

## [Mr. Mankowski]

Paper 2 [??]

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

NAME OF WORKER ROBERT WILDER

ADDRESS NORTHFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

DATE June 12, 1939

SUBJECT LIVING LORE

NAME OF INFORMANT MR. MANKOWSKI

ADDRESS NORTHFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Paper 2

Name Robert Wilder

Title Living Lore

Assignment Northfield

Topic Mr. Mankowski

Mr. Mankowski settled down against the showcase in the cool interior of the “Red Front” for a little chatting. Mr. Mankowski doesn't usually “chat” easily or without reason, but this morning he seemed in a cheerful mood as I hailed him . with

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“When a come from old country to Sunderland a hove job with old Yankee. He look something lak Uncle Sam. Have whiskers on chin, only he fat - not think lak Uncle Sam. He honest and square. He show me how dey do tings in this country. A learn to read English and b'm bye I get to be American citizen. A have good education, anyway, in old country. A lak to read history, so a get to be American citizen easy 'nuff. A read history now. A get books written in Polish. A get 'em from Library. They get 'em from Boston, or same place. Dey doan have no Polish history books here.

“A tell my children to never mind if I don't speak English so good. They speak it all right. And you can't tell my children from Yankee boys and girls. You bet you can't. But if you think you can, wait for my grandchildren to grow up. You can't tell them. It is more important to understand da country den to speak da language good. An' to know if da country is doin' right you gotta know what da world is doing. Ef a could fin' out what God is doing an' tinkin', a could know wedder da world was right or not. But dere ain't no history books written about what He did certain time and place and how everything turned out. Yes, a heard about Bible. But dat don't tell you whether 2 Communist right or wrong does it? Not right out good and plain so you can't make mistake? You got ter do your own thinkin'.

“Woll, when I live with old Yankee a learn how Yankee people look at thing. He treat me fine. All other old Yankee treat me fine. You know Mister Whitmore? He dead now. He old Yankee. He mak da joke. Joke never mean - jus' funny. He easy for Polish feller to onderstan'. He talk so slow. He mos' as wide as he is high. Not very big. But good farmer. Had big farm by river. Had old house some great-granfater builded. Big place in shade of old elums. Had ferry, too, to take team and people 'cross river. And waterfall by house dat ran mill. Waterfall - it make nice sound to sing you to sleep. I work for him, too. Odder old Yankee fellers don't think much of him, 'cause he Baptist, - someting funny about Yankee feller who is Baptist or Methodist, or anything but Congregational - Mus' a been someting

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wrong somewhere in family, or would still be Congregational. All was once, you know. A read about it in history.

“But he teach me same ting as odder Yankee feller; mus’ be honest an’ square. So I onderstan’ him. An’ tink I onnerstan’ all Yankee.

“He need fellers to help him raise tobacco. All Yankee need feller to help. So I write and get feller to come. Tell ‘em what nice place Sunderland is. And how good Yankee fellers are. Hah! 3 “A jus’ remember how odder Yankees try to mak da fun of Mister Whitmore. How him Baptist. No smoke, no chew, no nothin’, don’t believe in it. Think it dirty habit, yet he mak’ da money by grow’ tobacco. Dey ask him if it right. He say, ‘You - mean - is - it - right - to - raise - two - back - oh - and - not - use - it - my - self? Lat - me - see.... I raise - grass - too.... Cut - it - and - dry - it.... But I - don't - eat any - of - it - myself.... Do - you - honestly - think - that - that - is - wrong too? Da - an-i-mals - seem - to - like - it and [?] if - they - want it - why - should - not - a - so-pply - them with - it?’ Odder Yankees don’t know what to say. Mister Whitmore always like dat. Always tell story; mak’ da joke. He fine man. I like him.

“Well, a get lotta Polish feller to come Sunderland. Dey can’t talk English. Can’t read English. But I tell ‘em never mind. Sunderland Yankee fine people. All square. All honest. A b’lieve it, too. Dey look out for Polish feller what doan know English, like he blind, or lose arm, leg, or someting. A tink dis fine country, jus’ lak da Communists try to mak’ Russia.

“People here mak’ me laugh. They tink Communists goin’ try overtraw United States government. They can’t understand that Russia don’t care what kind of government we got, but dey doan lak our idea to make big men out of meanest people. If you get money you are big people. But you can’t get lotta money without cheat, or steal, or be mean. Don’t care what happen to odder people if mak’ money ‘self. Communist say dat’s all 4 wrong to let selfish people be da big people. Want to have revolution all over world to fix dat. Say church backs ‘em up so get money. Goin’ to do ‘way with church. Goin’ to do ‘way

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with eveythin' that bakks backs selfish people up. Not dat day care what happen in odder countries. But can't make Russia Communist if selfish people in odder countries butt in.

“Selfish people all on top in this country with Coolidge, and Harding and Hoover. But when Roosevelt elected they say revolution come in this country, an' dey don't need spend more money here. They like what Roosevelt done. Trying to do same thing in Russia but selfish people all over don't like idea of people running country for themselves. No sense in having revolution here - unless selfish people got on top. Don't vote next time. Democracy no good. Use bullet. Kill dem selfish people! Burn dere houses, bomb dere office. Dey got chance now to do as Bible says; be kind, generous and help odder feller wedder they get pay or not. If can't see it, noddin' do but shoot!

“Well, a tink Sunderland jus' lak Communist Russia try to be. But one day a feller borned there come back from West. He'd been cowboy and everything. He's been stay 'round some time. Run old farm for mutter - good farm - house right on Sunderland street - then he marry fine girl. Why she marry with him I doan know. But a doan know him then eider.

“One day a Polish feller came to me. Say that this Yankee feller goin' to buy crop from feller I get to come to Sunderland. 'dat's 5 fonny,' I say, 'He doan told me notting about it. Is it dat dis Yankee feller speak Polish?' 'No,' says feller, 'But a is interpreter. And I come told you right away.' 'How much he pay,' a wanta know.' He say he goin' pay three hundred fifty dollar. But I say, 'Crop wort' more. Wort' maybe five hundred eight hundred dollar.' 'I know,' say feller. 'dat's why I told you.' I go see Polish feller who goin' sell crop. He feel bad crop wort' no more money. I fin' out dis Yankee feller been buy lotta crop all over from Polish people. They can't read, don't know English. Have trust Yankee, and Yankee pay cash for crop. But times mus' be bad for price of crop so low. I know times all right. Get good price for onion myself. An' I see what Yankee do. He lie to Polish people an' cheat 'em. But I doan understan' Yankee doing that.

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"I say, 'When Yankee feller going bring money?' 'This afternoon,' he say. 'Well,' I say, 'You told him dat you already sell crop to me. I pay you eight hundred dollar.' Then, I think, I say, 'He didn't pay you any money did he? He say, 'No, but wanted him sign paper. Interpreter tell him wait for money before sign.' 'All right,' I say, 'You do lak a told you!'

The Yankee come see me quick. He mad, an' wantta know what I mean butt in on hees business. I wantta know what he mean goin' a cheat Polish feller. An' we hov' beeg fight wit' mouf. He say he goin' 6 sue Polish feller for breach of contract. I tell him go 'head and sue if wantta. Dat dis is a free country.

"Those word, 'free country' mak' more trouble for foreign people than anything else. They believe this is free country and they can do what they want. Doan understand 'bout law. Can walk where want to. Get drunk if want to. Do anything want to - dat's 'free country.'

"Well, the Yankee feller sue. An' I go court and tell Judge what hopen. An' Judge gav' dat Yankee feller hail; '[ssess?] him costs and everything, but give him nottin' only hail. He no good and disgrace to all Yankee. A fine for help out poor neighbor for nottin'.

"But Judge, he doan know everything. I sell neighbors' crop for eight hundred fifty dollar. A pay him eight hundred dollar, so a mak' fifty dollar for trouble, for know how watch market, how read English. Den, this polish Polish feller owe me three hundred dollar. So I keep that. That mak' three hundred fifty dollar I get. A pay Polish feller five hundred dollar. That hundred and fifty more than he get from Yankee. But, if he sold crop to Yankee a would lost money on loan. So I not so fine man ag judge tink. A no do good to friend formatting.

"A do someting else, too. A told all Polish feller not to sell to that Yankee. I tell buyer watch sharp what that Yankee try sell, and tell why. A tink a break dat Yankee. One time a fine out he wort forty, forty five thousand dollar. Now, they tell me, he ain't got notting. 7 "Woll, dat's da kind of revolution Communist Russia was trying get in United States. Gang up on mean fellers. Bust 'em!

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“No, I ain't Communist. I Democrat. A hear lotta talk 'bout, “Merican way of Life’ on radio. ‘Merican way of life was gang up on Indian. No hov’ Indian to gang up on no more, so why not gang up on mean feller? Why they call you Red, or Communist for do dat?”

“Shall I told you a story? You doan hov’ to b'lieve it if doan want to. It's why Polish feller mak’ so much whisky from what's done leave in silo when ensilage all gone. Dey mak’ it to keep crow from corn field. How dat done? Well, I told you. When crow bodder you by dig up corn. Tak’ plenty corn an’ soak it in whisky. Then you plant along wid other corn. Crow come, eat corn soaked in whisky. Mak’ him drunk so he can no fly straight. He sit on limb and go ‘haw, haw.’ Odder crow eat, too. All get drunk, and eyes close and head roll ‘round. King bird come mak’ fight. Crows get all peck up. Odder crows come, down touch corn. They lick King bird. Go ‘haw, haw’ at drunk crow, and peck ‘em. Next day drunk crow hav’ bad headache. Doan like light. Fell 'shame 'cause get drunk. Dey no touch no more your corn. Odder crow doan touch, neider. Get good crop. Data why Polish man mak’ moonshine from left over juice in silo.

“Well, when my old Yankee frien'he move to Northfield I move, too. We get land togedder here on meadow. He tak’ west side, a tak’ east side. And he live in next house. You know him? Always bump head? 8 ‘Haw, haw.’ He never wear hat. Has bald head. Look see what wrong under car. Bump head when he get up. Walk under ladder. Bump head. Go in barn. Board fall off hay. Bump head. He doan need hat. Always has strip of plaster stuck on head where bump. Sometim’ two three pieces. One time go to crank tractor. Bump head on radiator. Engine kick back and break leg. Dat dam’ good ting!

“Why good ting? I told you. While in bed with leg all hitch up with pulley, Speer get shot. Nobody know who done it. They shoot him through window with shot gun, you know. Kill him dead one night in study. Cop come. Lotta cops come. CCC come. Everybody come. All look for gun. Can't find gun. Mus’ find gun to say who shot. Can't find. Dive in river. Look everywhere.

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“By'm bye, feller who work in hotel hear talk. Go look find gun. Tell cop 'bout it. But doan say notting. Find it in dump up on hill near here. Tak' it to Boston. Only got barrel. Can't find stock. Man in Boston say gun might be one that killed Speer. He find number and find name of maker. Detectuf work on case. Find maker out of business, but use be in Hatfield. By'm bye find man who got records. Look up number and find gun sold to old Yankee frien'. Ol' Yankee frien' live near Mt. Hermon, where Speer was killed. Gun could have done job. Come to 'rest old Yankee. Find him in bed wit' leg all hung up in pulley. Been dere for long time. Been dere when Speer was killed. Can prove 9 by doctor. Well, maybe somebody stole gun. 'Naw,' say old Yankee, 'Nobody stole gun. Gun got all rust. A broke stock, and threw gun away two three year ago in dump.' Cop say dey look all over. Gun wa'n't there when search.. 'A doan know why we spend taxpayer money on you,' old Yankee say. 'How man goin' shoot gun wit' no stock? You didn't find stock, but now fin' barrel. You go look again. You find stock. A threw it away wit' barrel, it 'round dump some place, 'less boys found it first.'

“The cop hunt all over try find if old Yankee didn't like Speer. Can't find notting 'cause ain't notting. Don't b'lieve old Yankee ever saw Speer to know who he was. Nor none of old Yankee's friends [?] either . Cops wanta 'rest somebody. But can't 'rest man with broken leg. If his leg not broke that would be different. So I told you, old Yankee [?] lucky that leg got broke.

“Woll, come see me again some time. Mebbe I told you more story. “ Mr. Mankowkki Mankowski took up his bundles and trudged out, head low, massive shoulders bent forward.