

[On the Beach]

FOLKLORE

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 557 West 144th Street

DATE July 6, 1939

SUBJECT Maritime Folklore —- ON THE BEACH

1. Date and time of interview June 28, 1939
2. Place of interview South Street
3. Name and address of informant Anonymous
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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NEW YORK

FORM C

TEXT OF INTERVIEW (UNEDITED)

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ADDRESS 557 West 144th Street 557 West 144th Street

DATE July 6, 1939

SUBJECT Maritime Folklore — ON THE BEACH

A seaman's a casual labor. He's a man without a country. He ain't lookin fer glory because all the patriots are buried in Concord, Mass. He's just livin and waitin fer live ones. When the guys come off a ship you go over to South Street an they throw out a buck or two. You turn yerself into an excuse artist - you gotta pay yer uncle's poll tax or somethin. That's how it is when yer on the beach. There's no way out. The shipowners cut yer throat behind yer back.

Say the union sends ya down to the Grace Line madhouse fer a job, they turn ya down because you got dandruff in yer hair. But I sailed once with a guy had a wooden leg. He wasn't a beeper. They gotta lotta tricks like that. Sometimes that outfit'll land in Galveston instead a Huston because they gotta lotta beefers in Huston.

What we need is a little strike for a cold weather bonus so we can go and die somewhere and get pensioned off instead a croakin on the beach.

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Stanko the radical, he gets up on the floor and advocates, he's got the right idea. It's a two watch system, why can't they make it 2 a four-watch system, then more gusy can get jobs. I'd like to have a water-tender's job. It's swell, you sit and look at the steam gauge all day. I like passenger ships too, not the passengers, the ships.

You think we sailors are bad, the besta them passengers are none too good. Down South America one time I was washin the sun deck around midnight. It was dark as hell and I squirt the hose in a corner two of the passengers run out.

Joe Kane, he's a guy, he's master of arms. He was on watch one time when 816 jugs of wine was all stolen. While he was lookin fer them in third class he makes a date with a broad there and gets her up on the boat deck in one of the life boats and he's puttin the blocks on her when I come up and there's the dame crying like hell, she can't get out. One borad I remember, the watchman, he was a Heine, and I'm sittin on deck watchin the gangway when I see her with him, she's startin to take off her clothes and then she tears alla them off. He goes out to get a blanket. When he comes back she's stark naked. Well, he was no Sloppy Joe, this Heine, he just let her alone after that. But she was just crazy over him, later on she committed sewerpipes over him.

We let them passengers alone most of the time. We got plenty to do. There're plenty of accidents too, Screw Williams, he was sittin in the nest once, when his relief comes back. He goes out the wrong way and hits the deck. He got sixty bucks for that fall and it wasn't worth it.

Only time I lived a good life was in Havana. I was on leave and I got drunk. So I go back to the ship and it's not there. So I went to work on a couple beers. Sunday morning I wake up and go to 3 to the office of the shipping counsel. He asks me which I prefer, breakfast or a couple beers. I say beers. So he gives me a slip to a Hotel. I stay there nine days. Like a chump I go over to the Grace Line. I thought they'd put me on the shippin list. But I find

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myself with a big bunch of cops and I'm sent to a concentration camp prison behind the Morro Castle.