

Fieldwork Recordings—Dictionary of American Regional English
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**Transcript of DARE Interview (1966): Roswell, New Mexico; Primary Informant
NM014 (Tape 1068-S2)**

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INTRODUCTION: The following was recorded from Dictionary of American Regional English, tape one zero six eight, side two.

INFORMANT: Now we are preparing our food is all done outside, everything. We make our own yeast by putting milk and water together with a little flour and sugar in it until it sours and then
5 we get quite a quantity of that, and that's what we call sourdough. And we add to it as much as we take out every time, and then that way it keeps our dough supplied, our big jar, we have about a five-gallon jar that we use for sourdough. The way we cook this food is what we call "skillet and lid"— that's Dutch ovens. And we'll have three or four of those and they'll be about, anywhere from sixteen to twenty-four inches in diameter, eight to ten inches high. We put the skillet on
10 the fire and get it good and hot, and the lid red hot. When we, when the biscuits or whatever we're cooking, in the, ruh, skillets, is ready, why we, ruh, lift the, ruh, lid from the fire with what we call a pot rack, a pot hook. We always have a hook, it's a long rod with a bent with a hook in it, and we handle that with a lid, there, uh, handle on the lid, and we hook it in that handle and bring it over to the, ruh, skillet take a shovel, rake a little fire on the shovel, then take it over and
15 put it on top of the lid. And then we raise that lid, depending upon how hot you are, shouldn't get them too hot but then enough to brown, and there's no way in the world that you can cook better food than you can cook in that old black skillet and lid. Tastes better. And we have what we call a pot rack. There'll be two stakes driven down, about six feet apart, and a wrought iron that goes through that and on that there's hooks that go down and our coffee and our various
20 other things—apricots, and such dried fruit— that we use are hung on that and just whatever distance we want it from the fire why do it by having shorter hooks and long hooks and so forth. And our coffee of course, we always put the coffee right in the middle. When it gets done we pass it over then to one side or the, uh, pot rack, just where it'll keep good and hot, but not boiling.

25 FIELDWORKER: And they cook the, uh, sourdough biscuits and they also cook the steaks in these—

INFORMANT: Everything, everything is cooked, mm-hmm, that way, mm-hmm. Everything is cooked in the Dutch oven.

30 FIELDWORKER: Are there any other things you might have, oh not, like an everyday meal, but some special little things that the cook might make up every now and then?

INFORMANT: Well, he don't have very much, heh heh, he'll make up, the cook will make up a lot of stuff sometimes, what he'll call pudding or pie or something, sometimes you get it and sometimes you can't [laugh]. [cough] And you're never supposed to eat on the chuck box lid. We have a lid, a box where the cook keeps all of his dishes, and his, ruh, cooking utensils [cough] with
35 a fire about ten feet behind that wagon. The chuck box is let down, and you are never supposed to walk between that chuck box and that fire because that part of the ground belongs to the cook, and you are never supposed to eat on, rum, a chuck box lid. The beds are thrown off at noontime for the boys to sit on and rest on and they sit down on the ground and put their plate right on the ground. When we're through eating there's two big wash tubs right close to the fire.
40 Every man is supposed to clean out his plate, throw it away, and take it and put it over in the tub— that's what we call racking them, rack the dishes. Sometimes they'll stand twenty feet and try and see if they can rack, rack them, but that's, rum, that's an unwritten law that belongs to the wagon. And you are never supposed to ride up to the wagon from the side the wind's coming from because your horse and the dust and the hairs off your horse will fly into your cooking
45 utensils. You're supposed to ride facing the wind and come to the wagon and never get too close.

FIELDWORKER: Do they have any other unwritten laws like that? [cough] There's a lot of unwritten laws that they have, and it just take too, too, too long to tell them and some of them are a little funny [laugh], it'll— might run into something that wouldn't be pleasing for the ladies. We had the ladies come and go to the, ruh, coffee pot or to the pot rack, and they would ask the
50 cook, "Cook, how do you get the coffee out of the pot?" Cook would say, "Oh, just like these boys do, wrap your tail around the rack and dive in." [laugh] Oh, I think that's about all you got that we can put in about the setting space that you wanted to. What was this other pot rack?

INFORMANT: We have, er, uh, built under our chuck box which is right on the back end of the wagon, the chuck box is a big box with different compartments in it that the cook uses for his
55 different kinds of dishes. It's all tinware, and, ruh, but right under the chuck box is built what we call a pot rack. This holds our skillets and lids, and doesn't get mixed up in all black, black everything else, from being used out in an open fire. If we're in the country where there's no wood—which there never was out on the plains where I worked— we'd take and stretch a beef hide under the wagon and call that a cooney, and that's tied in four different places and hangs
60 open and the horse wranglers or the cowboys or anybody when they come to a little drift where rain might have drifted the little wood or something up together that can burn, we take and pitch it in that cooney. Then we have it, when we're camped, we have a little wood to go with. Otherwise, the horse wrangler has got to get wood for the cooks. And, ruh, he and the cook have quite an argument every once in a while about how much wood he's going to have to use and
65 what kind of wood he's going to have to use, and who's going to get it. [cough] But I don't think

there was ever a bigger hearted bunch of people that ever lived, [ah] than the open range cowboys. They're rough, they're rough, but they're not tough. Their heart is just as big as the open range. And if one needs anything or the boys that work together, they'll divide the last thing they have with each other. And, ruh, as far as their clothing, their clothing, they're all just the same because they wear it from the time they start out till they get back. They'll probably take a change or two of clothes with them. If it comes a rain and if they come to lake water and so forth, why, all go in a swimming and wash out our clothes, hang them on a mesquite bush and let them dry while we're taking a bath go back and get into the same old clothes, the same old way and so forth, but, ruh, it's quite amusing, it's quite amusing to see a wagon the way they used to work. I'm sorry that those days have passed, those were the greatest days. Men had an open heart, a man meant something to you then. You had a friend, when you had a friend and you was glad to see him, you was glad to see anybody and anybody come to the wagon, he was just welcome to eat and stay and stay all night, and until he got ready to go, it didn't make any difference where he was going. Or if we had a ranch and he come to the ranch and he needed to stay a week, he just as welcome as he could be, and we never thought of charging a man anything for anything either, he was welcome to what we had.

FIELDWORKER: [squeak] Did some cowboys ride from say one ranch to another ranch in the wintertime?

INFORMANT: Huh? Do what?

FIELDWORKER: Did some cowboys ride from one ranch—

INFORMANT: Oh, yes.

FIELDWORKER: What did they call that?

INFORMANT: Well, we call that what we call that is, um, winter range riding. We'll go from one camp to another and spend a few days over there and so forth and then probably go on down to one of these other camps so that we can keep in touch of how they are and what's going on and what news might come from headquarters, and various other things like, yes, they are kept in touch with, er, uh, all of the, uh, different camps are kept in touch with each other. And the men that do the windmilling and such as that, why, when a windmill gets out of order, he reports it and we have a couple men that don't do anything except repair windmills and that's what we call—we send word to the windmill men that a certain mill is out of order, and then he comes and tends that as he comes around. But, ruh, there's news that goes around, there's generally always somebody that comes in and stays all night for every week, hardly ever a week or two passes but what there won't be but two or three or four, and we keep pretty well up with what the various different cowboys are and what they're doing, and some of them is sick or maybe in town, or take a vacation, or maybe his mother died, and he's gone a while and so forth, but then, ruh, in the spring of the year when we start out after the wintertime, it's a great thing to get together. That coming together is quite a thing. And if we're in the rough, uh, country and there's rocks and so forth, we have to keep our horses shod, and that's quite a job of shoeing horses, by

105 the time you shoe eight or ten horses. Every man is supposed to keep his own horses shod, sometimes we have to lay them down and roll them over on their back and tie all their feet together to nail steel on them, but then we'll put a little steel on the bottom end of them, and, ruh, if you're riding and riding hard and rough and the horse slings his shoe, or loses his shoe, why he'd get sore footed and that and then you have to

FIELDWORKER: Each cowboy had to shoe his own horse—

110 INFORMANT: That's right, that's right. Maybe when we get together in the spring of year, we'll shoe horses for a week or ten days before the wagon ever starts out.

FIELDWORKER: And did they carry extra shoes around?

INFORMANT: Oh, yes, there's always a keg full or two of shoes and, uh, horseshoe nails and all the equip-, rasps, and such as that.

115 FIELDWORKER: Did they have different sizes then, or—

INFORMANT: Oh, yes, different sizes, and then you can take and throw them in the fire, you can lot of times they have to be spread and maybe have to be this or that and the other and so forth. Yeah, and that's why we try at the ranch, there's always a forge and such as that there, you see. And then some of them have corks and some of them are smooth, you know what the cork is, don't you? A cork on a horseshoe is where it turns down just a little bit to the back end, you know? That's what we call a cork, and a smooth shoe is where there's no cork on it. And we always [cough] like for horses a lot better, uh, and a lot easier on the man if he's shod the, ruh, if he stops on his hind feet, and in order to train young horses that way, if you put corks on their hind feet, and smooth shoes on their front, they will soon find that those hind feet, they can stop
120 on their hind feet, and the horse when he does that, why he kind of springs down like a car, but
125 if he's on his front feet, he just jobs them in there and just jokes, uh. So, ruh, a horse—it's a lot easier on men if they stop on their hind feet. Consequently, if you'll cork them behind, they'll be smooth in front, they soon learn that their hind feet will catch and stop and they'll stop much easier.

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