

Sam Hinton honored in surprise reception

October 31, 1974

Sam Hinton, the jack-of-all trades and master of all of them, was feted by several hundred of his friends at the University of California, San Diego Friday, November 1, in honor of his 30 years of service on the San Diego campus.

A surprise reception, held at the International Center on the campus, included the presentation of a 30-year pin by UCSD Chancellor William McElroy and a poem read by Muir College Provost John Stewart.

Hinton, born March 31, 1917, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, came to San Diego in 1944 as editor-illustrator for the University of California Division of War Research. He joined the Scripps Institution of Oceanography as curator of the Thomas Wayland Vaughan Aquarium-Museum in 1946 and continued in that position until 1964 when he joined the Office of Relations with Schools at UCSD.

As Associate Director in the Office of Relations with Schools, Hinton represents UCSD as liaison agent with the high schools and community colleges of California.

Outside of the academic world, and probably within it too, Hinton is better known as a folksinger. In 1934, while a student at Texas A & M College, he presented his first lecture-recital on American folk music. This was the beginning of an activity that has continued to the present and has resulted in his giving literally thousands of performances.

In 1937 he became one of the first professional entertainers to use the term "folk music" in describing his presentation. As "Texas Sam Hinton, Folksinger and Novelty Instrumentalist" he was a member of several vaudeville units under the aegis of Major Bowes and Ted Mack.

Hinton has performed and lectured for literally every type of audience. His childrens' programs have been heard in every part of the country and much of Europe. In 1947 he began a regular radio program. He has also participated in all the major U.S. folk festivals, and has been host-performer at every one of the well known Berkeley Folk Festivals.

Recordings of his singing are on file in the Archive of Folk Music, Library of Congress and have also been issued on commercial labels. He spent several years working with the U.S. Department of State in the Jazz and Folk Music Panel of its Cultural Presentations program.

In 1947 Hinton began a continuing series of courses in folklore and related subjects for University of California Extension. In 1967 he was named a Lecturer in Folklore by the Department of Literature at UCSD. He is an active member of several scholarly folklore societies and is a frequent contributor of articles and reviews to various journals.

One of Hinton's favorite performance techniques is to trace the evolution of a given song to show how folk processes have operated upon it providing an insight into the customs and manners of people in various times and places. He plays many folk instruments, including guitar, banjo, harmonica, accordion, jaw-harp, and penny whistle and uses several of these in each of his presentations.

Hinton is the author of three books on marine biology and, since 1948, has written and drawn a weekly feature, "The Ocean World," for the San Diego Union.

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