WE SING OUR HISTORY:  
A TRADITIONAL WEDDING SONG  
Lawrence A. Weigel

Many marriage customs prevailed among our people, some of which remain popular to this day. There were the "Freiersmanner" or matrimonial agents, the "Einladung" or invitation, the "Pollerabend," the wedding march to the church, the church ceremony, and finally the wedding celebration itself.

Among the Volga Germans in Ellis Co. Kansas, no wedding is complete, even to this day, without singing the traditional Brautdusch or Brautlied (Bride's Song). As the guests hold a glass of brandy or wine in their right hand, they sing the toast to the bride and groom just before festivities begin.

Not uncommonly, relatives and guests shed a few tears, because the song is so meaningful. It was brought to America in 1876 by the oral tradition, but it also appears in a German Prayer Book-Song Book combination entitled Der Geistliche Halszierde, published in 1846. This book made its way to America from Russia during the migration of 1876. The song also appears in Volkslieder and Kinderreime aus den Wolgakolonien, published in Saratov in 1914, and is entitled "Katholisches Brautlied" (Catholic Bride's Song). In neither of these books are the notes recorded, but the melody used today in America is the one our people used in Russia over 100 years ago.

Dr. Iris Barbara Graefe wrote a book entitled Zur Volkskunde der Russlanddeutschen in Argentinien (On the Folklore of the Germans from Russia in Argentina) in which the song appears under the title "Tretet Frohlich zum Altare," which in reality are the first swords of the second verse. The melody, however, is completely different from the one we sing in the United States.

To illustrate the popularity of this song, as recently as January 1977 at a wedding in Hays, Kansas, attended by 500 guests, each holding a glass of wine, the toast was sung to the bride and groom in both German and English.

BRAUT LIED

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\begin{align*}
&\text{Sing mit frö-lich-en Ge-mü-te, Bräu-tig-am mit dei-ner Braut.} \\
&\text{Die di-re-beu-te Göt-tes Gü-te. Zur Ge-} \\
&\text{hil-fin an-ver-traut.} \\
&\text{Das sie di-ch in Angst und Pla-gen. Trös-ten soll in die-ser Welt. Und die} \\
&\text{Bür-de mit dir tra-gen. Wel-} \\
&\text{che dir. be-schwer-l} \\
&\text{lich fällt.} \\
\end{align*}
\]
**BRIDGES SONG**

1. Sing with gay and cheerful spirit,
Bridegroom with your lovely bride.
Whom today God has entrusted,
As a helper at your side.

May in all your fears and troubles,
She your consolation be.
And with you share all the burdens,
From all sorrow you'll be free.

2. Cheerfully kneel at the altar,
With deep feeling, to God pray;
Ask that in his loving goodness
You'll enjoy good health each day.

Ask dear Jesus for his blessing,
Invite him as wedding guest;
That's a rule for all good people,
If you want your marriage blest.

3. Extend hand and heart to each other,
Be upright, and honest and true.
That in all your joy and sorrow,
Your strong faith will sustain you.

May your love-light burn forever,
It is written in God's command;
May your marriage never waiver,
Until death, your love must stand.

Translated by Lawrence A. Weigel.
Work Paper No. 23

Price $2.50

Spring, 1977