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**Transcript of DARE Interview (1967): Virginia, Minnesota; Primary Informant  
MN001 (Tape 0739-S1)**

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INTRODUCTION: The following was recorded from Dictionary of American Regional English tape zero seven three nine, side one.

FIELDWORKER: This is a recording made of Dave [beep] at Virginia, Minnesota, on June twenty-ninth nineteen sixty-seven by [beep].

5 INFORMANT: The Story of Arthur the Rat. Once upon a time there was a young rat who couldn't make up his mind. Whenever the other rats asked him if he would like to come out hunting with them, he would answer in a hoarse voice, "I don't know." And when they said, "Would you rather stay inside?" he wouldn't say yes, or no either. He'd always shirk making a choice.

10 One fine day his aunt Josephine said to him, "Now look here! No one will ever care for you if you carry on like this. You have mo-, no more mind of your own than a greasy old blade of grass!"

The young rat coughed and looked wise, as usual, but said nothing.

"Don't you think so?" said his aunt stamping with her foot, for she couldn't bear to see the young rat so cold-blooded.

15 "I don't know," was all he ever answered, and then he'd walk off to think for an hour or more, whether he would stay in his hole in the ground or go out into the loft.

One night the rats heard a loud noise in the loft. It was a very dreary old place. The roof let the rain come washing in, the beams and rafters had all rotted through, so that the whole thing was quite unsafe.

20 At last one of the joists gave way, and the beam fell with one edge on the floor. The walls shook, and the cupola fell off, and all the rats' hair stood on end with fear and horror.

"This won't do," said their leader. "We couldn't stay cooped up here any longer." So they sent out scouts to search for a new home.

A little later on that evening the scouts came back and said they had found an old-fashioned horse-barn where they would be room and board for all of them.

25 The leader gave the order at once, "Company fall in!" and the rats crawled out of their holes right away and stood on the floor in a long line.

Just then the old rat caught sight of young Arthur—that was the name of the shirker. He wasn't in the line, and he wasn't exactly outside it—he just stood by it.

"Come on, get in line!" growled the old rat coarsely. "Of course you're coming too?"

30 "I don't know," said Arthur calmly.

"Why, the idea of it! You don't think it's safe here anymore, do you?"

"I'm not certain," said Arthur undaunted. "The roof may not fall down yet."

"Well," said the old rat, "we can't wait for you to join us." Then he turned to the others and shouted, "Right about face! March!" and the long line started out of the barn while the young rat  
35 watched them.

"I think I'll go tomorrow," he said to himself, "but then again, perhaps I won't—it's so nice and snug here. I guess I'll go back to my hole under the log for a while just to make up my mind."

But during the night there was a big crash. Down came beams, rafters, joists—and the whole business.

40 Next morning—it was a foggy day—some men came to look over the damage. It seemed odd to them that the old building was not haunted by rats. But at last one of them happened to move a board, and he caught sight of a young rat, quite dead, half in and half out of his hole.

Thus the shirker got his due, and there was no mourning for him. They chained them to the flatbed, and they brought, they were brought in here and dumped into Silver Lake and into  
45 Baileys Lake here, the two lakes in Virginia. And they s-soaked in the water and were held there until they needed them and they were bought up on conveyor belt and processed through the mill, debarked and sawed into lengths, then planed and what they call "dressed" to certain types of lumber, certain sizes.

FIELDWORKER: When did you start working at the post office?

50 INFORMANT: I started there right after I got out of school in nineteen twenty-nine. At that time I was gonna go away to art school and I started in the post office just to help them out for the summer vacations. By the time I, uh, was ready to go back to school, they had me convinced that I should stay there and help them out through the winters, so I never did get back. I had started out to be a commercial artist and I ended up there in the post office instead. Working in there  
55 I've handled everything from facing the mail in the early days, carrying mail, uh, window work, money order room work, registry work, anything that, uh, comes within the post office at some time or other during these years I've done it.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. How'd you happen to find out, uh, all about the farming that we did earlier?

60 INFORMANT: Well, when I was young, my dad used to have a, what they called a distributing agency. They distributed bills all over these range towns, and we used to take the old street car and go over to the range towns and, and the surrounding communities and they would ship the samples or the pamphlets, whatever we were going to distribute ahead. And then we would cover the town with the samples or the pamphlets to the different houses and the different  
65 locations. And generally we used the money that we had for bus fare, or car fare. At that time they used to call it car fare. We'd usually spend it for lunch or pop or something during the day and we had to hitchhike home. Well there weren't the cars in those days that there are now, and hitchhiking from Hibbing to Virginia was a whole-day affair. Well, it, uh, short ways out of Parkville towards Mountain Iron there was a farm that we knew the parties that ran it. It was an old  
70 German woman that ran the farm, her husband was dead. Every time we came back from Hibbing we used to stop in there and visit with he and get some cold milk, or she always seemed to be making doughnuts, or some sort of biscuits or something that we could get in there and eat.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah.

INFORMANT: And, uh, just hanging around that farm I learned a little of this and a little of that,  
75 what her son was doing to run the farm, the crops that he planted, just general conversation and observing.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah, what kind of farm'd they have?

INFORMANT: Well, in these days they would call it a truck farm. It was a small farm, they had a few cattle, few milk cows, couple of pigs and some chickens, just a small—

80 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Homey farm.

FIELDWORKER: Did you ever work at all in the mines?

INFORMANT: No, I never worked the mines. Like I say when I came out of school I went right into the post office.

85 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: I was never laid off to the extent that I had to work the mines. During the Depression I had to, uh, I painted signs and worked at the Post Office, and done some art work, played in bands in order to make a living.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah. Was it pretty good money in bands those days?

90 INFORMANT: Uh, not what there is today, no, we used to, if we made five dollars an evening we were considered well payed. In fact, eh, if we played for a party, or wedding or something like that at, where they passed the hat, we made more money than we did if we were on union scale.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: But it was a lot of fun, a lot of enjoyment.

95 FIELDWORKER: Did you get any sleep?

INFORMANT: And we covered quite a bit of ground, quite a bit of territory. We didn't sleep very much, uh, we'd finish playing about one or two o'clock and then we had to go to the old Holland Hotel and have lunch, or so it was four or five by the time we got home. And I started when I was thirteen.

100 FIELDWORKER: Playing?

INFORMANT: Playing, so that didn't set too well with my folks, they thought that I was too young to be out that late. Used to be quite a hassle.

FIELDWORKER: [laugh]

INFORMANT: Which I'm going through myself now. [laugh]

105 FIELDWORKER: Yeah.

INFORMANT: But, uh—

FIELDWORKER: What kind of music were you playing those days?

INFORMANT: Jazz, blues, some Latin American stuff, foxtrot, waltz, a few schottische, it depended upon what type of dance you were playing for. If it was an old timer's dance you played schottisches and square dance type of music, waltzes, and if it was a Scandinavian dance, we used to play up in the old North Pole Hall here. That was a schottische and waltz and foxtrot. And if we played for what they called the younger crowd, that was Charleston, blues and jazz, turkey trot.

FIELDWORKER: Was this in the twenties?

115 INFORMANT: In the twenties and thirties.

FIELDWORKER: When it was dry?

INFORMANT: Yes, Prohibition was on at the time.

FIELDWORKER: They do any, uh, illegal selling of liquor around here?

INFORMANT: Oh yes, there was quite a bit of bootlegging. And quite a bit of, uh, Italian families and Serbian families making wine to sell or making what they called moonshine.

120

FIELDWORKER: Mm.

INFORMANT: And it was one of the best of, uh, the Prohibition drinks.

FIELDWORKER: They ever bring any down from Canada?

125 INFORMANT: Yes, but that was, uh, more or less for the high class people, uh, the rich people used to bring it down, it was smuggled in. Lot of the railroad conductors and train men used to bring it down for them. We had that, uh, DWP that used to run up into Winnipeg.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: And all of those fellas seemed to, quite a few of them in fact made a little stake for themselves by [laugh] bringing liquor down to them.

130 FIELDWORKER: Yeah. [cough] How's (xx) compare with the, with Butch's band?

INFORMANT: Well, as I say, we played all types of music. Today they play rhythm and blues, rock and roll, and, uh, what they call "far out" music, psychedelic.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah.

135 INFORMANT: But, uh, it's still the same, it's still rhythm, it's tempo that people dance to, today the kids have to feel it, so it has to be loud. We used to play, uh, soft music. We didn't have amplifiers, we didn't have microphones in those days, we used to use megaphones to sing through, and then later on the microphones begin to come out and we'd use one mic probably for the whole band, to air the whole van with it. Now they've gotta have four mics to, for a four piece outfit.

140 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: And your amplifiers, uh, take the case of the guitar now, the amplifier has to be at least a Dual Showman to, uh, put out the sound that the kids want.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

145 INFORMANT: Your PA system has to be able to have a hundred watt output, otherwise it isn't loud enough. Used to be in the earlier days that a forty watt output was loud enough for an auditorium or an armory. Today it has to be a hundred watt, otherwise they can't feel the music. But, fundamentally it's, it's what youth wants and in those days it was what youth wanted. You played the type of music they wanted.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah.

150 INFORMANT: I can remember one dance that we played out in the country, one of these big farmers came up and said, "Don't play any more waltzes." So I immediately turned to the piano player and said, "Play another waltz." We played the waltz and near the end of the waltz I had the snare drum smashed over my head.

FIELDWORKER: [laugh]

155 INFORMANT: So, needless to say, we quit playing waltzes that evening.

FIELDWORKER: [laugh] Was the waltz the old-fashioned music in those days or what?

INFORMANT: Well, it was, uh, one-two-three rhythm, a slow, more graceful type of dance, foxtrot was the box step.

FIELDWORKER: What'd the farmer want you to play?

160 INFORMANT: Well, when you were around the farms it was mostly hoedown or schottische or the type of music that they could, uh, more or less clutter up the floor with and jig a little bit. But the rhythms were still about the same as what they are now. You had Latin American rhythms were just coming in then, the Charleston was similar to your rock and roll music of today, quick beat, and, uh, but we had a turkey trot, was something similar to some of your—

165 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Rock and roll music. And then you had rhythm and blues in those days, only it was better defined as blues, because you had the long drawn out tempos instead of a quick and then the long drawn tempo that they have today.

FIELDWORKER: What are some of the things your father did?

170 INFORMANT: You mean occupations or?

FIELDWORKER: Yeah.

INFORMANT: Well, when he first came up here, he ran a, what was called a buffet. Later on they called them saloons, but, uh, he was in the liquor business for some time, and then he opened up, uh, an opera house here in town, which was the first one that was opened here. And he ran  
175 the first, uh, motion pictures in town. And at that time they were ran by operating machine by hand by cranking it, and you could make it go fast if you wanted or cut the show in a hurry, you turned it fast and got the picture over with, and if you wanted to carry it out, you ran the picture slow. And, uh, my uncle was the first one to learn operating here from my dad at that time. And then he went into the billboard business, the advertising business, which was posting billboards  
180 up all over the country. And he didn't want to stay in the operating business, so he taught my older brother to operate. He started when he was thirteen years old, operating a machine and he stayed in that to present time.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Some fifty-some years of operating.

185 FIELDWORKER: What'd the opera house used to offer?

INFORMANT: Well, whatever entertainments you could get. You used to bring in road shows, as they're known today, these, uh, more or less hiss-the-villain type and cheer-the-hero, and, uh, I was just a baby when I appeared the first time on stage, they needed a baby and anything they needed, my dad furnished. (If the) show came in and needed something, he furnished whatever  
190 they needed. This particular show needed a baby, so I was, uh, the baby in the show. The name of the thing was "Heir to the Hurrah," was a story of a baby that, uh, came into the estate of a big ranch. And that was my first appearance on stage.

FIELDWORKER: Did you ever do any acting?

INFORMANT: Ahh, through high school, yes, and through some junior chamber shows and things  
195 of that type.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: But I never considered myself much of an actor, see. Then after that, Dad went into, uh, oh I think it was custodial work at the First National Bank. Worked there for a while as the head custodian. Then he went into police work and he worked with the deputy sheriffs for a  
200 while, worked as a bailiff later on in life, and he worked at the Oliver in between as a stockman in the warehouse. In those days jobs were scarce, you took what you could get to make a living and lots of times you didn't know whether you were going to make a living or not, you didn't own a house in those days, you rented a house. Although in the beginning, when Dad was, uh, running the opera house and the buffet, uh, we did own property, little at a time he sold the lots to  
205 different ones. Finally ended up selling his own house, renting from there on in, the rest of his life I think he rented, never owned property after that.

FIELDWORKER: Where'd he come from originally?

INFORMANT: Uh, Dad came from s-, uh, Scotland, he came from, uh, Glasgow, and Mother came from Edinburgh, a little place outside or incorporated in Edinburgh called Leith. During the war  
210 when I was in Germany, I was, had a chance to go back on a nine-day leave to any place that I wanted to go, so I chose to go to England and Scotland and I went back up and visited the area that Mother was born at and the area that Dad was born in. Saw the place where he had worked as a candy butcher when he was young.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: And I visited the school buildings where Mother had gone to school, places where she had lived. They were pretty much the same as they were in those days, I guess they hadn't  
215 changed much.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. Were they married overseas or did they meet here?

INFORMANT: No, they were married here in this country. She, uh, dad was working as a grocer  
220 down in Duluth for an uncle of mine, and, uh, I think it was the Duluth Green Supply, they used to call the place. He worked there with this uncle for a while and then mother came over to this

country. I believe she, uh, came to my dad's mother's house, roomed there at that time and that's how he got to know her. I think that's where they met.

FIELDWORKER: Did they both come directly from Scotland here to Minnesota?

225 INFORMANT: Yeah, they both came right to Minnesota. See this uncle was here in Duluth at the time, and—

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: I don't know how Mother happened to come here, there was none of her relatives around here, but, uh, I guess they had known, uh, the families had known each other or something back in Scotland, and when she came to this country she came to Minnesota.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. Have you ever checked any further into the genealogy of the family?

INFORMANT: Yes, at the time of the, their fiftieth wedding anniversary, I done what we call a family tree, and went back through Mother's side of the family and Dad's side as far back as I could trace it.

235 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Which is quite a, a job, because you can get awfully tangled up for some of the things that, specially when you don't have anybody that you can really work through, you've got to work by letter, it's pretty hard to trace some of the things down, because in Scotland there's so many clans that, uh, intermingle.

240 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: And so many of them that come under the same classification. MacKenzie clan and the, the different tartans of the different clans, and, uh the Clark clan, and so many of the clans incorporate, uh, oh various names and various clans that, it's kinda hard, you get to going down one clan and the first thing you know it branches over and you're into another.

245 FIELDWORKER: Yeah.

INFORMANT: So.

FIELDWORKER: How far back were you able to trace them?

INFORMANT: Oh, back as far, I think it was six generations I finally went back in the clans to, to check.

250 FIELDWORKER: Were you able to find out much about the ancestors outside of their names?

INFORMANT: No, just, uh, the names and what the tartans were that they used in those days and what some of them did, some of them were sheep herders and some of them were, uh, what we would call farmers here now.



FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

255 INFORMANT: They didn't call them farmers, they were called land owners there. Then there was the tenants, uh, that farmed the land for them.

FIELDWORKER: Curious. What had your great-grandparents done? Did you ever find that out?

INFORMANT: Hh, well I think, uh—

FIELDWORKER: Or they would be grandparents, wouldn't they?

260 INFORMANT: My grandparent would be, uh, Mother's dad, I think was a tailor at one time. And I guess her, her mother was just a housewife. And Dad's I guess had, uh, been in business some way, uh whether it was the candy business that he was in, or what, I never could find out, all I could find was the name of the company and there was no definition as to what they, what product they made.

265 FIELDWORKER: They have any special reasons for coming over here?

INFORMANT: Well, he was, uh, offered a job over here with his uncle (that had,) of his, to, uh, work in his store. That's why he came over. And, uh, I guess mother just came because she thought it was a country of opportunity. Like they all did in those days.

FIELDWORKER: Are there many Scots or English around this area?

270 INFORMANT: Not throughout this area, but, uh, up in Canada, Port Francis has quite a few Scots, there's quite a, I think in Minnesota, the largest group of Scots at that time were in Duluth.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: And that's why I think most of them migrated to Duluth, is because they had friends there and they, at one time they used to have what they called the Scottish clan down there. It was an organization, Scotch, uh, nationality, and anyone that had his, had Scotch in his veins other than in drinking it, eh—

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FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: —was allowed to join the clan if they wished and it, uh, was an insurance agency and a social club, and we used to make trips, we had our own band, we had the w-, the pipes and the drums and own Scottish band. And the band was all dressed in kilts for parades and we used to have the Scottish games like the carried on down in the old country. And, uh, they used to have the Scottish dances and everything and once a year there used to be a picnic and we'd all get on a boat and travel down the boat Fond du Lac, from Duluth, and then the whole area was turned over into a picnic ground, we tossed the tabour [=caber] as they say and danced the Highland Fling and the Sword Dance a few of these other, listened to the pipers, they used to have piping contests, just as they did back in Scotland. At that time it was quite a few of the old timers here, the ones that had come from Scotland, and they brought their traditions and their

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290 customs and everything with them, they tried to keep them as long as they could. Now today it is, within the last twenty years that it, it has faded out completely, 'cause the only ones that's left in the clan are just the younger Scots.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: They still have their meetings, they carry on the insurance and everything, and they have what they call Burns Night, which is a banquet every year, an annual banquet. But that's the extent, I think, of their activities now.

295 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: No longer have the picnics which would, used to be the greatest thing on earth, because the boats all at that time had slot machines.

FIELDWORKER: Oh?

300 INFORMANT: And, uh, as soon as you got out of the harbor you could, they'd open up the slot machines and you could play slot machines. Kids and everybody had the chance to play slot machines.

FIELDWORKER: Hm.

INFORMANT: So that was a big day when we were young, to make the trip to Fond du Lac and go to Scotch picnic.

305 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. How would you characterize the, the ethnic makeup of the area around here?

310 INFORMANT: Oh, that's pretty hard to do, you've got quite a mixture. I'd say that, uh, primarily it's, uh, more Finnish than any other race. We have very few, uh, Negro, we do have a few Indians that come in from the reservation, had moved in from the reservation. The minority groups here are very small. At one time it used to be the Polish. And all these jokes that you hear about the Finlanders today were originally Polish jokes, came from books about the Poles. They came over here and they started to work in the mines and they were doing manual labor and everything. They were considered very dumb, like they tried to tell you the Finns are today. And, uh, I think that's where most of these jokes were derived from.

315 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: The Polish. But it's pretty much of a mixture up here, we have Swedes, Norwegians, but the greatest, uh, of the population I would say were Finnish.

FIELDWORKER: H-how, where did the, eh, how did the Finns get here? (xx) this particular area.

320 INFORMANT: Well, I think they were, uh, used to cold weather. The climate over here is just about the same as what it is in Viipuri and a few of those towns over there, and I think that was

the reason they, the first group that came over here liked it, and they advised their relatives and their friends to come here.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

325 INFORMANT: And they settled throughout northern Minnesota, and originally they, uh, were what we call lumber jacks during the mill days. They worked up in the camps, up in the woods.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: And they were husky most of them and able to take it, they were able to take quite a bit of abuse and cold weather. They were used up in the camps, we had a few Germans, but there very few now. The general run of them in the camp were either Finnish or Irish.

330 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. An-, any of them come directly over for mining?

INFORMANT: Yes, we had uh, quite a few families here that came directly from Ireland. I remember one that went into a dray line business after he got here. Had a freight line and a dray line, and his name was [beep], Pat [beep], and he married, uh, an Indian girl here and raised a family. Worked up in the m-, uh the woods for a while before he started in the draying business.

335 FIELDWORKER: Were there any special groups that came, especially for mining?

INFORMANT: Well, I think the, the Poles and the, the Serbians. And some of the Italians were, came here especially for the mining business.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

340 INFORMANT: After the mining industry took over, then the Poles, and the Serbians, Croatians all through the Yugoslav countries, Balkans and that, they migrated here and got work in the jo-, in the mines. And most of them were underground mines at that time, and, uh, they took what they called contract jobs.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

345 INFORMANT: You worked for so much a day and, or you worked for so much, uh, material brought out of the mine, at that time. If you had a quota, you brought so many tons or, and that's how they paid you at that time.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

350 INFORMANT: There was, at that time there was no unions, you worked, uh, seven days a week, and if you were on a contract, you worked until you finished whatever load you were bringing out or whatever area you were digging in.

FIELDWORKER: Mhm. When did mining become the dominant industry?

INFORMANT: Well, right after the mill went out in, uh, oh I'd say that was in the early twenties when the mill folded up. In middle twenties. It went along for a little while afterwards, but then, uh, mining started to creep in, men started to go to the mines, they were making more money working on contract, at the mill you'd work for three dollars a day, see.

355 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: They would probably make five or six down on a contract job in the mines, so they gradually left the mill and, lumber was running out, timber was getting low, in those days they didn't reseed or replant anything, it was all taken out, all they cared about was getting it out of there.

360 FIELDWORKER: Yeah.

INFORMANT: They'd cut over the area and just leave it. Now they require them to reforest after they cut.

FIELDWORKER: What'd they do with the mill? Just tear it down or what?

365 INFORMANT: Yeah, it was, uh, torn down and dismantled after they shipped out of here and it went to Burns, Oregon, from here.