

## [Local Norse Folklore]

FORM A Dup.

STATE: Washington

NAME OF WORKER: Roy Hanna

ADDRESS: Seattle, Washington.

DATE: December 22, 1938

SUBJECT: Local Horse Norse Folklore

1. Informant's Name and Address: A. Hal Lokken, Fishing Vessel Owner's Association, Pier 8. Seattle, Wash. B. Capt. Cris Svenson, same address.
2. Date and time of interview. Morning of Dec. 22, 1938
3. Place: Association office, mezzanine of Pier 8.
4. Own information.
5. Alone
6. Plain but comfortable office. Maps, study of fish growth by stages, other items on walls. Overlooks Pier 8 slip.

FORM B STATE: Washington

NAME OF WORKER: Ray Hanna

## Library of Congress

ADDRESS: Seattle, Washington

DATE: December 22, 1938

SUBJECT: Local Norse Folklore

Name and Address of Informant: Chris Svenson, Fishing Vessel Owners' Association, Pier 8, Seattle, Wash. Hal Lokken, Secy. of same, same address.

1. Ancestry: Norwegian
2. Norway. Did not care to tell place. About 1897 or 1898.

(Norse people do not care to answer questions relating to themselves. They are by trait; shy and retiring. Questions along this line are not prudent as they are the quickest method of drying your informant into sullen silence. Smartest thing is to wait and get this, if at all, when it is told voluntarily.

So I said to Hal, "Migord, you gotta save me. I am sent to chase down some legends. You know. Of the / Fishermen [e.c.?] and loggers and such and all the week long I have been toeing your clam-mouthed brothern around for some original stuff and what do I get?"

"All they say is " Vat vas I want and "I dunno I dunno! " and tap another cud out of their snoose cans. You gotta save me, Hal?"

Hal Lokken is the permanent secretary of the fishing Vessel Owners' Association, the Sunday name of Seattle's halibut fleet. He is a smooth collegian with just enough muscle to be reasonably impressive round and about and is one of a handful on the water-front who can get those Norse fishermen to unbutton and talk. If Hal says "Okay," they can unwind some wild sagas that will give you a psychological psychological message. If he

## Library of Congress

says "No , " they can't even speak English. You see, Hal is an important guy to me right now[.?.]

Well, Hal is just touching up a rather livid story in which a dory capsized. The dorymates grasp the hull but after hours of swimming one of them is taken to the Heaven of all good fisherman. Because he dreaded a watery grave his partner tied his body fast to the stern and went drifting on crying for help.

The rescue boat not only found a corpse but a virtual lunatic crouched on the overturned hull. With each roll of the tide the body, which was floating free, seemed to reach up with ghastly arms and clutch for him.

We are sitting in the dock office and this is just jelling and I am watching the misty sound shore and catching the ka-plot-ka-plot, ka-plot of a trawler mosing around the dock.

About this time we are joined by one of the skippers. He is a slight, wiry chap with the usual weatherbeaten face. Not particularly outstanding but just to build my man up . , I will record that he has great terrifying hands, the kind that can tear the shank right off a bullock and the quick intense eyes of a kingfisher.

2

Hal given me the nod that here is my chance. He says to my man, "Chris h, y this gent is looking for some yarns, wild ones. Open up. You know 'em all."

I find my man is Chris Svenson, skipper of the F. C. Hergert. He fires a cigar and studies a wandering gull which lights in the slip. "So. kid, he says softly—surprising soft, "You vas vant a little of everything. O.K., that's just what you get— a little of everything.

“CONFIRMATION”

“I guess I can tell you, too, Ha!. I been aroundt the void four—five times. Across the Horn seven time. You go to church. You know what confirmation means. Do you know what it

## Library of Congress

means in Norvegy? No. Vell— just this. It means the boy leave home, go out alone when he is fourteen, fifteen to make his vey in the voidt. He generally run away to sea. At thirteen I vas confirmed— and I been sailing every since. I am fifty now. Do you see: In the summer time in my village only the girls and very old men are left. All the rest are away. Ha! I met my kid friends later in every port—Hamburg, Rotterdam, Havre— I met four in Brussels, two ort three in The Hague.

### JERVIS INLET MALESTROM

“You know, the longest inlet on the Pacific is just north of Vancouver— Jervis Inlet, 110 miles. Believe me, that is a fjord. You got to lay on your back to see the sky , so narrow are the cliffs in some places. Let's see, in 1929 I believe that vas, I vas skipper for one of the [Studebakers?]. My God? That vas the best pay I ever got. I took them in.

“There is a rapid in there, too. Covered at high tide but in ten minutes when she goes out there is a steep rapids with the worst damn whirlpol you effer heard of at the bottom.

“Say! We watch— with field glasses you know— we watch that damn thing suck a handret-food tree, three-foot through at the stumpage around like a straw. And do you know if neffer came up. We vatch andt vatch and vatch but neffer see it again. When the tide flow we came back down and hunt for four or five hour but I swear we neffer see it. Where didt it go? Ha! You ask me? 3 “You know that outfidt they had swell rifles but dey couldn't hit a sea lion's ass at twentdy food. They shoot at a cub bear aboutt as far as across dis dock and he had to run a block for cover but dey all miss. And Studabaker— you know what he did? He took his swell rifle andt slung it over in a hundredt fathom. Yes , he didt.

### SEA LIONS

“And those damn sea lion. Say, one tribt last season they took aboutt a thousand pound of halibut from my lines. And by God they always take the biggest fish. We had all lines down and the catch was coming good went dose buggers come along. We did't have a

## Library of Congress

rifle aboard , damnit , and they lay right there in aboutt fifty fathom and snap off the big ones when we pulled them up. The Provincial government kills them off every year.

### GOONIES

“Goonies. Dat's another thing dat give us hell. Day follow right after us ven ve are setting bait and snap up the herrings. By Go , one of them take ten herring right after another. We test them on day. Ve pudt sticks in the herrings and I swear that damn birdt swallow ten in a row. They are big birdts, wingspread ten, twelve feet. No one know where they go to nest but I think the Fiji Islands.

### IN THE FIJIS

I made three trips to the Fijis, too. Dat vas in War time. We went after guano a couple of times for / Dynamite e.c. you know. Then I made a trip for copra. Say, we lay there, the French Islands waiting for a load of that bird crap for six months. Dose girls. Say! Dey are old there at fifteen there. You know the flu had swept through some of the villages and they all took to houses in the trees. By God, kidt, you lay up with a girl in a big tree when the wid is blowing. There is some fun.

### THE LEGEND OF THE JAPANESE ADMIRAL

“Ha! Yes. A tousand stories. There was the time—that was long time ago—the Indians on Vancouver Island used to put all a man's property on his grave when he die. Well , one time myself and anodder fellow we searched one of dose cemeteries for a good pair of boots and what do we find? Someone had been buried just that day and on his grave was one of does old phonographs with a horn. A record was on. We wound it up 4 and it started paying “Goin' Home.”

“That Japanese Admiral. Yes, by God, dat is true. I saw him. That vas in Ucluelet about six, seven year ago. We put in there in a storm. The Canadian Customs dey good

## Library of Congress

fellows you know. They ask us over to eat and dat evening dey invite us to a Japanese fishermen's meeting. The Japs was just organizing then.

"And you know, when one got up to talk all the rest rose and bowed to the floor. He is round and short man and he vas an admiral in the Japanese Navy during the Russo-Japanese War. "

"He got into a tight spot and blew the country and settled up there on the Island. But dat is true. He was a high Admiral at the battle of Port Arthur.

### DOTS AND DASHES

"Ha! You don't know what suffering iss, Kid. Say, you see that picture, what is it— 'Captains Courageous— where dat guy got gaffed with a hook.

"Say dat is nothing. See dis knuckle (2nd finger, right hand). You know how I gott dat? Well I got hooked when a fifty-horsepower windlass was reeling the line in.

"I got hooked in this knuckle and I vas too far away to stop the motor and no one could hear me shout. So I pull with that hook in my finger against fifty horse! Say.' All the damn doctors wanted to take my handt off but I save it myself, by God!

Oh, ve find lots of things. Last season we pick up the rotor off the speed log of a Canadian patrol boat that went down with all handts in — lets see— 1912, I think. In two hundred fathom, too. Just one tiny hole to hook it but the line was dragging on the bottom and it snagged.

"Vell hell, kidt, I could go on— whadt I couldn't tell you. But I got to go aboard. By God if you put that in the paper I trow you ff the dock. Good bye, now!"

## Library of Congress

Well, so that is that. I offer you an hour's worth of cigar smoke from Captain Chris Svensen of the F. C. Hergert, halibut trawler out of Seattle.