

[Lewis Knutson]

Week No. 26

Item No. 1

Words 1000

Percent

Received

Accredited

Do Not Write In This Space

Form A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Fay Levos ADDRESS Petersburg, Nebr.

DATE Febr. 26, 1940 SUBJECT Folk lore

1. Name and address of informant Lewis Knutson, Petersburg, Nebr.
2. Date and time of interview Febr. 16, 1940. 2:00—4:00 PM
3. Place of interview Friends home.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant NONE
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you None
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Library of Congress

Dining room, open stairway, dining table and chairs, heater, curtains, radio and rug. C. 15
[?]

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Fay Levos ADDRESS Petersburg, Nebr.

DATE Feb. 26, 1940 SUBJECT Folk lore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Lewis Knutson, Petersburg, Nebr.

1. Ancestry Norwegian
2. Place and date of birth Oslo, Norway, June 2, 1873.
3. Family Himself.
4. Place lived in, with dates Norway 1873-[1882?], Nebr. [1883?]-1913 Oregon 1913-1914. Nebr, 1914-1940.
5. Education, with dates Country school. Speical skill in farming.
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Farming.
7. Special skills and interests Farming.
8. Community and religious activities Lutheran.
9. Description of informant Average height and build. Light complexion.
10. Other points gained in interview None.

Lewis Knutson, Petersburg, Nebr.

Library of Congress

I was born in Norway and lived there until I was ten years old. While in Norway I went to school for six years. During the summer I herded cattle as back there that was the work of the women and children. One place where I herded them was on a mountain that leaned out over a large body of water. It was solid rock on that side but on the Western side of it there was a lot of grass and there were large openings in this mountain and where these passages led to no-body every found out. Because people tried to find where they led to but gave up as they could not reach the end. Later years I have read in the paper that this mountain fell over into the water and everything was flooded around that country. My grandmother and I stayed up in the mountains sides through the summer and herded the cattle and made butter and cheese, then the men would come up ever so often and get them and take into town. We went skiing and skating back there. It was interesting to watch the woodmen cut trees in the forest on the side of the mountain. They loaded thirty logs on the [bob?] sleds with one horse to pulling all. A hole was cut in the end of the trees and tied to the logs on the next sled until all were tied together. Then the horse started out and ran all the way about seven and eight miles down the mountain side. The horse could not stop because the wight of the logs behind kept pushing it along. At the unloading place, [at?] by the river, and the horse would swing around so the logs would pile into the water. Then they had to be marked so each one would know what belonged to him. In the spring when the water was high they would float them down stream to Oslo where [where?] there was a mill. Then we came to U. S. and settled in Boone County, at the place now [know?] [known?] as North Branch. I had to walk eight miles to school. We had open wells and once my dog fell into it, so my dad let me get into the oaken bucket and then he let it down in-to the well. I got the dog out alright. We started to drive a team of oxen into Oakdale with a load of water melons. The greenhead flies were so bad and we did not use lines to guide the oxen, just let them go. So away they went across the prairie and finally hit a tree stump and upset melons all over, and that ended our trip to town. After I was in America a few years I went to Oregon to work in the forest. We started out to cut a trail across the mountain. First we cut all the under brush and piled it up and burned it, and in some way a pile of this brush was accidently thrown by a hemlock tree, and as

Library of Congress

they fire easily, the first thing we knew that tree was all in flames. This tree was about 200 feet high and we tried to saw it down but the burning branches fell on us and burned our clothes. This fire burned 90 days before we could get it checked. There were 104 men fighting it. It covered 11 section of timber. There were six other fires at this time on other mountains nearby. [The?] way we fight a forest fire is to cut them down as the branches are way up on the trees as the lower ones are trimmed off. The trunks were so big that we could not saw through them near to the ground as the saws were not long enough. So we had to put a spring board along side of the trunk and make notches in the tree and brace another board so we could climb up and saw where the trunk was smaller. We had to stay on the board when the tree fell. These trees were 16 feet through. The trees start to burn in the tops and that makes a [pitch?] that run down in side of the limbs and keeps burning on the inside all the way down in the tree until there is [just?] the shell left. No amount of rain can put these fires out as the they keep burning on he The inside. There wasn't any smoke down where we were working together. The forest fires spread through the tops of the trees as the branches are so thick and close to each other not by the under brush as some would think. We had to cross a river to circle around the burning trees so we cut a tree near the bank so that it fell across the river. Then we took our equipment and crossed over. Some could walk across but when I started and looked down at the water, it seemed as though I was falling over so I crossed on all fours. The water in this river was always ice cold but from the burning trees fall into it made the water hot. It was difficult to get grub. We had to use a pack horse to go after it. At night we cut branches from the fern trees and made a bed out of them. Rolled up in our tarpaulins, we slept rather comfortable. The danger of getting burned in forest fires is if you are by a cliff or in a basin like and a burning tree comes sliding down into it, you can't get out as the tree is to thick to climb over and you get penned in. After we had this fire out we went home. Walked 24 miles, we were an awful sight, long hair, torn clothing, and burned and blackened. People could not recognize us. I homesteaded in wheeler county and raised cattle, but rustlers were very numerous. They would disguise the brand and I couldn't claim them. I was riding around the pasture one day and found where some cattle had been butchered. The heads had been thrown

Library of Congress

in a pool of water. I rode into town for the sheriff and we traced the rustlers for a long ways but had to give up. On my homestead I had a big bottomless tank, holding 1,000 gallons of water. It had sides but the bottom was gumbo, so it held the water. The muskrats got to working under the tank and let all the water out.