

[Show Business]

Beliefs & Customs - Folk Stuff

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview [7?]

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER WAYNE WALDEN

ADDRESS 51 Bank Street, New York

DATE November 10, 1938

SUBJECT SHOW BUSINESS — and SELECTIONS FROM AN OLD SCRAPBOOK

1. Date and time of interview

Evening of Sept. 19 and 20.

2. Place of interview

Home of informant

3. Name and address of informant

Mrs. Erma Hayes, 332 West 19th Street, New York

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

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None

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

None

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

Small two or three room apartment, situated in the basement of building, but neat and comfortable. The informant, formerly Miss Erma Gilson, is a lady admitting sixty years of age, tall, well preserved, and apparently a natural blonde. She, beginning about 1900, has for years been associated with vaudeville and a performer in such still-remembered plays as "Vanity Fair", "The Crackerjacks", etc. Mrs. Erma Hayes is American and born in New York, I understand, of American parentage. She is over 60 years old.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER WAYNE WALDEN

ADDRESS 51 Bank Street, New York

DATE November 10, 1938

SUBJECT SHOW BUSINESS— and SELECTIONS FROM AN OLD SCRAPBOOK

ERMA DOES SOME FIGHTING....

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“I don't suppose,” said Erma Hayes, once known to Vaudeville as Erma Gilson, “I don't suppose that my experience while following vaudeville was much different than what the ordinary girl might have. Generally, whenever we played in a town, there was some fresh geezer on the lookout to pick us up. Now and then they came in handy, particularly when you might land in some town with no money and a delayed payday. At such times these guys might turn out as angels. A girl soon enough learns how to get along with them.

“We couldn't have held a job unless we had looks. I was rated as being good looking — maybe not a dazzling beauty — but I was a young and giggling girl at the time and also had my encounters with mashers. I remember once when we were playing a burlesque in a little town in Florida — Mulberry, I think it was — a town reported to have 3000 men and 300 women — we were told by the manager to leave the theatre in a body, as singly we might be annoyed. Well, sure enough, it so happened that as some of us were walking down the street, a young, rather tough-looking smart Alick, practically a school-kid, grabs ahold of me and in a harsh voice says, “Come on with me.” I turned and told the kid to beat it. With that he pulled a gun, a '38 revolver, from his pocket and threatened to shoot if I didn't go with him. Well sir, I don't know what come over me, maybe the Irish in me, but I lit into that guy 2 and gave him the worst beating he probably ever had. At the same time I was calling him a dirty little coward and everything that he didn't like to hear. I had to be pulled off, or I might have killed him, I was so mad. Anyway I then walked to the hotel we were staying in, and all the way the rest of the girls were telling me how brave I was. But, and here's the funny part of the story, as soon as we got into the hotel I fainted clear away.

THE DANCER KICKS A FRESHMAN.....

Another time, when we were playing in Laporte, Illinois, or is it Laporte, Indiana? Anyway, it wasn't far out of Chicago - it was another of those college towns, another girl and I were leaving the theatre when up steps a fresh college guy and started in to bother us. Finally,

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when we didn't pay much attention to him, he grabs hold of the girl with me and started to drag her along. That proved just too bad for him for she was a dancer and a high kicker. The first thing that fellow knew he got a good swift kick right on the chin. He then beat it out of there in a hurry. As it happened we came through that town about ten days later and learned that the poor guy was in the hospital with the end of his tongue bitten off.

JOHN L. MAKES A [SPIEL?]....

Maybe this will strike you as funny. We had old John L. Sullivan once, and his stunt was to do some shadow-boxing during the oleo. We girls were forced to wear not only the woolen tights, but a pair of silk tights over them. A moral wave must have struck that town about the time we did.

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Anyway the first thing we knew was that signs were being posted up where we had to see them, that neither such words as 'damn' nor 'hell' would be tolerated. In addition to that no jokes of double meaning would be allowed, but worst of all, especially for old John, the sign also forbid sparring or shadow-boxing. It seems, too, that the Mayor had said something about not caring to see the antics of a "has-been". Anyhow old John came out, when he was to give his little talk, and says: "Ladees and Gentlemen, I can't tell you what I'd like to say 'cause there's some signs around here that won't let me use 'damn' or 'hell'. 'Course I don't give a damn if someone thinks I'm a 'has-been', but I can say it's a damned sight more to be a has been than to be a never-was'. That might not have been the exact way he put it, but he got away with 'damn' at least three times in his short spiel."

SHE WON THE BET.....

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I think it was the year 1905, here in New York, that our burlesque wheel split up into two circuits, an Eastern and a Western one. Some of us were feeling rather bad about being forced to break up. You remember the Miners ...Well, Eddie Miner says to me, "Cheer up, in another year we will be one wheel again." I said, "No, I don't think it will ever be." "I'll make a bet with you", he says, "I'll bet you a long pair of white kid-gloves." "You're on," I said, "I'll bet you a box of cigars." Sure enough, when we met just a year later, the first thing he said was, "Well here are your long white kid-gloves." And believe me, they were beauties!

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ROMANCE ENTERS THIS ROUND.....

There was once, I think it was about 1902, that a lull being on, we were sent South to play New Orleans. In Cincinnati we were delayed so that we didn't get to New Orleans until late on a Saturday night. The hotel we struck about charged us everything we had for a room, so that we were just about broke for fair. After we got the rooms, a number of us went down to a restaurant, and in this restaurant we were of course talking among ourselves about the high prices and so forth. I guess we were talking rather loud, as a bunch of girls naturally would in such a case. Well there were some fellows sitting over at another table, and they, of course, were listening in.. Pretty soon a tall, striking, very dark Frenchman comes over and very politely says, "Excuse me, but I think that I can be of assistance in getting you girls placed — if you'll wait a minute I'll be right back." He did come back in a few minutes. He got us a place with a friend of his, a woman who kept a boarding house right around on another street. Six of us put up there, and hardly had to pay anything. He had fixed it so that we didn't, but that the charge should be made to himself. I got to know him quite well while we were there. He certainly treated me swell. His name was Michele Monier. When at last we left New Orleans, he and I were standing on the street talking. I told him that a friend of mine, by the name of Della Faytell, I believe

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she was in the 'Crackerjack' at the time — that her show would be coming soon, so he instructed me to have her look him up. And, of course, I wrote and told Della all about him and to be sure to look him up when she got there. Later on I got a letter from Della saying what a nice fellow he was and everything, but, she says, 'your description of him was all wrong. He isn't tall, dark and handsome, but short, light complectioned, and not too good looking. And his name, too, you were wrong on - his name is not Michele Monier, but Dick Evans." I'd given up trying to figure out the tangle of it - it didn't seem to make sense at all - but quite a long while after I again got down there and then I met Della and also her Dick Evans. The way it turned out was that this Dick Evans was standing near where Monier and I were talking that time and he overheard what I said about Della 5 coming down. He heard the whole story and got it down pat. So, when Della did arrive, who was there waiting but this Dick Evans. He, of course, introduced himself as Monier and asked if she was Della Maytell. "Why, yes," she says, "it was my friend Erma Gilson who told you about me, wasn't it?" He said "Yes, I'm the fellow" and took her in charge right away. Imagine the crust, would you? Well, they got married and the last time I heard from them they were hitting it along quite well. Gosh, to think of it, that was over thirty years ago.

[?]The second visit at the home of Mrs. Hayes enabled me to procure this poem which according to her has never been published. The story concerning the poem would seem to be that it was written by a professor's wife, anonymously, to satirize the prudery of/ one (the president) in authority who had ordered removal of certain parts of three statues presented to a Tennessee college:

The Sculptor From Tennessee

1. Oh say, my friend, have you ever heard, The tale that is told in Weatherford Of a deed that was done in the Art Musee By a modern sculptor from Tennessee? There are other tales that are somewhat gory, And celebrated in song and story, But the three blind mice

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and the farmer's wife Who cut off their tails with a carving knife
Could not compare with the statues three Who met with the selfsame cruelty.

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This modern sculptor was fresh and green, And evidently had never seen,
Since he left the scenes of his native heather A statue posed in the altogether.
So he called for chisel, hammer and tong, To handle the thing that didn't belong
In the realm of Art; and with one swift blow He removed the cause of old Adam's woe,
And left the poor statue standing there The picture of impotent wild despair.

3. That night as he slept in his trundle bed The spooks came floating around his head,
They pointed their fingers at him in a scorn, And made him wish he'd never been born.
The doctors shrieked, "You measley skate, Who gave you license to amputate?" And the
sculptors screamed "You infernal quack You better get busy and put them back."

4. "For if you don't we'll cut (ahem) We'll do unto you as you did to them." And flourished
their knives with fiendish glee While the old man begged on bended knee. "This world" he
said, "will go straight to perdition,

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Unless I can issue a second edition." At that his inquisitors formed a ring, (line missing
from copy) They rode him around from Beersheba Dan Till he woke a sadder and wiser
man.

5. That day the illustrious president Bought him a bottle of strong cement, And returned to
the school with the single thought To repair the damage that he had wrought. But there's
many a slip twixt the cup and the lip, And the boys hadn't left him a single chip. Those
innocent cherubs of tender years Had carried them off for souvenirs.

6. There was naught remaining for him to do, But to manufacture a thing or two. So he
worked and chiseled with might and main Till his mind gave way from the terrible strain,

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For the only model he had, alas, Was the one that he saw in the looking glass. Imagine the stalwart Hercules With pigmy attachment, if you please, And I think you'll then be prepared to say, "No wonder the old man's mind gave way."

8

Now the modern sculptor is running rife, With pincers, saw and carving knife, And, if you linger outside the gate You'll be a eunuch as sure as fate. He never stops for bone or gristle But whittles them off as slick as a whistle, For he hopes to find when he looks then o'er An appendage to fit on the Discus Thrower, A match for Apollo (Belvedere) And another for Hercules, too, I hear.

8. But you never can find in a little town, A very good fit in a "hand-me-down". Good models seem scarce in these later days Forsooth average men look more like jays. And that is the reason I apprehend That no one can tell where this trouble will end. The moral to this isn't hard to find, The nastiness all is in your mind, So please, if for something you have knack, Don't take things off you cant put back.

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The poems presented here are selections from an old scrap book of Mrs. Hayes', in which, affectionately pasted up by the former actress, is a miscellany of subjects diverse enough to serve the Walrus with 'things to talk about'. Indeed, the contents of the scrap books range from cooking recipes to divorce notices, from vaudeville itineraries to obits, but among the poems from the scrap book an old forgotten friend may appear.

Included were a number of "Popular Recitations", published by Claude C. Hale, 1777 E. 9th Street, Cleveland, Ohio, -

"Kelly's Dream" by J. W. Kelly

"Hunting the Wily Pole Cat" - as told by a French-Canadian

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“The Wedding of the Persian Cat” - no author given

“The Shooting of Dan McGrew” - by Robert W. Service

“Toledo Slim” - no author given

“The Face on the Bar Room Floor” - author's name left off

The “Legend of the Loganberry”, from “The Seamy Side of Vegetable Life” - by Morris Bishop, written on the typewriter for the scrap book, may or may not have been published.

“THE LEGEND OF THE LOGANBERRY”

(From “The Seamy Side of Vegetable Life”) A rose once bloomed in a garden
White and dainty and fair
By the garden wall at evenfall
It dreamed and nodded there;
And a raspberry bush climbed over the wall
And hung in a rakish pose;
“Haven't we met somewhere, my pet?”
The raspberry said to the rose.
The pure white rose turns whiter
And trembles upon its stalk
One of its petals slowly settles
Down on the garden walk;
“I'm not the kind of a rose” she said
“That blossoms in studios;
“You're wicked, very, you red raspberry!”
To the raspberry said the rose.

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“Be mine, be mine, O maiden rose!”
The wicked raspberry cried;
But the rose was brave and cried,
“Behave! “Begone to your raspberry bride;
“The rose may only woo the rose,
“The cherry espouse the cherry,
“The gypsy maid gets the gypsy blade,
“The raspberry gets the berry!”
“Rose, you have torn in tatters
“A raspberry heart today;
“To make you share my own despair
“I'll throw myself away;
“And maybe you'll be sorry
“And cease to be so merry
“When it is said that I have wed
“A horrid black, black berry!”
And just to pain a sweet little rose
— Lovers are very queer —
He made a match in the blackberry patch
And ruined his own career;
And from that shameful mating
— 'Twas only temporary —
Was born that wild, alluring child,
The lovely loganberry!

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— Morris Bishop.

Attesting appreciation of Eddie Guest are these verses in the “Just Folks” series: “Smile”, “The Purpose”, “How do you buy your money?” “Uncle Sam”, “He was a decent guy”, “The Blame”. “If I could live it over”, “Let er go, Gallegher”, “The Golfer's Wish”, “An American Talks”, “Do the best you can”, “Woman”, “Our country”, and may be a few others that we didn't happen to see.

That by no means exhausts the stuff of lighter vein; there yet remains a variety of poems, or, if you prefer “pomes”, clipped from papers in every section of the land, and over many years. There is, for instance, “The Ornerly Cuss” (signed “[CRY?]”), “No Parking Here”, (unsigned), “The Death of King Jazz” by Tisdle Mairs in the Detroit Free Press; “The Landlubber's Chanty” by Maoriland, “The Good Old Days” by S. Gillilan in “Farm Life”; “The love of Riley” (J. W. Riley) by W. L. Larned; “The Vampire” by Kipling;

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“The Auto Fire Engine” typed by the author, J. W. Foley, and presented to the compiler of the scrapbook:

THE AUTO FIRE ENGINE “Yes, things are changed doggone the luck!” Said the Driver of Engine Three, “For they're going to fires with an auto truck And a horse — he's a used-to-be. It was sugar and oats and a shiny coat That was dappled and smooth and clean, And now it's a lump in the Driver's throat And a tankful of gasoline.” “There was romance then in a driver's work And something you loved right well; It was snap a collar, a cry and jerk And off in the streets pell-mell. It was 'Steady, Charlie 'and 'Come on, Dick! It was sparks where the hoofs came down; And many a time that they turned the trick Of saving a slice of town. “There was something then in the stalls back there That was human or purty near; Big eyes and a shiny coat of hair And a beast that a man held dear, As a life long friend — but the auto truck Is ousting 'em slick and clean, For oil and grease, and a lot of muck And a tankful of gasoline. “And a driver, it used to be, could stand And pet 'em and rub 'em

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down And feed 'em sugar outen his hand Dapple and gray and brown. But now it's a crank and a chug and a wheeze And a rattle and roar and grind, With a smell of gas to make you sneeze And a blue smoke out behind." "The March of Science along the track I guess you might call it so; But gi' me the old fire horses back And le' me hitch up and go! For a horse was a human sort of thing When he ran with that old machine; But an auto truck for a fire — by jing! And a tankful of gasoline!"

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Then he rubbed down its nickled and varnished coat, And he shined up its great glass eye, He polished the brass with a lump in his throat And a sorrowful long-drawn sign. He lifted the hood where its metal soul, Lay hidden and all unseen, Then unscrewed a cap from a yawning hole And fed it some gasoline!

"That Heathen Chineese" by Bret Harte — "Safety Last", a series of four and five-lined rhymes dedicated to the dead motorist whose life was lost, alas, for a number of no good reasons, and taken from various newspapers: (Sample) Lies slumbering here One William Lake; He heard the bell But he had no brake. — Detroit "News" At ninety miles Drove Edward Shawn; The motor stopt, But Ed kept on. — Little Falls (NY) "Times" Here lies the body Of William Jay, Who died maintaining His right of way. — Boston "Transcript" At fifty miles Drove Ollie Pidd, He thought he wouldn't Skid, but did. — Rome (NY) "Times" If you are old enough to remember, you may enjoy "The Woodpile Near the Door", enjoy reading it, that is, more than you did cutting it. This ought to give a notion of the amount of loving labor that went to the gayer side merely of the scrap book. Even Berton Braley is included. More somber and some lyrical are: "When Twilight Comes" from "Exchange"; "The Deserted Song Sparrows Nest" and "Jack London", these two by Arch Bristow of Garland, Pa., typed and presented by him to Mrs. Hayes, who believes the poems were never published: 13 THE DESERTED SONG SPARROWS' NEST Frail little home, close hidden in the thorn, Twas here, in June, the baby birds were born, Twas here the tiny feathered mother pressed Through days and nights her faithful warming breast. Here beat the mother heart with tortured fear When prowling wild marauder hovered near, And here

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the summer storms with thrashing blow Bent nest and thorn bush wildly to and fro. Here in the dew soaked dawn when days were long The little mother trilled her song, And all the day she searched in field and wood To find her fluffy fledglings constant food. True to her mate, her honor clean and high, And he as true, and singing ever night. How much of that which good men highest prize Was 'compassed in this home of tiny size! So fragile, so diminutive a nest That scarcely covers half my hand at best; This was a home, and here such mother love As makes the saddened angels smile above, For all too oft' an angel, looking down On some great mansion in a mortal town Sees loveless mates and mother love denied, And gazes on that mansion tearful eyed. And now, deserted little wind-tossed nest, That symbols much that in the world is best, November winds will shortly fray your form And toss and break you in the snowy storm. So small you are, here in the thorn tree curled, And yet the greatest thing in all the world Has dwelt within you — love — 'tis not the size Of mansions that insures this greatest prize.

HAY RAKE (Arch Bristow - Garland, PA.)

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JACK LONDON

(By Arch Bristow - written Nov. 24, 1916. Garland, Pa.) On Thursday night, last Thursday night, We'd planned a pleasant hour With neighbor friends about the fire Within our humble bower. The girls had made a plate of sweets, The lamp was burning bright; We waited for the coming guests With joy last Thursday night. Outdoors the night was black as ink, And harshly beat the rain, And ran in little beaded rills Adown the window pane. It was a night no man would wish To face the driving storm, And glad were we about the lamp Where all was snug and warm. A footstep fell upon the porch And after it came more; We went to meet the welcome friends And greet them at the door. We did not guess the evening held For everyone a pall, That soon it's sadd'ning form could quiet The laughter of us all. For scarce we'd settled down to talk Till someone who had drawn An evening paper from his coat Said, "Boys, Jack London's gone." It hardly seemed it could be there, It scarcely

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seemed we'd read aright. Yet there upon the printed page
It stood in proof in black and white. The laughs were hushed,
the jests were dropped, No song was in the room,
For each one there felt in the air The sombre touch of gloom.
No one of us had clasped his hand, Yet each one felt he knew
The man who gave us "White Fang" And the tales of "Smoke Bellew".
We had not heard Jack London's voice, But we had cruised with him;
And heard the Sea Wolf's coarse command, And felt the tempest's vim.
And we had known him in the days When beaten and forlorn
He fought the long and bitter fight With Old John Barleycorn.

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Though none of us had ever seen The living face of Jack,
We'd sailed the seven seas with him And heard the big waves smack.
And we had cruised upon the Snark To many a foreign isle
And heard the combers hiss and foam And matched the breakers pile.
We'd mushed in many a northern night And on the trails been lost
In drifting snows and blizzard blows With "Children of the Frost".
Around the lamps in miners camps We'd heard the Norther whine
And met with Jack, in drifted shack, The "Princess of the Pine".
And now three thousand miles away The hand that held this pen
Chilled and without a motion lay Never to write again.
And each one there in circled chair Thought of that journey's end
And each one knew how sadly true It was, he'd lost a friend.

There is "The Light of Asia" by Sir Edwin Arnold, and "The Woodman" by Robert L. Stevenson, two poems of which a once prominent critic wrote: "So far as I know these two selections are unequalled in all literature as graphic descriptions of the murderous nature of the struggle for existence - Arnold for Animals, Stevenson for plants." There is a poem to "The Brute" by William V. Moody, and to "Eugene V. Debs" by Douglas, of the International Song Publishers (defunct), "Land of Beginning Again" by L.F. Tarkington, and "Tired Mothers" by Mary R. Smith. "Labor" by Edwin Markham, and last but not least,

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several verses of Ella Wheeler Wilcox, whose "The Unwed Mother to the Wife" is 16 a poem of ringing defiance.

Miss Hayes also clipped and pasted in the scrapbook the account of a "Veteran Actor and Manager in Mix-up",:

VETERAN ACTOR AND MANAGER IN MIX-UP

Latter Attacks Former Who Refuses to Continue in Third Act at Appleton Theatre Last Night Until He Receives \$42 Back Pay.

While the audience was waiting patiently for the curtain to rise on the third act of "The Sweetest Girl in Dixie" at the Appleton theatre Sunday night, there was a little performance going on back of the scenes that would perhaps have been more interesting to the audience than the show itself, which was not up to standard. M. A. Moseley, who portrayed the part of Col. John Howard, father of the sweetest girl in Dixie, refused to participate in the third act on the grounds that the management of the show owed him \$42 back pay and he would not go on with his part until he got the money. The manager of the show made an attack on Moseley, who is a man about sixty years of age, and would have perhaps done him bodily injury, it is said, had it not been for the timely interference of the stage hands. It was only after Manager Mark Hulhorst of the Appleton Theatre promised to do what he could for Moseley that the latter consented to go on with the play. He left the show last night and joins a company that is playing "The Virginian." The show manager said that he knew that Moseley intended to quit and for that reason would not give the veteran actor back pay that was due him.

The curtain was held for such a long time that the audience became restive and insisted that the performance go on, as practically everyone present knew that there was no scenery to shift and no costumes to change, that would bring about such a long delay,

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over twenty minutes, and the gallery gods, who were not particularly impressed with the play, set up a noise that could not possibly have been mistaken for disapproval.

A recipe for Scalloped Scalloped Oysters, is short and simple:

Take a dish, put a layer of the oysters as free from their liquor as they can be made, and a layer of rolled crackers; another layer of oysters, another of crackers, until the dish is full. Add a little salt and pepper and pieces of butter between each layer and moisten with cream. Bake about 15 minutes.

Another recipe for Mayonnaise dressing completes the cookery department.