow at his passing documented.

On that visit, and several others afterward, I recorded many long-term residents in the area and occasional visitors who had seen him and knew something about him. I talked to children who had hear stories about him from their teachers, interviewed the local children's librarian and many others who did not object to my initial, "Excuse me, I'm trying to learn something about the old hermit who used to walk around this area. Do you know anything about him?"

Needless to say, in stopping complete strangers I often felt a bit like a proselytizing street missionary or a brazen journalist, and at first I really had to force myself. But after a while it became easier and I could even accept a curt "No, I have no time" response without feeling rejected.

My greatest difficulty in doing fieldwork related to Martin Piniak was keeping the accumulating information to myself. I had to repeat the same questions and patiently allow people to expound on details I heard over and over again. It was not easy, since I am rather loquacious. Several times my comments "gave me away" and I could sense a person's disappointment in realizing I already knew just as much, if not more, about the mysterious hermit. To salvage the situation, I would try to explain why each account was important and necessary to me as a folklorist, but the informant's "thrill" on telling me the story was gone. Obviously, everybody wishes to be recognized for their individual contribution, and sharing the limelight with others reduced the excitement. Furthermore, the idea that any one account may be compared to another, and perhaps judged for its veracity, makes people ill at ease. The situation is especially poignant when the stories and explanations are all quite speculative, actually legends with only tenuous connections to a reality that once was and suddenly is no more.

As I indicated in another article about Martin Piniak (Indiana Folklore, 10:2, 1977), my collected data could be analyzed in a variety of ways. I wanted to make sure that I had samples of as many explanations as possible so that others would find the material academically tantalizing. The skeletal outlines of

the two most common renditions are the following: 1) Martin Piniak became angered at the government for instituting income tax and, quitting his job at the mills in protest, he opted to lead his life as a semi-recluse, and 2) tragic accidents, including his fiancée's death, caused him to decide "normal life wasn't worth it." I interpreted the first explanation as depicting Martin Piniak's chosen lifestyle as one of protest, and the second as one of remorse. I stress the word "interpret" because my analysis was based on my own vision of the phenomenon and my particular interest in how the individuals from that neighborhood related to him.

The stories were fascinating, but equally so were the expressed attitudes toward Piniak. I always asked if people thought Martin Piniak was crazy. Why was his obviously unhygienic presence accepted: Why were they willing to extend charity to him with clothes and food: And why did some of them express a kind of awe and respect for the man? For me the answers to these questions constitute the most intriguing part of the recorded tapes.

Of all my fieldwork in the Region, I feel that the collection related to Martin Piniak is the most coherent and the easiest for other folklorists to use. No tapes need translating or are long explanations of the ethnic cultural context required. Anyone who wishes can walk the streets of the neighborhood and get the feeling of mainstream American blue-collar lifestyle. People could still be stopped and interviewed, though I suspect Martin Piniak's memory may be fading. My fieldwork occurred in public places, not in private family homes, into which I had to be invited. I needed no special contacts and had no "super-informants." And the information I was seeking was on a figure who was, in spite of his obvious reclusiveness, the most publicly visible individual in the neighborhood.

When probing into the attitudes about ethnicity, I often felt as though I was intruding into a private domain. I was a bit more comfortable with the Lithuanians, but even there I remained an "outsider," inquiring about the inside life of families and a specific community. When stopping strangers on the street (who remained strangers even after the talks), I was simply asking about a phenomenon that was clearly in the public domain. Our shared curiosity about the man and his motivations gave us, however briefly, a sense of camaraderie not experienced elsewhere.

Collecting legends about Martin Piniak led me to conclude that being "a folklorist at large" was probably the most exciting and gratifying part of my work on the Gary project. It presented me with the challenge of finding different kinds of strategies, with which I suspect folklorists will have to grapple when dealing with urban folklore, folklore shared by people not because they are members in any specific group, but because, even as total strangers to each other, they relate to specific phenomena outside their homes, clubs, or churches and on the public city streets. I was lucky to find just such a phenomenon. I, as well as my many nameless informants, remain grateful to the old urban hermit, Martin Piniak, who, although dressed in rags of drab grey, managed to conjure up so much color in the minds of the people who talked about him.