sun had finally gone down and with it the intense heat. As planned, I started off the festival—not as part of the competition, which was for newly-composed songs—with a couple of songs and a pipe-and-tabor piece in Mirandés (excusing myself for speaking only fidalgo, which in Mirandés means speaking Portuguese, the "upper class" language). People were rather surprised, but some had seen me before and by now I seem to have acquired a reputation in the region's villages as a sort of harmlessly mad ageing hippie professor who wanders around without a car, with a video camera and a decrepit knapsack (and sometimes a much more with-it teen-aged daughter), looking for old songs: as a single, middle-aged woman, so far removed from any possible classification system that they've given up trying to categorize me (instead, they sing for me and the women feed me, in both cases a distinct improvement over classification). By the time we jury members got around to our deliberations, in an impressive chamber of Town Hall looking over the main square, it was midnight, and by the time we emerged with our collective verdict, well past 1:00 am. The evening was supposed to end with a Carga de lágrimas (a "cascade of tears" with fireworks), but for unknown reasons they somehow didn't get around to it.

The songs weren’t great compositions, but the mere fact that they are new songs in a very old language in danger of extinction, and mostly new songs by young people, is the important factor. Outside the city, there are still quite a few people who sing the old songs, and some young people are learning at least parts of the repertoire, though generally not the most complex vocal aspects and rarely in the old performance style I love and whose passing I mourn, ethnomusicologically incorrect though the lamenting may be.

Some 10 days later, I was a few hours' south of Miranda, back in Belmonte, the Crypto-Jewish village/small town par excellence, where much of the research for my ongoing project (thanks, SSHRC and York University!) has been centred. Back in 1997 in Belmonte, it had been my inexpert but dogged potato-hacking (meant to be peeling, but it was a knife more suited to slaughtering buffalo than to delicately peeling new potatoes) which won the hearts of some of the normally suspicious (with reason) Crypto-Jewish women's. This time, it was having seen me on Portuguese TV, in my unlikely Mirandes musical role. I hope you don’t find it too sobering a thought that I’m their only role model for the image of the Canadian ethnomusicologist/folk singer….  

— Judith Cohen

Our Back Pages

Fifteen Years Ago
Bulletin 18.3 (July 1984). Lots of features in this issue. John O'Donnell wrote on "Blackleg Miners in Cape Breton"; Hal Doran eulogized the late Duck Donald in "The Man Behind the T-Shirt and Irrepressible Grin"; Tim Rogers edited a feature on Canadian murder ballads, including an article on Acadian songs by Ronald Labelle, Edith Fowke on "The Birchall Murder," Donald Deschênes on Cordelia Vieu, Laurel Doucette on Newfoundland examples and Don Miller on "The Black Donnellys"; David Watts contributed Part I of "Singing and Language Learning" and Tony Stephenson Part II of "The Saving of Lukey's Boat"; Helen Creighton also added to the latter topic with "More on Loakie's (Lukey's) Boat." In addition to a multitude of songs accompanying the articles, there were songs "Aftermath" (contribution of Edith Fowke), Jim Payne’s "Wave over Wave" and Janice Spence’s monologue accompanying the latter song. A report on the 1994 Alberta Kodaly Association, and a review of Utah Phillips’s Vancouver recording We Have Fed You All a Thousand Years wrapped up a jam-packed issue.

Ten Years Ago
Bulletin 23.3 (September 1989). Bill Sarjeant's article "Canadian Folk Music—Merely a Fading Sound in a Commercial Wilderness?" mused on the state of the art in Canada. As well, Lynn Whidden told us about the Saskatchewan and Manitoba Music Educators' Prairie Music Project, and Denis Donnelly about the Victoria Folk Music Society. Instrumental music associate editor Anne Lederman presented four "Tunes from Present-Day Tunesmiths," and Nate Tinkham's song "Curly Bob" completed the music component of the issue. Reviews were of the 1989 Edmonton Folk Festival, and of The Great Western Orchestra’s eponymous recording.

Five Years Ago
Bulletin 28.3 (September 1994). Subtitled "Canada/Britain/Rituals/Music," the issue featured an article by Mike Ballantyne, "English Ritual Songs," including a number of songs in that vein; the British and rituals twin themes were also furthered by Pauline Greenhill's article "On the Whiteness of Morris," a response to it by Daniel Stone, Andrea and David Spalding’s "The Mummers and the Paupers," "The Role of Music in the Men’s Movement" (Michael Tacon) and "Ritual Drumming in the Men’s Movement" (Fred Hollis). In addition to the English ritual songs, Rika Ruebsaat’s "Underneath the Cow" and Judith Cohen’s "Telephone Lover" were included, as well as an Ethnfolk Letters column contributed by Cia Gadd. The first Festival Directory as a quarterly update rather than a once-a-year feature showed up. Reviews were of Bud Davidge’s book The Mummer’s Song and Pauline Greenhill’s Ethnicity in the Mainstream, and of recordings Where Old Friends Meet (Ken Whiteley et al.), Música Tradicional del CUSCO-PERU and Música Tradicional de LAMBAYEQUE-PERU, and Prairie Druid (Paddy Tutty).

These issues are available from CSTM Back Issues, 224 20th Ave. NW, Calgary, Alta. T2M 1C2. [JL]