

[Union Square]

FOLKLORE 12

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Herman Partnow

ADDRESS 530 Parkside Avenue, N.Y.C.

DATE February 13, 1939

SUBJECT Leisure Folklore

1. Date and time of interview January-February, 1939
2. Place of interview Union Square
3. Name and address of informant A group of anonymous people in the park.
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.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

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DATE February 13, 1939

SUBJECT Leisure Folklore RAT-GUT, BOOZE AND BEER

SH-A-A-AVEN AND SHO-O-O-ORN!....

Listen, God desired to put hair on a man's face so he put it there. Woman he desired to make beautiful so he made her face smooth. On man's face he put wonderful ha-a-air....GOD made ME a MAN!...SHEEP. SLAVES... Where's your individuality? Where's your personality? Where's your singularity?....WHY were you BORN? Slavery! SLAVERY!... You! Why don't you shave your head, TOO?...Imitation of men. Half men. Women. WOMEN! IMITATION MEN...HOG-eater! SWINE-eater!..... Rat-gut, Swine. Booze and BEER...

O-O-O-OH! SHA-A-A-AVEN A-A-And ...SHO O ORN! (BREAKS INTO SONG)
They look so pitiful, so sad So miserable, s-o-o-o forlorn... And they wander, o-o-o-h they w-a-a-a-nder O w-hy-y-y were they born To be shaven and shorn...
COWARDS!.....COWARDS!..... O-O-O-O-H - H-E-E-E is an average man. Go all the world around. 2 Six months in jail and six months out He IS an average man.

(MORE, MORE.) They act so very queer When they are full of- RAT-GUT! SWINE!
BOOZE AND BEER! Right here on Union Square.... BAH! In contempt - while the drunken nuts Talk away I-I-I-I just walk away.

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(DON'T WALK SO FAST, WE'LL GET BLISTERS ON OUR FEET ... HERE, CHICK, CHICK, CHICK, CHICK, CHICK...) Cowards. Cowards...Sneak! Freak!...Go back to the coffin, all of you.

[?] HYGIENE JOE

People ain't nacheral. Dey eat too much. Ye know, yer stomach kin hold maybe a pint. De jamority uh people cram a whole quart inta it. What happnes happens ? Neuritis, arthritis, neprivis, colitis an' so forth. Take de question uh sex. Majority uh people are sex poivoits. Ovhdoo it. Can't stay away from de wife. Got to adulterate her. Animals don't do dat, insects neider. It ain't nacheral. Ye kin sit near ah fire, ye don' have to lay right in it, do yuh? Ye kin small poison, cancha, ye don' have to go ahead an' drink it. Ye kin drink water, ye don' have to drown in it. Am I right or wrong? Mos' nacheral place in de woil' is de Caribbeans. Plenty a froot an yuh kin nevuh get constipated.

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I wuz dere six yeehs ago. Before dat I wuz just an honest dope. Yuh know, work alla time, worryin' and take everything serious. Well, suddenly I started in usin my eyes an I saw an awful lot, I'm tellin' yuh. Fir instance, I discovered de less a guy works the more money he's makin. Aftuh a while, I started in workin' less, see? I figgered - you know de way I figgered. But sumthin went wrong wid de idea. De less I woiked de less I wuz makin. But I still figgered de same way. So I tried it again. I woiked less n less, and den I stopped altogether. I'm stubborn. You know. Once I get an idea, I don' let go. So I got fired. So I thought I'd blow de stink off and I goes down to de Caribbes. Dat wuz heaven... Soons I can I'm goin' to work on dat problem again. Go an' find me anodder job an find out what wuz wrong wid my system. Nacheraliy, so fars I see personally it wuz all right. But de mos' nacheral way of all is like de way I'm doin' now. Not woikin at all. It's de most hygienic. How does it strike yuh, am I right or wrong? IT'S FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL, HUH?

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I'm de depression generation. I can't wait. I wanna go off and do sumthin big right away. Fr instance, get sumthin virgin and play it - play it big. But I dunno, nuthin happens. Some man I wuz talkin to in de park here tol' me once about Moses, how he usetuh go around like dis too until he got disgusted. Den, aftah while, de older guys de died off, den he wuz boss. Jeez, I gotta wait de same as Moses, is dat a fact? It's from time immemorial? Wotta shame. My personal opinion is I could amount tuh sumthin if things wuz diffrient. Sometimes I think to myself I could be a leader. A Capone, a Schultz, one uh dem. Not one uh de mob. Way on top like Moses.

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Why not? I got wot it takes, I catch on quick, I come from smart people. But I dunno wot's de trouble. I can't play dirty tricks on people. If I wuz only able to play dirty tricks on people, I dunno, I could turn out to be de biggest success. But somehow I like to be widda guys that are bucking it instead a suckin it, yuh know wot I mean? I despise de suckers. Look it dem two girls holdin each other. Is it true about dem? Dey're pretty. Jeez, wotta shame... Didja evuh read de Well uh Loneliness?...I get de best books outa de library, it doan help. I dunno, books doan do me no good. Why is dat? Wot's wrong wid me anyhow? I gotta snap outa it. Las' week I went ovah to one a dem bar an grills on Tird Avenue, jus' fer - well, you know, I wanted tuh do sumthin unusual. Wot d'yuh tink I noticed? All de men dere dey were wearin different suits. Not one uh dem wuz wearin de same suit, wotta yuh think uh dat? An dere wuz thirty eight men dere, not countin de bartender. Kin it be dere ain't two people de same in dis world? Is dat possible? Wot duh you think? When do de best ideas come to you? Tuh me dey come two, tree in de mawning. One time I hitch-hiked to Philadelphia fer tree days. It's a funny thing, maybe you got a million worries on yer head but you hit de road an everyting just disappears like magic, you forget everything. Well, when I come back to Noo York it wuz too late to go home, it wuz one in de mawnin. So I come right oveh to de park here and I laid down right on dis bench an stood dere all night. I just laid dere wid my eyes open an looked up adduh stahs. Dere wuz oder guys on de oder benches too. Den, befaw I knows it, de sparrows wuz singin

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in de trees. I dunno, I like it here. I sorta find friendship here, I guess. Dat's important, ainit? I don neveh feel lonely in dis pahk. I suppose dat's de dreamy side uh me, ainit? I like day way. Sumtimes I go to a movie, den I walk aroun' thinkin it 5 ovah. Lotsa things. De whole world. Fr instance, wot would I do if I suddenly got lotsa money? Now I go to de movies twice a week. Naturally I play dis game Screeno. Wot dyuh tink, every day somebody is winnin, I nevuh won once. Dat way I'm diffrant from oder people. No luck. Sometimes I wonduh suposin I won a big prize wot would I do? Would I spend it or put it in de bank or would it make me dizzy? You know wot I tink? I'd go ahead an buy a whole outfit and go off to an island. Some place nobody ever gone tuh before. I'd get me a gun an a knapsack an breeches and boots an a knife and a mackinaw and - I dunno I guess I'd travel. Travel all over de world. Africa, Honolulu, South America. Den again, maybe I'd spend dat money on my old lady. Send her out to Lakewood for de wintuh. Dere's two sides tuh my nacher. Wot's de difference, I doan win anyhow. I doan deserve it, maybe. I wuz always de flowuh uh de class, de bloomin idiot. How hahd I try, I can't control myself from bein bad. I'm always thinking uh things that don't do me no good. Riddles an things - what's go got legs and walks, or what's got eyes an can't see or what turns without movin. De trouble is I got things on my mind. Jeez, wen de stork brought me to my old lady he musta said tuh her. "Nuts tuh you." See dat man oveh dere? He doan have no home - he sleeps on uh platform of uh big buildin. I useta delivuh packages oveh dere. I see im once in a while on my way home. He sells razor blades an shoelaces an oder tings. I dunno, I can't make it out, it's too much fer me, maybe it's like dat man said to me once, it's from time immemorial. All I know is I got no moral standids no more. Dis kinda life's givin me pimples. Wot dyuh tink, is dat yeast stuff dey talks about on de radio - is dat good fer pimples? 6 ONY DE TROOT KIN SAVE YUH

Dey doan edjicate yuhs. Dey domesticate yuh. Dey make tame animals outa yuh. Why? So dey kin use yuh in de next-bloodbath dey got up dere sleeve. Dem big parasites. Dem big dirty parisites. Feedin off yuh bones, alla time. Why, even yuh own mothers are on dere side. Take a baby. When he grows up an wantsa know de factsa life, wot does yuh

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own mother say? De boogey man is gonna getchuh. I tell yuh, we want de troot. Only de troot willyuh be set free. An none uh dese here dirty yelluh socialists an communists is gonna tell it tuh yuh. Dere alla dem bought an paid fuh an owned. Yuh bulldozed, dat's wat yuh ahr. Why, dere's one man who's woikin an nine walkin de streets. One man, mind yuh, woikin tuh support sixteen men. Yuh doan buhlieve it? Go over tuh de Cahnegie Libary an look up de facts. Yuh make twenty five dolluhs a week so's de boss kin make tweny five dollars an hour. And you do nutin about it. Wotsa mattuh wid you guys anyway? Looka me. Iwuz locked up tree hundred times fer tellin de troot - an I been loinin, an loinin, since I been seven, studyin human nachuh an life, an everyting. I tell yuhs only de troot kin save yuh...Wot? Wot's de troot? Wot'sa mattuh, widyuh? Doncha listen? O, a wise guy, huh?

***** ALL PUFFED UP WID PRIDE

Brother is you saved?....Is you saved from sin?

(HUH!)

You nevuh sinned, brother?

(No!)

N-o-o-o?....You're all puffed up wid pride, aintcha - my... son...

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Listen, Ah heard dere wuz a man who died on de craws for me. An I wuz baptized in de knowledge uh this and wuz saved - by de beloved Father and de Ho-o-o-ly Ghost.

(GWAN, LEMME ALONE!)

Does yuh desahre de key, son, to de Kingdom uh Hevven? Den wash yuhself in de blud uh de lamb, son. In de knowledge uh dat is SALVASHUN.

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(DE KEY? HERE'S DE KEY....MAZUMK!)

A-&-&-h, no, my son. You is blinded an mis-guided. You is deaf, you is mis'eble....

(YEAH!)

Son, doncha wanna save your soul from de livin HELL?

(SOUL? WOT'S DAT? WHERE IS IT? IN MY LIVER, IN MY LUNGS, IN MY BELLY?
WHAT'S ITS ADDRESS?)

Address?....Lo-o-o-r', son, it ain't go no address, de soul hasn't. Least, I can't tell yuh... De Lord he says it's in the Bible and he made it, he should know. But de knowledge thereof, so, de Lord God, in his almighty wisdom, he hid it f'om me until I reach de next worl'.

(NEXT WORLD! DON' KNOW DE PLACE, NEVAH HOID OF IT.)

No?...I've heard of it, son. I knows it....Listen, A'se not livin now, son...Ahse waitin - dat's all. Ahse purparin an ahse purgin myself f'om all evil.

(NOT ME!)

Aintcha 'fraid?... Aintcha 'fraid yuh may go to de livin HELL?

(N-A-A-A! I KNOW IF I DO I'M GONNA MEET LOTS A PEOPLE DOWN DERE. YOU TOO!)

Mercy, n-o-o-o. I don' wanna see you down dere, son. You'll look so strange an terrible wid fire all around yuh...No, indeed, Purge you' heart, son!.....

***** 8 O. K. AMERICA

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Me American. Starve! Starve! Eat!....Wot? Wot?....Air.... Ai-r-r-r-r.....O.K. America....
Har! Har! Har!....You bastahrds, you LAHFF... O.K. AMERICA.... 'Scoose, pleeze...
'Soooze.... Ah, me ti-r-r-red... Look, cut on finger... Blood. See. Same. You. Me. Wop.
sheeny, dutchman, mickie. Same. All. Sure. Blood. Blood... You believe God? God?
Bah!.... (GETS ON HIND LEGS, MAKING GESTURE OF DOG WAVING TAIL).... Nah-
h.... Wu-r-r-k. Fah-h-hm!.... A-h-h-h! Go-o-od! Pleeze, misteh, dime... (YANKS HEAD ON
SIDE, APING BEGGAR) Dime, misteh, pleeze.... Bah!.... Eight millio-o-on peebul. Mone-
e-e Peebul. Star-r-rve. Eight mil-.... Eins, zwei, drei, fur.... (HOPS ON HIS FEET AND
TURNS AROUND AND AROUND) D-R-R-R-R-R..... Tu-r-r-rn ar-r-r-oun' and ar-r-
r-oun'. You. You. You. Dizzie!.... Har. Har. Har. You bastahr-r-r-ds, you LAHFF, you!....
(SHAKES HIS FIST AT THE HIGH BUILDINGS). Soon cry, C-R-R-R-Y..... O.K. AMERICA!

***** I AM THAT I AM

I KNOW YOU.

How can you know me when I don't know myself. You know de things you shouldn't know
and the things you should know you don't know at all.

WELL, WHO ARE YOU ANYWAY?

I am what I am because I am.

WHY?

Because I am that I am. I was before you will be. And you are what I ain't. And what's
more, you can't even be an ain't.

YOU'LL GO TO HELL FOR SUCH TALK.

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How can I go there when I'm there already. Hell's here - inside me. Heaven's inside me.
I'm as high and as low as the earth.

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LISTEN

I know before I listen and I listen before I know. Hah, hah. I'LL GET THE BEST OF YOU
YET.

How can you get the best of me when you can't get the best of yourself?

WAIT, YOU SEE, I'LL GET YOU TOMORROW.

Why should I wait for tomorrow when tomorrow will come to me.

LISTEN, I'VE GOT SOME MONEY IN MY HANDS, I'LL-

You haven't got the money. The money's got you.

AW, DRY UP, WILL YUH?

————— C'MON, BREAK IT UP BOYS.

C'mon, break it up. Hire a hall. C'mon, beat it. Yuh're blockin deh road. C'mon, break it up.

—————