

[Money and a Wife]

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK 6 Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER SIDNEY ASCHER

ADDRESS BROOKLYN NY

DATE November 14, 1938

SUBJECT MONEY — AND A WIFE ... ABE ZEIKOWITZ

1. Date and time of interview

November 11, 1938. 2:30 pm

2. Place of interview

416 Rookaway Parkway, Brooklyn

3. Name and address of informant

Mr. Abe Zeikowitz 416 Rockaway Parkway Brooklyn NY

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

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6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Mr. Zeikowitz lives in a four room apartment of a modern building... the section, East Flatbush, is a section dominated by Jews. It is a "no man's land" between Brownsville and Flatbush. Living with Zeikowitz is his wife, daughter aged seventeen, a niece thirteen years of age, and his father-in-law. The apartment is modestly furnished.

FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER SIDNEY ASCHER

ADDRESS BROOKLYN NY

DATE November 14, 1938

SUBJECT MONEY — AND A WIFE ... ABE ZEIKOWITZ

1. Ancestry

Russian-Jewish

2. Place and date of birth

Russia in 1898

3. Family

4. Places lived in, with dates

Russia. Came to the United States in 1912. Lived in New York for a year or two and has since resided in Brooklyn.

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5. Education, with dates

Lived on a farm in Russia and was “too busy trying to makeing a living to get much schooling here.”

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

Worked for his brother upon arrival in the U.S., owned dairy stores but lost his business in 1928. Is now a driver-salesman for a bakery.

7. Special skills and interests

Is a good automobile mechanic, and has a mechanical mind. Has invented an improvement for airplanes.

8. Community and religious activities

Does not partake in community or religious activities.

9. Description of informant

Bald, thin, about 5'6" in height. Is an earnest speaker and becomes very, serious when discussing present day conditions. Has a splendid sense of humor.

10. Other Points gained in interview

Although the informant is in sympathy with the work in Russia, he stated in no uncertain terms, “I am an American citizen, I brought up my kits (kids) in this country, and I make my living here. Yeh, I simpatize with Russia but America always comes first.”

FORM C Text of Interview (unedited)

STATE NEW YORK

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NAME OF WORKER SIDNEY ASCHER

ADDRESS BROOKLYN NY

DATE November 14, 1938

SUBJECT MONEY — AND A WIFE: ABE ZEIKOWITZ

Interviewed Mr. Zeikowitz in the living room of his apartment. Also present were his wife, and daughter. After some discussion of business conditions, I led the talk around to card playing. I had been advised that my informant could tell me of *gambler's experiences". His wife is one of the hundreds of women in the section who play cards at least six hours a day and succeed in losing as much of their husbands' salary as possible — and more. He has come in contact with a great many of these players and since his is a keen and observant mind, he has a large store of anecdotes concerning gamblers. I asked him if he would be good enough to relate some of these stories to me. "Tell him about Weitzman," said his daughter. "You'll die laughing," she continued. "Every time I hear about Weitzman it gets funnier all the time."

"Well," said Mr. Zeikowitz, "I wish Weitzman was here, then you could hear it right. You know Weitzman is a born gambler. If he has a dollar it burns in his pocket until he can get to a card game. It's nothing new for him to lose his pay on the way home from work.

One day when he got paid he felt a lucky streak so he stopped in at a game. By twelve o'clock he was cleaned out. He knew his wife would raise hell if she knew he lost his pay in cards, so he cut out his pants pocket. He came home about two o'clock and his wife was waiting in the kitchen for him. He started crying he was pickpocketed 2 and the reason he came home so late was because he was afraid she would be mad." (Mr. Zeikowitz laughs, and is joined by his wife and daughter. He takes his pipe from the smoking stand, fills it

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and begins to puff contentedly.) “Tell him about when his wife went to the country,” his daughter advises.

“Oh, yeah, that was a funny one,” says Mr. Zeikowitz, “Lemme see, yeah, Weitzman used to make a pretty good salary and one summer his wife went to the country for a couple of weeks. He had a lucky run and in a few days made about two hundred dollars. He figured he'd surprise his wife with a new bedroom set. He gave the money to his landlady to hold so he wouldn't be tempted to play and he sent his wife a special delivery telling that when she comes home he's gonna have a big surprise for her, something she never suspects. After a day or two it began to “kitzel” (tickle) him and he took the money back from the landlady. So what happened? He lost it. She came home a few days later and said, “Nu, nu, where the surprise is?” (The family is laughing, and Mr. Zeikowitz begins another story):

One night Weitzman comes home from a game very late and thought his wife was fast asleep. He comes in very quiet. You see he had a winner and was trying to figure out a good place to hid the money. His wife wasn't sleeping, she was watching him with one eye. She saw he put the money, maybe thirty or forty dollars in his shoe. So, when he fell asleep she put a ten dollar bill in his shoe. Maybe you think she was a dope. Yeah, dumb like a fox his wife is. So, the next morning he ran in the toilet to get dressed. He hurry up counted the money and found \$10 extra, he was very happy — poor Weitzman, he didn't know a storm was coming. When he sat down to the table for breakfast his wife asked him if he had any money she wanted to get the Kit (kid) a pair of shoes.

He said, “Where should I get money from, you know I don't get paid for three 3 days yet. I haven't even money for lunch.” His wife got mad like a dog, “Oh”, she said, “Momzer, (bastard), gonif (crook), give me at least back the ten dollars I put in your shoes.”

He started to stutter and hicka (stammer) but finally he returned her the ten dollars and gave her an extra ten to quiet her up.

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(There is much laughter at this story, and Mrs. Zeikowitz leaves us at this point. She's going to a card game.)

“Yeah, Weitzman sure had to think up places to hide his winners. He had a dining room table that pulls apart and had a hole it was shallow. That was a good bunk for a while 'til his wife got wise. He even used to put the money in the sugar bowl and other dishes that was right in front of his wife's nose every day and she didn't even see the money. Yeah, he even hid the money under the carpet until one day his wife walked over the lump and nearly fell. She lifted up the carpet and found the money. But one of his biggest escapes was when he once put the money in the cellar.

One day he come back with a pretty good winner, fifty dollars, and he couldn't think of any more places to hide it. He thought and thought, and finally figured he would hide it in the cellar. He lived in a two family house and the landlady lived under him only with her father. She was a widow. So, he walked down the cellar and he seen on the shelf an old pot dusty that wasn't used for years. He was hiding the money until he'd see for himself an opening for a good game. About a week later he felt lucky so he went down — plop! the money was gone. He almost went crazy. He finally figured maybe he should ask the landlady but he didn't know how to begin - she was sweeping the stairs in front of the house. He got up his Irish (laughs at quip) and went over to her. “Maybe you found some money I left in the cellar?” The landlady got all excited. “Weyzmer,” (woe is me) was that YOUR money? I gave it to your wife. A fireman came around and inspected the cellar he said for prevention from fire week I must clean the cellar so I found the money when I was cleaning up the cellar. 4 (At this point, Mr. Zeikowitz becomes very excited and waves his arms around in the air.) Weitzman was in a pickle. He didn't know what to do. He couldn't go to his wife and say that's my money because he swore to her that he didn't have a penny. So he says to her — he says to the landlady: “Maybe you could do me a big favor. Maybe you go to my wife and get the money back.” The landlady begins to plead with him: “Mister Weitzman, Mister Weitzman, I can't do that. I told her the money wasn't mine, not even

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my father's. I asked him." Weitzman, he has no conscience. He says to her, "Say to her it's your father's money, and he didn't want to tell you he had money; that's why he said 'no' when you asked him." "O, Mister Weitzman" she began to cry, "I can't lie, I never lie in my life. It's a sin." So Weitzman starts to plead with her to save him with trouble from his wife. She finally gives in and goes to his wife. She tells Mrs. Weitzman the money belongs to her father but for the trouble she can keep \$5 for herself. The wife kinda knows something is not kosher but what could she do? Weitzman took the \$45 that was left, thanked the landlady very much, went to the game, and lost every cent — didn't come home with a dime for carfare. (Informant laughs loud and long at this.)

One day Weitzman hid himself a nice little sum of money in the water tank of the toilet— Well, that was just happened his misfortune that there was something wrong with the toilet pipe — and they called the plumber and while fixing the pipe he happened to open the water tank box and found the money. I think about eleven dollars. The plumber handed the money over to Weitzman's wife (laughs at this). No matter how hard he tried, it always happened that she got the money in the end.

Weitzman once had a streak of bad luck for a long time, and after many losses and misfortunes with his wife because of his losing he heard about a guy who gives lessons in making a peckel (making a peckel means to stack the cards). (laughs) He paid fifty dollars for the lessons. After a dozen lessons he comes back a graduate pupil — he knows how to make a peckel — (laughs) he's a graduate professor.

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He started to go to one game and another and started to break them all. (Laughs some more) After once playing in every house he was discovered and thrown out. Rumor came around that he was a peckel mocher (stacher of cards). Poor Weitzman he's got plenty trouble now. He can't make no money — nobody will play with him. He lost his job and now he sells nightgowns and women's pants from door to door.

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Yeah, card playing does funny things to people. Once it gets into your blood it's hard to get it out of your system. There's a woman named Lesser. She's some character. There's no hope for her. She's got a wonderful husband, he makes a nice living and she loses every cent he makes and owes everybody in the neighborhood. She pulls off some funny tricks. She's got cards in her so much that one morning even she threw a coat on over her pajamas and told her husband she was going to the grocery to get some breakfast. Yeah, she went for breakfast. She went to the corner and grabbed a taxicab to a game. (Looks at clock). Well, I have to go to sleep now. It's almost six o'clock and I have to get up to go to work 12 o'clock. So Come around again and I'll try to think of some more card players.”