

[Alcoholic World War Veteran]

Introduction to STORIES OF AN ALCOHOLIC WORLD WAR VETERAN

by Marion Charles Hatch

It was Sunday afternoon. A cool breeze was blowing from the East River and the sun was warm. In a parked taxicab opposite a garage on First Ave., the interviewer talked to Huey and his brother. Huey's brother, whose first name was not obtainable, was rolled up asleep in the back seat of the cab. From time time to time he awoke and made interjections. The interviewer sat in the driver's seat with his typewriter on two iron bars which extended beneath the meter. Huey sat on the small extra seat in back of the cab. Twenty five unoccupied cabs were lined up and down the street in front of an unused warehouse.

"You have a room?"

"No address," said Huey, waving his hand dramatically.

Both men were probably born in America or came to America when they were very young. They are of Irish descent but speak clearly and rapidly without any brogue.

"Did Huey have a good education?"

"No. We were more interested in fishing in those days." said his brother.

The two brothers have stuck together through life and are now engaged in drinking themselves to death together.

They joined the army at the same time together and they have worked as bell hops in the same hotel. Both were skilled buglers in the army.

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"Don't they say anything to you for sitting in this cab, sleeping here?"

"No. They're all good sports. If they take out this cab, we'll take the next one."

Huey is emaciated, red-faced, slight, his clothing not noticeably poor. His blue eyes gleam slyly out of their red background. His brother's face is heavier and coarser.

The interviewer paid Huey twenty five cents for the material. The money was immediately translated into a half pint of reddish whiskey which Huey said he had to buy to quiet his brother. [I don't [?] their's [?] in these [?] us _____ lw?] Washington #3 [?]

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A 3,420 Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Marion Charles Hatch

ADDRESS 862 First Ave.

DATE Oct. 5, '38

SUBJECT Stories of an alcoholic world war veteran.

1. Date and time of interview

Sunday afternoon, Oct. 2, '38

2. Place of interview

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Parked taxicab of Sentinel Cab company, Allied System, across street from their its garage between First Ave. and East River on 48th Street.

3. Name and address of informant

Huey Davison. "You have a room on Second avenue have you not" I asked. With a dramatic, decisive, even proud wave of his hand: "No address" , he [answer?] answered

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.

Huey's brother, whose first name I didn't get , was rolled up in the back seat of the cab. He wakened and made interjections from time to time. Huey sat on the small , extra seat in the back of the cab. I sat in the driver's seat with my typewriter on two iron bars that extended beneath the meter. Huey laughed and talked through the window opening, through which by now some millionaire may be calling destination instructions. The day was pleasant with a cool breeze from the east river and a warm sun above. [?] Twenty five unoccupied cabs were lined up and down the street in front of the blank wall of an abandoned or unused warehouse.

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FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Marion Charles Hatch

Library of Congress

ADDRESS 862 First Ave.

DATE Oct 5 '38

SUBJECT Stories of an alcoholic world war veteran

1. Ancestry

Irish descent but speaks clearly, quickly [?] and without brogue of any kind.

2. Place and date of birth

Probably born in America or came to America very young. Both men about 55 years old

3. Family The information on this page is necessarily sketchy. All New York alcoholics, penniless, engaged in committing suicide the slow way, are suspicious. When Huey went away to buy a bottle in the middle of our interview his brother said I could get a certain story from him. I said I would ask him for it when he returned. "No" said his brother "If you ask for anything he won't answer a word."

4. Places lived in, with dates

New York and in Europe during war.

5. Education, with dates

"Did Huey have a good education" I asked his brother. "No. We were more interested in fishing in those days." Probably not over a common school education. Made [?] few grammatical errors.

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

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The two brothers have stuck together through through life and are now engaged in drinking themselves to death, together. Besides joining the army together they worked as bell hops in hotels. This was all I could get from them without awakening suspicion.

7. Special skills and interests

Both were skilled buglers in the army

8. Community and religious activities

Very affable and good hearted. "Don't they say something to you for sitting in these cabs, sleeping here." "No No they're all good sports. If they take out this cab we'll take the next one."

9. Description of informant

Huey is emaciated, red-faced, slight, clothing not moticeably poor. His blue eyes, belieing his woe-begone face gleam out of their red background with slyness and devilment. His brother had a rougher, coarser face and heavier figure. One wondered how such happy, bright remarks could come out of such a battered, poisoned head.

10. Other Points gained in interview

See extra comment.

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NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York,

Library of Congress

NAME OF WORKER Marion Charles Hatch,

ADDRESS 862 First Ave.,

DATE Oct. 5, '38

SUBJECT Stories of an alcoholic world war veteran. 1 1 #Huey: "[now?] can you just keep your moth mouth shut " Brother: " [first?] thing you'll do is give me the price of a half pint. " Huey: " He's a wash out " [?]. Huey: [He'll?] give you the rice price of a half pint dont don't worry. Now I can't do your stuff [you?] gotta [?] ask me the qustions questions . How about some butt ? Oh , that's right yu you don't smoke That's vanhoe [Ivanhoe?] one of the toghest toughest [?] cigarettes in the world " Brother: Away goes your [?] typewriter if you take a drag out of this lts pipe tobacco but its all we got ." Huey speaking: # I was foling fooling around in 1917 , working for an express company [so?] we decided to go [?] to the war [we?] were all young fellows. So we went into that war game [we?] walked into a certain place on 46th st and the doctors [one?] is by the name of O'[connell?] [?] and the other was [/] [nelson?] [so?] we all walked it in there [he?] said to us , " [how?] many of you men want to go to camp right away ?" [out?] of 45 men there [?] was only two that stepped forward Doctor , " [now?] you two step back again " But we insisted so we went to [camp upton?] [we?] don't know what happened to the other gang [separated?] I went with an enginger engineer to [?] France [my?] partner to the 77th diviion [division?], [I st?] [?] [battalion?] [he's?] dead and I'm here. [when?] we hit cam [camp?] [upton?] Wait! we [?] started to hit the camp , in [hoboken?] a gentleman there was [a?] [?] barber in the city of [n.y.?] [the comany company [?] barber.?] He decided he could get away with it [he?] didn't have t to go to war. So we landed on the [hoboken?] dcks docks [when?] we hit the docks the first thing they said was " [throw?] your pack on the left shoulder [?] and walk up the gangplank !" [this?] gentleman thought he could beat it by [?] puting his pack on hi his left shoulder and falling down 2 2

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[this?] gentleman [???] , at this time , goes [?] up the gang plank [he's?] got it all framed up how to beat the draft. [so?] he goes up the gangplank [when?] he gets in the middle of the gangplank he falls down pack and all Ha! [but?] they fooled [?] him [three?] [dailors?] sailors ran down the gang [?] plank and threw him on the ship pack and all. [and?] the next time I met him was on the British front with the greatest barrage they ever had. They made him a / cook in the outfit to keep [?] him back of the lines. [and?] comin ' back after the armistice [all?] during his time / in [france?] he was ' ritin ' to his sweetheart in [?] the [united states?] and [?] building up his [?] moustache. He had one of the most wonderful moustaches [he?] was trying to beat the kaiser out at that time [a?] nice big black moustache. [so?] we pulled through to the [embracation point?] [Embracation point?] at Bassens outside of Bordeaux , [?] Genoucourt [This?] party that's telling you the story now is the / only person who ever sounded the boat call , as sounded by the [united states?] army in the A.E.F. and I sounded it at Bassens docks. (In further explanation after barber's purpose in falling down the gang plank) Instead of getting him from the botom bottom part and taking him ashore they run from the top part and took him [?] aboard [so?] he didn't beat the draft . [?] *****

There [?] was a cook over there [was?] a Polock. We [?] were livin ' in billets [?] now this cook every night he used to get drunk [and?] we were livin ' in billets and general Pershing give the order we had to put our shelter halves up This cook came in every night [he?] had the right of way to come in late but he used to step on everybody. [he?] step on you your feet he would step 3 3

on your hands [he?] would step on your feet Oh , every night we used to argue with him [??] [we?] raise hell with him but we culdn't couldn't do anything with him. [So?] we decided one night we would change the subject. [we?] were [?] billeted up over a barn [plenty?] of cows and horses below , wth with the big hay door open [so?] we decided we would fix he the cook up. [so?] we had few francs , so we went out and bought a fromage , cheese , if you parlez-vous franc franca is , [?] that [os?] roquefort cheese [it?] sounds

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good [so?] when he came in that night nobody said anything o anything to him and we let him go to sleep. s As soon as he went to sleep and when he went sleep and we was sure he was asleep we wrapped his hair in that [roquefort?] cheese, get it and the Rats were very plentiful there at the time (Laughter on our part) [wait?] but here's the [?] pay-off [wait?] til I get through with the [?] pay-off . [so?] you now know the door where they have block and fall , where thy they bring up the bales of hay , upstairs ? [were?] you ever on a / farm ? [so?] we [?] were all laying the there [we?] couldn't get no sleep to see what is going to happen [finally?] he comes in. [stepped?] on Meek , steep steeped on other guy , they all squawked [walk?] right on your feet , hands everything [?] [goes?] over and he lays down. [so?] after laid down it [?] was our turn ta let the rats to ride to him. [as?] soon as he lays down and [goes?] to sleep two guys wait. [as?] soon he goes to sleep start in snoring ake take the roquefort cheese and spread it all over his hair , head and everything. Now this guy was a tough guy this cook. He had em 'em all beat. [so?] finally about three / oclock in morning there's an awful uproar in the joint. We were / upstairs over the cows. He [?] jumps up and he runs like hell. You know where he run ? [right?] out through that window [right?] out that window on the second story That's true 'm I'm telling you [we?] had it fixed up for him. 4 4

[as?] soon as he reached up and fund he found the rats in his hair he went right through the goddam window. Just an ankle broke. He's a casualty of [the?] war Ha! Ha! [that's?] the only ay way to figure it out. [he's?] on relief now. [?] ***** # So long as we ' don't mention no names its O.K. [wait?] til 'til I figure the yar year now. he the year that , the year that Rosoffs didn't clean the center of the streets where the car [?] tracks were [did?] you ever tell a proposition [go?] ahead [we'll?] write it up

One night I'm roaming around so finally I stop a man on the [?] corner of 96 th street I said , " [will?] you pleae please lend me five cents I want to get down - town. " [so?] the gentleman gave me the five cents I go out and get a bus on [second avenue?]. I get aboard the bus and I got a package [a?] couple of old shirts I want to wash up , in my hand [so?] I'm riding down second avenue on this bus. and all of a sudden the bus hit a [?] f

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bump of ice in the middle ([Rosoff's?]) and I wound up on the floor. [and?] the bus driver , as soon as I fell on the floor , he pulled the bus rght right over to the curb and locked all doors. I didn't even know what was the matt[r?] matter and neither did the rest of the passengers. He didn't ask me if I wanted any medical [?] aid or anything else. [so?] finally they were all sitting there and a big car pulls up. I don't know the [?] license of the car [a?] swell car a , Buick eight , pullsup. [and?] he takes me out the side door of the bus , takes me into his car. [so?] he says , " [?] Here You're all righ right aint ou you?" I said to him " [yes?] sure , call a doctor to find out if I'm all right " He says to me , " [no?] , [no?] we won't call no doctors ." [says?] , " [get?] n in my care here and sit down. " so I get in his car and sit down. Brother, interrupting very politely, as he gets out of cab. " Yu'll You'll have to excuse [??]." me a [?] I'll be back" Huey cant [?] says , " here [we?] [he, says] [??] 5 5

Says , " [here's?] [?] \$5. O.K. " He says " [sign?] this. " So [?] what"" [sign?] it. " I said , " [no?] I won't sign [?] that." He says , " [take?] a five and sign it. " " No , " I says " I'm gonna sue the company fr for, for , well , my injuries. He want me to sign a blank sheet [what?] a dop dope I'd be for christ sake He'd make \$1500 on the sheet [wants?] to get my signature [so?] he stayed with me all ight night [he?] stayed with me all night. I says , " [listen?] , do you think I'm a dopo to sign that [??] goddam sheet ?" So lets see the sheet again [so?] this time he's got the sheet [?] fixed this time. He wen went/ to the [?] toilet [he?] brings it back [had?] one five [?] but he could raise it to fifteen hundred [you?] know , he had one in front of he the five. You always gotta be careful wa [?] what you sign I was a dopo once befoe before that I went and signed. I [faled?] [failed?] anyway " I tell what I'll do with you Give me five bucks and I'll quit. " He brought me in his car right to 61 t st street. So he's got the blank sheet. But I [didn't?] sign nothin ' . That ended it then. [?] ***** # [do?] you want to use a lttle little humorous one ? [now?] all the gentlemen who are hanging arund around the [muni / ci / pal lodging huse house, ?] and I am one of them , have very uch much trouble getting id rid of lice understand ? [what?] I'm always wondering about is why the EF AEF soldier doesn't show them how to get [?] rid of them. I was with a [?] regiment in France and th the way we get rid of them is : " Never let a lice beat [??] you, beat the

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lice ." he the trick is how to get rid of them [never?] get lousy always get rid of them [so?] you take after you [?] good and lous [??] lousy, all good and lousy ((Huey to [his?] brother who returns:) ["World?] from somewhere coming in Yu You got the world This guy is lousy himself.) [???? The greatest trick in the world The simpl simple bums can do anything. 6 6 (Brother, interjecting: " I can give the [?] remedy right away , [cut?] the pockets out of the politicians ' pants. [From the [orther?] man just [?]. I' I'm waiting for a cigarette. [Has [???] for cigarettes] They all smoke cigars. I'm going to be hack driver from now on and smoke cigars.) (Huey [continues?]:) How we get rid of the crabs Go to the company cook Gives you a bag of salt. Go down near the creek You take all your [?] clothes off , right at the crek creek [pour?] salt on the inside. Make that inside not on the outside [they?] fly away on yu you . So after you pour this here salt all over you your/ clothes Take them down to the lake just leave them close enough enough to the water. [the?] lice eat up this salt [?] they're very thirsty [?] They're bound to be thirsty [now?] when these Ice lice, all o of them , you can see them any time [when?] they walk down here to get themselves a drink of water you grab your underwear and you run like hell. Ha! Ha! (Brother interjecting again:) (" (ITs a hell of a way to duck / em. [?] Put that in [cab?] [?] [????] number 000141)

——— ***** A [guy?] stopped me on 25th street the [lodging?] house. A poor little nigger all buy himself. "Say man was yo bon in noo Yook." I said "Yessir I live in New York." said well listen here where them two trains went together. Them two subway trains hit themselves on Lexixton ave. I said yes i remember. He says why I read about it In Scranton Penn. ————— 7 7 (I gave Huey 25 cts, at [??] on his [???], he goes for whiskey) ***** "Whats around the corner] Brother: " Its just a hole in the ground. They're all barrelled up. They don't even kno know whether first avenue is above them or not. , [??] [?]

I gotta get a drink of water I don't know which garage to go into to get a drink. I was asleep in this cab when you come , wasn't I. If they use this one I [?] go into the next one. They don't say anything. They're all good scouts. I hang out wid them. [?]

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We [?] brothers. We worked together all our lives. ***** [?] Huey returns and both drink Brother: " That's humorous aint it ? [the?] dopey [?] guy coming in from Vermnt Vermont, 50 below , comes into to [new york?] 13 below and gets his hand [?] Lok frozen. Look at his finger. (His [?] finger is permanently [?] So use your wn judgent own judgment He comes into [?] a warm climate and freezes his hands. " #Huey tells the story # Here [?] is a [??] humorous proposition. In camp Green , [vermont?] , where [president roosevelt?] sent the [?] ccc guys , 2210 company , that's the company war veterans. [no?] transportation to get into Mt Pelier , five miles. (Brother: " [he's?] drinking bum whiskey ".) It was fifty - four below zero and I was leavin ' that camp at that time. I boarded the train at Mt Pelier and went through. [the?] cold was 40 below ntil until we hit North Hampton [Northampton?] , Mass [all?] the way through [put?] the date / in there Feb. 9 , 1934 Stick the date in there [that?] makes it more perfect [so?] they don t fool ou you on dates. I arrived in the city of New York , Pennsylvania station. and the taxicabs wee were on strike [put?] the date in thee there . It rose to 14 below zero in New York city and I got frozen up badly [?] and I'm still walking around with finges fingers crooked. [?]

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NEW YORK

FORM D Extra Comment

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Marion Charles Hatch

ADDRESS 862 First Ave.

DATE Oct. 5, '38

SUBJECT Stories of an alcoholic world war veteran.

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Several weeks ago Huey Davison, who has a two-block long fame as an inebriate, stopped me on the corner for a dime. I gave it to him, on a verbal contract that he wouldn't ask me again, because of my own straightened circumstances. To this he readily agreed. Seeing him a couple of weeks later, parching for liquor, he hummed and hawed but carefully refrained from asking for a new dime. Seeing him again last Sunday morning it occurred to me I might dig some stories out of him. I told him I might be able to let him have another dime and that where I worked, a relief job, I had to turn in ten pages of stories each day. Perhaps he could help me out I definitely couldn't go over a quarter.

"While you've been talking I've already doped out a good one. On the docks at Hoboken."

"Fine "I said "I have to eat and I'll see you in an hour. Where ?"

"Well I just put my buddy to sleep, in a cab. You know where. At the foot of 48th st near First Ave. You know where I hang out Meet me down there."

In an hour I came back and located the cab. One man was rolled up in the rear seat and Huey was seated on the small folding seat in the rear.

I live just around the corner and preferring to work with a typewriter I thought I might invite them up but decided I would have perpetual visitors so decided to get my machine.

Coming back with my typewriter I met Huey on the corner a block away from the cab.

[????]

(Extra Comment Continued)

STATE

NAME OF WORKER

ADDRESS

Library of Congress

DATE

SUBJECT

“Oh we can't do anything with that bum. He's barrelled.” he said.

“But I thought I could type in there. I can't type in the street. “I said

“We'll get another cab.” [?]

I felt Huey was making sure , if there was to be any money , he would get it without [?] having to cut the [?] [melon?] with his pal. I pressed a little in the direction of going to the cab with the occupant. After passing this cab Huey turned bout and said “O.K. we'll try it .” This explains his first remarks as he entered the cab, to the sleepy occupant who turned out to be his brother.

Here are a few / other points relative to Huey and the interview: They insisted at first on my giving the quarter to start with for cigarettes and a drink so they would be comfortable. Knowing I would be stuck again at the end and knowing I could never get a dime out of the Works Progress administration on a legitimate excuse for expenses, I [?] shushed them and asked for a few stories first , as samples , so they rolled cigarettes of “Ivanhoe” said to be very strong pipe tobacco. Later I gave Huey a quarter and he went out and returned with half a pint of red [?] whiskey, to [still?] his raucaus brother.

I tried to get Huey's address as explained earlier. At one time he told me he was on relief so he probably feared complications I understand he has a room on Second Avenue somewhere near 45th st. I had difficulty getting his name. I said several times on [having?] him “My name is Hatch.” This had no effect. Finally I asked “What is your name”. He changed the subject and talked on making up his decision and finally sad said his name was Huey Davison “Spelled with one

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'd' one 'd.'" [?????????] ???]

Throughout the interview from time to time the brother would remark "Boy I could get you some stories if I took you around the corner. "Or as a variant "He would get something around the corner." I had a vague idea in my mind that what I would get would be either violent or undignified , so evaded further questioning. Later , my curiosity aroused , I pressed Huey for what he meant. Huey thereupon said ther there was a hole , at the foot of 47th st with from 10 to 20 bums sleeping the there . He said he would take me there but I should sit only in the spots he designated , in order not to catch lice. I agreed to meet him later to go down the hole, figuring I would look the place over and get out before the lice got into action. So I took my typewriter home, Huey figuring the score of bums might be too much for me and I wuld would have to pawn it. I met Huey fifteen minutes later, following our interview in the cab. By this time however he was so banged up with liquor I decided he would be useless. He also said I would have to buy drinks for the bums so I said I would pospone the visit to a future date. [?]