

## [Waterfront]

JUL 6 1939

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 Herman Partnow - Saul Levitt

ADDRESS 557 West 144th Street

DATE June 13, 1939

SUBJECT Maritime folklore

1. Date and time of interview

June 6, 1939

2. Place of interview

Waterfront, 20 Street, 11 Avenue

3. Name and address of informant

Anonymous

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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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I look gleeful and happy? I'm thinkin of my sister, last time I came back from South Africa she told me she was pregnant. Jesus, was I happy. Ever notice them christenin outfits, white, lace up the front? I bought her one in Havre, right up at the Rue de Paris, stuff! I love kids. If I ever get me a divorce, I'll get hooked up again. I got a kid of my own, Joan, that's her name, I'd go all the way to hell for her, I'd kill her, I love her so much but some flu key lawyer won't lemme see her. NOW I'M GONNA get the satisfaction of bein a good uncle to my sister's kid. Uncle Joe. That's why that Glee Club look on my face. It's an artificial smudge.

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I'll give ye a version. I strolled over to Park Row and got this tattoo on. J-O-A-N. Joan. I'm a sensible man, my old man was a commercial artist, I went to Cooper Union, I been married but I messed up with the wife, I'd never think of gettin my arms scarred up like this but when I busted up with the wife, I let everything go to the four winds, I went the way of all flesh, whenever I'm under the weather I get tattooed. I'd rather have a job ashore. The sea ain't no home. Look - my next trip out is Wednesday. I'll get my shaving gear and dungarees and sea boots, whatever I need, at Benny's. He always gives ye a break until the next trip. Regulations calls for a 24-hour sign-on, I'll sign them foreign articles. Coastwise you can sign any time. All right, we leave for Le Havre. First stop is Cobb, Ireland. No time ashore. Next stop is Southampton - no time ashore. Next is Le Havre. Well, we blow our tops. The Rue de Gallianne, Cognac, we drink with the gals. BEE GIRLS THEY CALL THEM IN FRISCO? ON THE WEST COAST, THEY GET A

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PERCENTAGE. Then we come back late or we're drunk or we miss a hatch, so we get logged for it. All right. We gotto Hamburg. If we take too much dough we get picked up, then we come back drunk and we get logged for it. After all, I been married, a married man gets used to it, if he don't get it he's lookin for it. Over there in Havre I'm a second Fred Astaire, I got them Frenchmen all snowed under. I like singing too, literature. In other words, I'm no horse. I turned out to be the beat in the family until my father died, then I was the black sheep, everything went to the seven seas, I'm just a sailor, one of the boys, I gotta do common shipwork, it's boresome. When the boss puts me on lettering work I'm happy. I whistle. But that don't happen often. Most of the time I'm just a tattooed son of a bitch, 8 to 12 lookout, relieve the wheel half an hour, paint, chip, wash, maintenance work - souji. Souji floogie, crap. The whole marine is in violation of all the laws. Underscore that.

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We sailors, our dungarees can be clean as a pin, but we're a bum anyway. A year ago Easter Sunday we're goin out through the Narrows on the excursion boat, [Romance?]. We're in the Glory Hole havin beer. The alarm pops. "Man the life boats." In eighteen minutes we hunkies take off 365 passengers. So Johnny Sharp shakes each one of us by the hand and gives us a medal. Them boasses were lordin us to the skies. We're heroes. A week later all them fellers went out on strike. You shoulda heard. This same crew was jailbirds, unfit to sail, the worse kind of labor agitators, scum. Only a week later. We was dirt, a lotta dirty seamen, worse than college punks and summer sailors.

In that 1937 flood, you remember it, we sailors hiked down there, why we didn't ask what we were gettin. 7,000 volunteers, they asked for life boat credits, alla them seamen had the tickets. Did they put that in the press? Of course not. The only time they put the sailor in the press is when they gotta report some mischievious battling in the streets. Or some lies. Listen, I run into more human nature down here on the waterfront than uptown or in the World's Fair. Down here we're always a friend, nine out of ten. After all, we're workin together.

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Listen, is a sailor [on?] a ship or [in?]>it? I say a sailor is an integ-ral part. A passenger is just spare gear. He's a temporary placement. A ship without a sailor is only a piece of dead metal. He's in it with the rest of the machinery. All them rosy-cheeked college boys, for instance, is on that ship. They're like a saddle on a horse. But the sailor is [in?] it. Not them officers or cadets. Why, I known officers who were so lazy they couldn't get out of their bunk to pee. One guy, it was on a mail ship, he used to take a bottle to bed with him and then throw it out of the porthole. Captains. I asked one of them if he'd let me go around like a horse, you know. Be asks why? I says If you're gonna make me work like a horse I wanna look like a horse too. Hey, can you tell me where the smoke goes when a submarine submerges? You know where? They get the captain, see, and back him up against the stack and all that smoke

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Here's a supposition, an example. Destroy all the ships, machines, everything, every industry. Then strip the laboring man to his skin. The captains and bosses, too. Strip them too. Them have am all revert to their primeval instincts. Then we'll see who survives. Why, man, we'd have a new order. One thousand top dogs workin the ass of a hundred million guys, it ain't right, runnin the factories. Why, they buy our collective ideas, that's all. Shoot, a salt water bath would give any of them blisters.

I say we need a revolution, no bloody revolution. An industrial revolution. I say give the superior brain worker the advantage, he deserves it but give him a motor car and private baths, but no surplus, for Chrissake, accumulations are stagnant, laying back that's not goin to do you or me no good ever.

If I had the dough, boy, I'd get me a freight train and put plus bottoms on the rods. Then I'd jump my own soft cushion rods and hire my own cops to put me in the cooler. My own cooler. Whhoops. Shoot. All ya needa do is stick a feather up my nose and I'm a friggin submarine. A goddam beautiful sea-jamming submarine, for Chrissake. I sound as if I was gassed up on the Embarcadero, for Chrissake. Nice girls out there, nice girls all over the

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world. But the biggest disappointment was Turkey, their religion is to shave the hair off the organs, a goddam bald skillet, that's all it is . . . In Pyreusp Greece, also. You couldn't give crabs to nobody. But Turkey's the rottenest place. You're comin down the street and there are the soldiers. You ask em: "Where's the house, boys? We don't know. What do you mean, you don't know? We don't know, nobody knows. Well, what do you do for your pleasure? One of the boys, he says, the women is for officers only . . . Down to your shirt you are, and what a shirt. Comes from Hong Kong, I bummed it off a guy in Frisco, one washing and it shrank up to my elbows. That's the sea for you.