



# African Culture Brought to Life

By CLARA HIERONYMUS

**M**ONTGOMERY Bell Academy's Patrick Wilson Library will resonate today with ritual echoes from faraway cultures, through artifacts which speak silently of African ceremonies and rites of initiation, and a storyteller who will bring to life with verbal eloquence the folklore of South Africa.

Masks and other primitive artifacts from the collection of Dr. Otto Billig go on display at 2 p.m. Sunday.

At 3 p.m. professional storyteller Estelle Condra, who grew up in Johannesburg, will tell the legends and folk tales she learned from members of the Zulu, Xosa, Wenda and Sotho tribes.

**PSYCHIATRIST** Otto Billig has been collecting masks and other primitive artifacts for some 30 years, interested in their uses in tribal ritual, magic and healing.

In the exhibit are masks from

Liberia, the Ivory Coast, New Guinea and elsewhere, along with small carvings which have artistic merit as well as anthropological significance.

One carving is a Bakota funerary statue which, Billig said, was a grave marker of the type placed on top of the basket which held the bones.

Some of the masks are woven of straw or raffia in basket-like forms, others are of wood, often painted and sometimes adorned with grass or feathers, shells or teeth.

**VIEWERS WILL** readily be aware of the influence this art source had on European painters and sculptors.

MBA's Jim Womack calls attention to the fact that primitive art is seen out of context by westerners.

"Created with a specific purpose in its native culture, place-

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—Staff photo by Robert Johnson

In African dress and storyteller's neck ring and hat, Estelle Condra is a professional storyteller of South African folk tales. She will tell tribal stories today at the opening of the exhibit of primitive art from Dr. Otto Billig's collection at Montgomery Bell Academy. The exhibit opens at 2 p.m. Sunday. The storytelling program begins at 3 p.m.