

Marvin Moehle

Marvin Moehle is the grandson of immigrants from Aegean Macedonia. His love for folklore began when he was a small child, hearing his grandmother sing the traditional and revolutionary songs of her native region. Marvin grew up in Lincoln Place, the immigrant neighborhood of Granite City, IL. He spent his days in the family grocery store, where the customers were recent immigrants from Macedonia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Armenia, and Mexico. At social gatherings of Macedonians, he learned the traditional dances and music of his grandparents' region, and heard stories of village life.



As a teenager, Marvin met several Americans who were interested in folklore. Bob Leibman, folk dance teacher and Balkan researcher, was one of the first people that influenced Marvin's interest in collecting and researching. At first, Marvin couldn't understand why someone would want to learn the language, music, and dances of a place that had no connection to their own family. Later, he came to understand that folklore is the key to the history and identity of a village or region, and that it is a treasure that must be preserved.

Over the past 40 years, Marvin has accumulated an impressive collection of folk costumes and artifacts, and has collected oral histories from hundreds of immigrants. He is fluent in Bulgarian and in the local Macedonian dialect of his grandparents' region, and he has traveled extensively in Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Greece collecting costumes and recording oral histories, music, and dances.

Marvin's costume collection began with gifts from neighbors and friends, who wanted their grandparents' costumes to be preserved and cherished. Over the years, it has grown through gifts, bequests, and purchases, especially when key pieces were needed to complete certain costumes. In recent years, several costumes were donated by members of the folk dance community, who were downsizing and needed an appropriate home for their beloved costumes.

Marvin's collection now includes several hundred complete costumes from the Balkan region, along with hundreds more individual costume pieces and folk artifacts. Several of the costumes in his collection are believed to be the only complete example still in existence in the world. He has thoroughly researched the history of each costume, including the region and specific village, the approximate dates when it was created, and information about the family it came from, whenever available.

Marvin will display some of his costumes at the NFO conference in St. Louis, and he will be speaking about them and his experience as a collector and folklorist.