

## [Meteor' Hell, Cicero Done It!]

FOLKLORE

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NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Earl Bowman

ADDRESS 86 West 12th St., N.Y.C.

DATE 4/17/39

SUBJECT "METEOR' HELL, CICERO DONE IT!"

1. Date and time of interview

4/17/39

2. Place of interview

3. Name and address of informant

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

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

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

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SUBJECT "METEOR' HELL, CICERO DONE IT!" "METEOR' HELL, CICERO DONE IT!"

(An Uncle Steve Robertson (Story.

"My Uncle Steve Robertson told me how the 'Great Hole' (which some people think was made by a meteor) happens to be out in the very middle of the vast, almost level Arizona desert. He told me about it one night when we were camped over in the Lost River country where we had gone with a pack outfit, aiming ultimately to get up into the Stanley Basin part of the Sawtooth Mountains and perhaps get ourselves a mountain sheep or, if our luck was good, maybe a mountain goat.

"MY Uncle Steve was such a great pioneer in the very Far West that there were few things indeed whether of natural, human or animal phenomenon of those early-settler days which he could not tell about and that too with the greatest of sincerity.....

"So, Uncle Steve told me about the 'Big Hole.'

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“We had been out through the ‘lavas’ where there are many strange sink-holes, lava-pots, and other weird and ghostly formations in the volcanic desolation of that mighty interesting corner of Idaho. (I think that it has been made into a National Park by the Government and is now called “The Craters of The Moon). Anyhow, its fascinating and one kind of feels like he is...on the desolate Moon when he is wandering around in the silence that is always there.

“After supper, both of us entirely full of Little Lost River trout, we were lying by the camp fire listening to the coyotes and just sort of thinking...maybe about what we'd seen that day, so I mentioned to Uncle Steve that once down in Arizona I had come onto a Great Hole, several hundred feet deep and nearly a mile across from lip to lip, right out there in the flat desert and as far as I could see there wasn't the slightest excuse for it being there.

“But some people, I told my Uncle Steve, had the idea that a big meteor had fallen there one time and caved in the earth and that probably that was why the hole was there.

“My Uncle Steve then told me just how it happened...”

““Yeah, I-Gawd, since you mention it, I remember that damned hole out there in Arizony,” my Uncle Steve exclaimed. “In fact, by gosh, Bob White and me was right there and practically saw it made...But, ‘Meteor, hell, Cicero done it. 'twant no dammed meteor a-tall!

“But maybe, to be plumb reliable an' truthful an' not ‘xaggerate an' stretch things like some danged liars does, Bob an' me wasn't on the ‘xact spot where th' hole is when she was made, an' maybe we didn't ‘xactly see th' cussed thing made, but I-Gawd we was as clost as anybody ought to be an' we sure as hell heard her when she was made. They ain't no doubtin' that!

“An' like I said, twasn't no cussed ‘meteor’ that made it.... ‘Cicero’ which was Bob's and my goat done it an' he done a hell of a good job when he done it.

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“That was one thing I admired about ‘Cicero.’ He was one of th’ thoroughest damned goats I ever seen an’ when he done anything..whether it was eatin’, or buttin’ or, I\*Gawd, even smellin’ he done it right or he didn’t do it a-tall...Fer instance, if Cicero started to eatin’ anything he et it all ‘fore he’d quit, if he started to buttin’ anything he’d keep buttin’ the dangd thing till he busted it or butted it out of his way, that’s all there was to it; an’ when it come to smellin’, well, hell there jest ain’t no describin’ how p’rsistent he was about that!

“But Cicero was a Papago Injun goat (to be plumb honest an’ truthful, Bob an’ me stole him from some Papago Injuns an’ thats how we come to have him in the’ first place) an’ that’s that way the Papago Injun goats is. They ain’t nothin’ they wont undertake an’ when they undertake it, I\*Gawd they finish it up.

“Bob an’ me’d never possessed a goat back in Arkansas an’ natcherally when him an’ me an’ Mam (she was Bob’s wife) went out to Arizony an’ we heard about th’ buttin’ power of them Papago Injun goats, Bob an’ me thought that by rights we ought to git ourselves one jest to see if all we’d heard about ‘em was th’ truth, besides we figgered that probably we’d need one some time.....’Cause we’d heard how powerful they was in an emergency when it come to buttin’. Why, I-Gawd all th’ freighters haulin’ ore from Bisbee an’ so forth always had a Papago Injun goat in their outfit so’s when they’d git stuck in th’ sand with a laod of ore an’ their six or eight mule-team couldn’t budge it they’d jest take their Papago Goat back a ways an’ turn him loose an’ tell him to butt th’ hind end of their wagon an’ I’Gawd he’d butt her a couple of butts an’ away they’d go! What them six or eight mules couldn’t do, that dangd Papago Injun goat could accomplish with jest a few brief butts...

“So, when Bob an’ me got a chance we stole Cicero an’ took him home.

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“Mam (Bob’s wife) wasn’t so hellish enthusiastic about Cicero when she first saw him.

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“My Gawd,” Mam says when she saw Bob an' me leadin' Cicero up to the' ranch, “what have you danged fools gone an' brang home now? Ain't there enough disagreeable features on this cussed desert out here in Arizony without you goin' an' gittin' a doggone Papago Injun goat for a body to be dodgin' an' also smellin' all th' time? Jest when I'm gittin' used to smellin' Arizony skunks an' Arizony vinagaroons an' Arizony carrion when a steer or cow dies an' the buzzards let it ripen too long before cleanin' it up, I-Gawd you go an' bring home a danged Papago Injun goat for me to also smell-When I married you, Bob White, I promised to 'love, honor an' obey' but darned if I promised to smell Papago Injun goats for you! So, you can take him right back where you got him or take him out behind th' corral an' shoot him, I don't give a dang which, before he butts th' britches off of you an' Steve Robertson an' smells me out of house an' home!”

“But Bob he always had a soothin' way with wimmen so he jest said, ‘Why, Mam, Steve an' me thought Cicero would be a kind of surprise to you an' we stole him jest so you could have somethin' else to smell a while besides them other things an' he'd be a sort of change for you— But now you go an' scold us for bringin' him home! You've plumb hurt our feelin's Mam 'cause we brung him home jest for you an' now you go an'...an'...resent him! I'Gawd, you see, Steve,” Bob says, “that's the way it is— A Mam goes an' does his damndest to do somethin' for a woman like stealin' a goat for her to smell or something an' then she gives him hell for it! That's th' way wimmen is, they never appreciate nothin' an' I'Gawd I don't blame you for shyin' off from 'em like you do Steve an' never gittin' married or nothin'....”

“Bob winked at me when he said it an' 'course I knowed he was jest 'soft-talkin' Mam but I\*Gawd it worked an' Mam repented and said, ‘Alright, dadgum you, Bob White-you know cussed well no woman can resist that, danged honey-tongue-of 5 yourn— If it hadn't been for it I'd still be down in Arkansas enjoyin' paw-paws an' persimmons in Mam an' Pap's peaceful home down on th' old Sac River! So, you an' Steve Robertson can keep your cussed Papago Injun goat but I'm promising you one thing and that is that if he ever butts

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me once I'll bust him twice! I'll smell Him...but I'll be danged if I'll be butted by him, that's all there is to it, Bob White!"

"So, Bob an' me kept Cicero an' if we hadn't there probably wouldn't be that damned Big Hole out in th' middle of that Arizony desert you mentioned a while ago.....

"To start with, that danged hole wasn't a hole but was Injun Head Butts...one of them cussed mountains that sticks itself right up all alone as if it doesn't want any other mountain neighbors close to it...Sort of like Big Butte, over there th' other side of Lost River Sinks, where we was today [doez?].

"An' Injun Butte was practically solid rock to begin with...jest a great big bump of rock stickin' up out of the' desert...Then, I Gawd, Cicero turned that damned Butte into a hole in th' ground!

"Yeah, it wasn't no danged 'Meteor,' Cicero done it.

"I-Gawd, I ought to know. Bob [White?] an' Mam an' me an' Cicero was there when it happened...After it happened, well, Bob an' Mam an' me was still there but where th' hell Cicero was...that's a mystery nobody ain't ever solved yet an' I don't reckon they ever will!

"It happened th' year before th' big dry spell, th' one I told you about, maybe you remember it, when it got so dry an' hot that even th' damned buzzards wheelin' around up in th' sky an' practically everything else includin' th' cattle an' the trees out in th' forest jest up an' petrified from th' heat and th' dryness.....

"Well, Bob an' Mam an' me decided to take a trip up to North Arizony an' see if maybe there wasn't better grazin' for our cattle up there than there was down along th' Santa Cruz river in south Arizony where we'd started 6 our cow-outfit when we come out from Arkansaw, so we travelled up there.

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“Natcherally, Cicero went along. Bob an' me had trained him to go along with us wherever we went with a wagon-outfit so if we got stuck in the sand he could butt us out like th' ore freighters had their Papago Injun goats do when they got stuck.

“So, we got up there to where there was a little spring...Arsenic Springs they called it 'cause th' water would physic anybody worse than hell but it was all there was an' they had to drink it anyhow...about two miles from old Injun Head Butte an' we camped there.

“Everything would a'been all right only there was a couple of prospectors already camped there who was figgerin' on doin' some prospectin' on Injun Head Butte 'cause a old [Hopi?] Injun Chief had told 'em there was a lost gold mine somewhere on th' Butte.

“Them damned prospectors had a whole burro load of dynamite with them an' had spread it out in th' shade of a Joshua tree to sort of cool off and...Well, to make a long story short, while Bob an' Mam an' me was gittin' our camp set an' not payin' much attention to Cicero th' damn fool found that dynamite an' 'fore he quit he'd et every last cussed stick of it! “Th' first thing Bob an' me knowed about what had ahppened was when one of th' prospectors...Dirty Shirt Smith was his name...caught Cicero jest swallerin' th' last damned stick of dynamite they had, an' he come runnin' over to our camp yellin'-'Hey, your cussed doggone goat has et up all our dynamite every damned drop of it! Now, how th' hell is Solemn Johnson (that was th' other prospector's name) an' me goin' to do any balstin' to find that damned lost gold mine that old Injun Chief told us was on Injun Head Butte? How th' hell are we goin' to— You gotta pay us for that dynamite your goat et!”

“I ain't worryin' about payin' for your damned dymaite,' Bob up an' told him. “What I'm worryin' about is that cussed goat runnin' loose around [here with all that high explosive in him. If he ever gits th' idea that 'cause?]”

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our wagon's standin' still we're stuck an' need buttin' out, or if he starts in to practicin'g buttin' like Pago Injun goats does, well, Gawd help us all, that's all I can say!"

"Mam she got excited too an' says, 'Bob White, for Gawd's sakes, you an' Steve Robertson figger out some scheme to keep that goat from stirrin' around much till he either sweats all that dynamite out of his system or digests it or something. If he goes off anywheres clost to us there wont be nothin' but fragments of us left! For Gawd's sake tie him up or something but do it an far away from camp as possible— Maybe you'd ought to give him a dose of castor oil, that might help!" Mam says.

"Yeah,' Bob says, 'an' who th' hell would straddle him an' hold him while I'm givin' it to him...an' take a chance of him goin' off while they're straddle of him?"

"Mam realized th' danger of it an' didn't insist on us givin' Cicero castor oil.

"So Bob an' took Cicero an' tied him to a Joshua tree about a hundred yards from camp an' everything seemed safe an' sound for th' time being.

"Mam, she quieted down an' after supper we all went to bed...lettin' the' white Arizony moonlight stream over th' desert calm an' serene like.

"Fore I went to bed I looked out where Cicero was tied an' he was layin' there peaceful an' quiet as if eatin' sixty or seventy sticks of dynamite was jest a incident an' didn't have no significance a-tall.....

"Bout three o'clock in th' mornin' I reckon it was I waked up all of a sudden with a sort of p'resentiment—I think that's what you call it when you think somethin' terrible's about to happen—pressin' down on me. Anyhow, I felt it i my marrow that Gawd only knowed what might take place any minute.....



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“Natcherally, when I was a little a waker I remember about Cicero eatin' that dynamite an' the first thing I done was to peer out through th' 8 moonlight an' see if he was still tied to th' Joshua tree an' still keepin' still till th' dynamite was absorbed out of his system—

'I-Gawd, that's when I got a shock. Cicero was gone.'

“He'd gnawed his rope in two an' escaped.

“Then I snuck over to where Bob was sleepin' an' shook him an' says, 'Bob, fer Gawd's sake wake up! Cicero's loose an' prowlin' around somewhere with all that dynamite in him an' Gawd only knows what's liable to happen!”

“Bob waked up and says, “My Gawd, Steve, don't wake Mam...she's tired an' needs her rest (Bob was always like that, awful considerate of Mam) an' besides if she wakes up an' realizes Cicero's loose she'll raise hell an' I'm too dammed worried to have any woman raisin' hell with me at this time of night! But where th' hell do you reckon Cicero's gone to, Steve?’

“Danged if I know,’ I told Bob, “but th’ chances is he's wanderin' around in th’ moonlight huntin' something to practice buttin' on— Only, I\*Gawd,’ I says, ‘if he find it I hope to Gawd it's a good ways from camp!’

“I-Gawd, so do I,’ Bob said. An' then it happened—

“Sounded jest exactly like th’ world had come to a end.

“Th’ long an' th’ short of it was, th’ next mornin' there wasn't no danged Injun Head Butte out there on th’ Arizony desert. There was jest a hell of a big hole in th’ ground where she had been.....Bob an' me knowed what had happened.

“Cicero had wandered around huntin' somethin' to practice butting on an' in that moonlight he'd saw Injun Head Butte....She looked danged good an' solid so he thought he'd practice

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on her. An', natcherally, when he hit here with all that dynamite in him he jest went off. That's all there was to it.

“An' when he went off he jest ripped old Injun Head Butte out by th' roots....an' there couldn't be nothin' left but jest a hole where she had been!

“So, that's the way it was—An' I don't give a dang what anybody says—even them cussed 'scientists' that thinks they know such a hell of a lot...an' that that Big Hole out in Arizony was made by a meteor..gits crazy ideas 9 sometimes. They jost don't know th' inside story of them things like us Pioneers of th' Far West does, that's all.

“But th' next time anybody tells you that that hole was made by a 'meteor' jest tell them, 'Meteor hell, Cicero done it'.....

“An' I-Gawd, if they don't believe you, take 'em out there an' show them th' Hole, its still there ain't it? They can see for themselves th' damned thing's there—An' that ought to be proof enough for anybody.....” END