

["The Baron"]

Tales - Tall Tales

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK 6 Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER MARION CHARLES HATCH

ADDRESS 862 First Avenue

DATE November 1, 1938

SUBJECT ADVENTURES OF "THE BARON" - "DUTCH" VAN BRUDEN

1. Date and time of interview

October 31, 1938 - 6 pm

2. Place of interview

Office of Donald's Garage, 48th Street between 1st and 2nd Aves.

3. Name and address of informant

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“Dutch” Van Bruden, also known as “The Baron”. No permanent address. “Where did you sleep last night?” I asked. “Dree den (310) - dat's da spickeasy. Dat's good. Some nights go down town. Dat costs a quarter. Somedimes in a private house.

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant. He collects rags for a junk man located between 339 and 343 East 48th Street.

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

Chauffeurs and mechanics came in and sat down and listened to “The Baro” Baron tell his stories. They all knew him and had heard the stories before, prodding him from time to time when he left out details. The garage office fronts the sidewalk on the north side of 48th St. It is a room of about twelve by twelve feet; there are over a dozen chairs about the room, touching each other. Chauffeurs waiting for calls, or otherwise putting in time, sit about and chat.

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

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NEW YORK

FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER MARION CHARLES HATCH

ADDRESS 862 First Avenue

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SUBJECT ADVENTURES OF "THE BARON"

1. Ancestry

German. "No, no, I'm not a baron. My andcestors were barons, I sed."

2. Place and date of birth

Germany, 1897.

3. Family

Divorced from his wife when he came home and found "a colored fella laid in my bed."

4. Places lived in, with dates

Sailed the seven seas; has lived in New York off and on for several years.

5. Education, with dates

He spent four years in a German naval school and eight years in the German [?] navy.

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

He was a turbine engineer, but has held many other jobs on ships. Now he is collecting rags, metal, paper for a junk dealer.

7. Special skills and interests

Speaks English brokenly, German, "Hollandish" and a little French.

8. Community and religious activities

9. Description of informant

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Van Bruden is short, with chunky, strong shoulders. His body hasn't deteriorated although his face is just beginning to show some of the ravages of liquor. He has horizontal lines on a broad, square forehead. His small blue eyes are a little watery from excesses. He has a strong nose and his cheeks are a spotty red, lined. He wears a soiled chauffeur's cap. The top half of his head is bald.

10. Other Points gained in interview

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE NEW YORK

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DATE November 1, 1938

SUBJECT ADVENTURES OF "THE BARON"

(Remark by a chauffeur:) Tell the one about being thrown in the river.

(The Baron starts:) One Friday night, with Frenchie, I was drinking in a speakeasy down on forty eighth street. So she invite us to go with her in the hallway and have a good time. Und a we get chased out from the yanitor. So vell we walked down on the waterfront. Und I supposed to be the first lover so I yoost try to get on my arms. Two guys get ahold of me and drew me overboard. It was pretty coold, September. Und dey drew rocks after me. Huh. The fellas was in the mind I swim down de river, but they made a mistake. I swim

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round de barges, up to forty ninth street. Dere were a couple of coal shovellers und de watchman picked me up and start to bring me to the hospital. He brought me in jail and locked me up for fourteen days for being drunk. Dat's the truth. Frenchie was with me. Who were the fellas that threw me in? Dey was also bums.

(Remark by a chauffeur:) If he starts to drink tonight that will be eight days he will be drunk.

(Another chauffeur:) Remember, Dutch, don't forget to tell him the time you took the copper off the roof. You know the guy that told you/ to take the copper off the roof?"

(The Baron:) Very little to say about that one. Vell, ah, it was on Monday. Unda two fellas, standin' on the corner, told me about the copper. So they hired me. 2 Two other fellas hired me. So one says "Gonna pay you a cupla of dollars to get that copper off the roof." Claimed one was a contractor. So I climmed (with a short i) up and drew the copper off. Und they stole it off me. Finally when I dried to get down the flewer (floor) give in and I fall from one flight to the udder one and the udder one give in and I fall to the next one. After Grey, the cop, and they fixed me up with the club. Well he let me goin dat was all. I tare it down ya know and they stole it. No they didn't lock me up.

I was young cadet, through;the first time we went on land we yooked for a yurl. After an eighteen months trip we like to have an action, you know, life. Finally we found em. They told uns to go to und village und de ground floor would be light on the ford window — so we went there and we found the light and the window. So de udder man was a big tall fella. I vas short compared to his size. So we vas fightin about whose the foorst one to climm in the window. So he toold me, "I'm de daller one und yu da smaller one". Vell I didn't agree wid him. Und I told him if I am the smaller one what's the difference? After all, he vas the first one to stand ound my shoulder. He knocked und da window, a great big, heavy farmer grabbed him by the window (general laughter. Voice: "It was the wrong

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house, see!") Und beat him up wid a club til the collar bust and he fall down. Dat's the hull story. Den we beat it. That was tuff story. He had him by the neck. (Demonstrates).

(Chauffeur:) How is it about your wife, Dutch? Dat's a long story.

(Another)- Oh, Dutch, tell him about Hotcha.

(Chauffeur:) How you come to be a bum, that's all.

(Dutch:) Yoost how it happened to come on the bum;

"Yes".

(Dutch continues): Vell I gonna tell. Depression broke out. Und so I took 3 a whale boat to Soud Africa. After a twenty two munts drip I coom up in my house und a colored fella laid in my bed. Vell I didn't bodder da man at all. I told him to balk out. Vell den I jost my business and house. Then got separated for non support. I vent twice to yail for six months and then I was legally separated.

How I got ball headed, you know? (takes cap off) Vas in March, nineteen hoondred ninteen, shortly after the war. I yoost was cummin' from Scarpa Flow, Scotland. Had a Norwegian liner. We went over to Nord Africa, to Algiers, for siffax. It's for fertilizer. And the siffax we get heavy loaded. White stuff for fertilizer. We reach the Gulk of Biskaya. Heavy stoorm brook out. After twelve days heavy fight our ship sink. Had nuttin' else but swimmin' vest. I drift around for six days on a beice of lumber. Was bretty near insane (accent on 'in') till a Portageese liner coom und picked us oop und brot us to Balboa, in Spain. After dree moonts in da hospital looked in da mirror and my hair was snow white den I lost my hair altogedder and I qvit da sea. For a year. (laughs)

Dat's anudder one from a Grick liner. I paid off from a Yugoslavian liner in Montevideo and zined (long i) on a Grick liner wid da name Vaselious Pondilly from Pireus, Grickland. Und da Brazzil cust, San Vernando mutinity (accent on 'tin') brook out. Da mate, da foorst

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mate, da captain, dree fireman, und six sailors got killed. A creezer, a battleship, picked oop da wireless und shelled da ship till it zunk. Da rest of da crew get broot und land und Parnaboocoo vere we went on trial. I get four munts hard labor. Da rest of dem get, some of dem get more, some of dem less, ya know. After zex days I deserted a labor baddallion, und valked nine oondred miles to Rio da Janiero. American consul put me on American ship und brot me to Panama zity und da Panama Canal. From Panama Zity I vent over to Philadelphia und from Philadelphia home, dat's all. 4 Took fifty days. (How did ya eat? (interjection)) Bananas, fruit, everding on the railroad. (What did ya meet on the road? white people?) [xxxx?] No white people. Animals. Oh, dere was railway tracks. Keep hot over night. All the snacks (snakes) keep themselves on da railway tracks — soon as a train passed, da train kill dem by da millions. (What did ya eat?) Oh, bananas, oranges, und grape fruit, all kinds. They callem a lion, ya know, some little ones (gestures with hands). Some pretty dings. Once in a while und an old farmer told us about if we vant to help him how to catch moonkeys so he drilled a great big hold in de dree, big enough to put an orange in. Da moonkey looked from da dree und vatched him, vat he was doin and he was smart enough to leave the orange go when he had him in his fist. So he hold da orange in his first fist und he couldn't get it out any more. (Do they bite?) Now, now. Den we put him in da net. Und they had them little eisels (asses?) little dunkeys. It happened one day we delivered some of dem on da market [xxx?] about fifteen miles. Und he told one on de police department. The monkey runned away und took part of the scalp from da police commissioner. (You say 'wo'.) Yes, we were twelve men. (Well, that's better than walking alone) (Did you make any money on that trip?) Yes, onct in a vile. We helped out once in a vile on the way. Vel, by crossing the Amazones River a man falled asleep und fall over board. A great big vater snack wus right long side him and swing himself round his leg. It was a good ting dat two men was on vatch. They took him out da river. Boot he died four days later. It was over night very cooled dere. Und dree or four men, it was da oldest of em. Ve didn't oonderstand one anudder because the Grick language very hard to oonderstand. Da dree vent over for water. (Maybe they were bitten by snakes?) You know it might be dat, ya know. That vas all on da drip.

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We was on a windjammer, vid eighteen men. Veed vas very bad. Und da hull crew swear da captain, dat him pay off in Sandiego da Sheela (Chile). Veell da was no ship to get droo. Two Indians valked mitt us over Cordiliera mountains. Dey valked vid us. Ve loost already on da virst drip, dree men. Und den buried dem under de rocks. Da next wick four more men vent. Und we had da snow hills. Anudder man died. We vas so far doun dat ve was so hungry we vas willin' to eat da men. We was willins to do it. No, we didn't eat dem. 5 Da next day we saw da virst spring where vater cooms out. Den in a farm house vere we get da first warm meal after dree wicks. Oor drip to Boones Aires vas da best one. The river captain picked us uoop und brot us back to civilization again.

Did ya hear dat one about imported hair. Da bald headed sailor let his hair growin' on one side. Da captain assed him why he doo dat. Vell, he says, dey import it. Dey coom from da udder side (laughs loudly) Because they coom from one side to da udder. Just did it for a joke. He cut off one half of it.

* * *

(Dutch goes out a minute and comes back)

I gotta go and help a farmer unload a druck. I never break my promise. He comes 103 miles, ya know, in front of da speakeasy.

(In Dutch's absence one of the chauffeurs says: "He's just going out for a drink. Why don't you buy him a bottle, cheap liquor, 25 cents?)

"The Baron", on his return, continues:

The time I was in Australia. Bald off in Zidney from a Swedish liner wid da name Anton, from da Swedish trans-atlantic company, Roodenboorg, Swedden. All of us had blenty of money and we get wid about twenty men togedder [xxxxx?] because heard from a gold rush near Brisbane. Ve board mules und vixed ourselves up vid vadder, because there's

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no vader und da desert. Vell aften forteen days drip ve saw a lot of diggers, gold diggers. Ve dried our luck, und started digging after blue ground. Da last days ve didn't found nuttin. Ve ate our mules up. If airplane didn't bort vader me all vood die. Den we had to valk all back agin, valkin back. Oh. Crist, yes, ve vouldn't sleep at night. Voolves and snacks. Vere after us. De sandwhipper. Dat's one of da voorst snacks in the voorld. Ve made fires every night to keep the mooskitos (accent first syllable) out of from da hot dessert, sun. Vell dat vas all. 6 I have anudder ting I'm gonna tell you from the cruise round da world on da Resolute. On January eighteen, 1925, I zined on da steamer Rezalute under Captain Crooser for a drip around da voorld. Ve visited (long i) dwenty five coountries. Da interestingest of dem all vas Boombay. I zaw da zeven dowers vere built. Da priests hacked da eight man in bieces und da birds coom and ate em, ya while I was dere. It strickly prohibited (long i) to kill a bird. Dere holly. Da most da time we had good weader. Ve took bunkas in Bornea (oil). Out of more dan de most dirty people we had on board vas one baroness vrom Chooney, Svitzerland. She yoomped overboard und left ten million dollars word of yooelry on board da ship. (laughter) It was family drooble. Dey had family drooble. Her husband is a great banker end he only had von doughter. Dere vas [?] no zign dat anybuddy else could do it because da door vas locked ven men tried to ender it. You could mark down we put a boot out. Meantime the sharks ate her already. Den we had drubble wid de Yapanese government for landin' in Hong Kong. Da crown prince from Yapan vas killed in a automobile accident in England. Nowbody now dat his body was on da battleship. Our captain (accent last syllable) forgot to put un flag on half mast. A distroyer (accent first syllable) was cummin long side and brot us out of da harbor in Manilla und da Phillipine Islands. By loosin' da anchor a man stepped in da line and get his leg out off. He died before dey reached da hospital. End Cristabol in da Panama Canal. We runned with a French liner togedder. It wasn't our fault. American vorder police found out dat da mate vas drunk. Ve had to goin on dock for repairing and lay dere eight days. (reverting to the trouble with Japan) Captain had to put on his first class dress an goin' over for an excuse to da admiral and excuse himself. Finally da German goovernment had to notify da ministerium of foreign affairs with an open note. Und the Yapan Ambassador

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to Germany. This was German ship. The man is still today captain, up to today. 7 Dere vas all kinds of little tings ya know on da drip. Vell in Shangkai, not no it vasn't Shankai. It doesn't make no difference. Ya know ve had a French sailor on board. He vas a deserter vrom da French navy. Dey had him on devils island and he runned away. Da man get a chinnee girl. She vas his sweetheart some dime ago ven French ships was layin in Shankai. A detective arrest em on da port and they get delivered back to French. Dey had da finger prints on him.

It vas a vonderful drip. Oh yah dwoo brudders met themselves after 18 years. We had a first officier (accent an second i) - Snyder was his name. He missed his brudder for eighteen years. He met him in Nooport News when we took on bunkers (oil). It was da first dime he saw him in 18 years. He vas a pilot on da boat.

Dere vas a fist fite between dwo pesons von vell overboard. On account two cents. Da second purser smack da first purser on da jaw. Da fall over da railing und overboard. We had to stop da ship, let da boat down and pick em up. Da had an argument about dwoo coppers, I don't know.

You know by a dounsand people on da ship little dings but we don't see em all ya know. Oh yah, dere was a very broud engineer. He vas so broud he had his finger nails polished und the engine, ya know. On da valves, ya know, he it makes em nice and smut (smooth). Von day, it joost happened dat one of dem oil tanks bust und all da oil vent over him. Und all skin was browned after dat. (laughs) By dryin to get out of da oil tank he run against da wall und hit his nose flat. Den they called him a nigger (laughs). Oh, dat takes years to get cleaned up. You know, it takes years to get dat hot oil out of your pores, you know. (Pinches his arm to explain). Dem have dem great big oil tanks on top. They oil demselves. All da have to do is fill us. Da oil is hot, ya know. Dat's before it goes in to da furnace. It's hot, ya know. 8 Vell, I vas on an English liner (Try Sait Troll). End we took bunker in Port Suez. Da crew vent ashore und all of em was gettin' drunk. Ve didn't had a chance to reach da ship in time and had to walk to Port Side. Vell da virst day we had

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money. Second day ve valked hoongry. Da dird day ve vas on da dezert altogedder. Ve cooldn't zleep day und night. Ve heard da lions barking, hyeens vas always arounden. Da virst down ve reached da old shike refused to give us da salt but he givens us da bread. English speakin' arak told us dat means dat ve haven't got no protection. Udderwise ah he would [x?] given salt to make da bread. After zix days drip ve reached PortSide und found out dat our ship are gone already. It was nuttin else doin' to keep on valkin to Alexandria. Ve had a lot of drubble vid dem Arab vimmen who are greusommer dan de men. Dey druin rocks on us und spit ind our face wen we asked em for da way. It was the hungrierest drip I ever made in all my life. Mark it down Alexandria is de dirtiest down I ever saw und all my life. Those dam arabs you know you cooldn't drust nown of em. Dey most women an und kids was half naked. Da kids walked naked around altogedder. All da buildings were made outa of clay. Dares no roods. Und we have to be glad to get some water. Dey stale every ding dey get ahold of.

(Reminded of another story, he laughs and beings) Und da junk shop. Put him in da 1/2isj cart and run him down da river. You know dwo years ago we was riding in da baby carriage. Da was Slim da lawyer and Oggie Fat, and Mule da doctor. Big Tom he wins zixty-vive dollars in da horses bettin'. So all of em went on da drunk. To get off da sidewalk we had to put 'em in baby carriages und veel em down on da dock vere eddy, now dead, made a nose dive aff da platform (laughs). Da lawyer had dwoo lumps on his head, run against da druck, und all dree had go und da hospital. Myself fall off da platform und vreak my ankle and I vas fourteen days in da hospital. After cummin out, Little Johnny und I get pinched for bein droonk and locked up for vive days on da 9 Island (laughs gleefully). Of dat dime you know when Hotcha vas here. (interjection by chauffeur:) They call this woman Hotcha, who hangs around 'the bums'!

I vas yanitor in apartment house. One night the chauffeur from da garage was on da sidewalk and Hotcha get a bath. She fall in da basement on dop of me und lost her shoos (laughs). Hotcha Polish. (interjection: She is a typical hot-stuff woman, about forty-five years old.) She looked more like a Malay than she looked like Polish. (Interjection: Yes,

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she had high cheek bones. She used to wear a red ribbon around her head all the time. A characteristic) She was drinkin more dan dree men. Vel was dwen I found da golden watch around da corner dere. (Dutch glances up, suspiciously) but I gave da gold watch back again.

Is dot good when da vimmin strip me? Is dat good? One day a Yoouish (Jewish) delicatessen store man hired me for clean da store at night, und make deliveries. I vent in one of dem great big houses, und da twelfth floor, to deliver dat, whatever was cummin to dem, a yonung girl opens up droonk and stripped naked. She told me to coom in. Ven I coom in anudder dozen girls was sittin dere, all of um drunk. Dey locked da door und hide da key and grobbed me and drew me over on chaise long, you know sofa. Took shoos, pants and shirt off me. And I had to dance wid um for about two hours. It was around dree oclock ven da police ringed up and get the whole bunch arrested. Den dey got me out ya know. I get my clothes and the money. Vealthy girls. Here, da delicatessen. (points) I was all alone dere. Vat da hell could I do? Making deliveries for dem, you know!

(Question by chauffeur) Did you tell him about the rich woman stopped and tried to take you away?

Tings was different you know I can't vind out up till today what da vimmen want from me. (perplexed) Vell, what happened I was drunk, sittin on da stoop in vront of 10 da house. Big Caddilac car stops. A lady cooms out. Just did is not so long ago p about a year. She says 'Man, are you hungry?' I sez 'No, I am dryer'. 'What ya mean by dat,' she says. 'Mean I liketo have a drink.' 'Well, come sittin in da car instead of sittin on da stoop.' I sittin long side of her, ya know. She took a bottle out und I took quite a couple of good ones, out of it. In da meantime she start feelin, me over. I was helpless and she drove away to 126th St. Dere I dried to get myself togedder, but I didn't want to let that bottle gone. So I took anudder cupla drinks and tole her have to gone out for a minute. It was the last chance to

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run away on her. I don't know whats da matter wid da dam wimmin. Nice, big—looking, strong woman.

(Interjection: Tell him about the time you was sellin ice cream) Dis is some story, ya know. (Constantly takes butts from pockets and lights them). Oh, I got robbed a cuppla times. Vell two years ago Paul Carey gave me ten dollars (owner of Carey's garage). I buy a box of ice cream to start business; business went good the first fourteen days. As soon as I had my debts paid I fall on drinkin' again. One morning I waked oop, my ice cream was all melted and I had nuttin else but vater innit. Vell four days later I vent on the dock und a half a dozen youngsters fall over me und stole all da ice cream. Vell anudder time I vent up to one dem high buildings to a party. All of em was atin' and drinkin good. Vell in da mornin I asked for my money. I was asleep in da apartment und da porter dold me da apartment isn't rented out at allund da party was gone. Vell I was broke yaknow, and had to give it up. I give all da ice cream to dem. Figgered I'd get paid, ya know. Had to give up da ice cream business. I walked back again pickin up rags. (Laughs. His laughter is husky, high-toned, deep, without much ring, but happy). Mark it little bit down von day I valked in da house to an Irish lady. She wants to give me some rags. Zittin in da chair little kids start screamin becuz she saw me commin. She saw day bag. Da moller hollered at him 'Share up or I'll make dat big bum ate ya[?]. (laughs huskily) Dat was a hot one right here on fifty first street. (laughs gleefully) Two old gentlemen lookin out da window und da fifth floor. Dey holler down. 'Come up we have a lot of rags for you'. After climmin up five flights dey had two neckties und a couple pair of stockings. So dey asked 11 me how much I gonna pay for dat. I tole dem dey at least got a dollars wort so might as well bring em up in da pawn shop. (laughs).