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**Transcript of DARE Interview (1967): Bassett, Nebraska; Primary Informant
NE001 (Tape 0920-S1)**

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INTRODUCTION: The following was recorded from Dictionary of American Regional English Tape, zero nine two zero, side one.

5 FIELDWORKER: This is a recording of Art [beep] made at Bassett, Nebraska, on September fourteenth, nineteen sixty-seven by [beep]. All right. Now you say that you've been born in Nebraska and everything you're fairly familiar with the area...

INFORMANT: Yes

FIELDWORKER: And, you still fish then, right?

INFORMANT: I do a lot of fishing, that's right.

FIELDWORKER: What kind do you usually go {after?

10 INFORMANT: Well,} trout, catfish, bass, whatever we have here in the local community.

FIELDWORKER: Do you do any of your own fly-tying or anything {for trout?

INFORMANT: No,} no, I, uh, buy all that stuff. It's, they're pretty reasonable, most of it.

FIELDWORKER: Do many people come in from out of state to fish around here?

15 INFORMANT: Yes, we have quite a few non-resident fishermen in here, and, oh, they do pretty good, generally, they're, have quite a lot of luck.

FIELDWORKER: I noticed that, I think that it was Mrs. [beep] recommended (xx) or someone this one stream up here where we would- were camping for {a while.

INFORMANT: Oh} Pine Creek, {yes.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah} Pine Creek, I saw a few men up there.

20 INFORMANT: Mm-hmm, that's a wonderful trout stream. Of course it's always a lot better early in the spring then when, then it is later in the summer.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah. Now you're in the insurance business. How long have you done that?

INFORMANT: I've been, uh, with the company I write for for eight years, {(writing) for them.

FIELDWORKER: Eight—} Were you doing that same work before that?

25 INFORMANT: No, I was a rancher {before.

FIELDWORKER: Oh,} you had your own ranch?

INFORMANT: Yes, still have one.

FIELDWORKER: You don't work it at all yourself {anymore?

INFORMANT: No, um} my, uh, our oldest son is on it.

30 FIELDWORKER: Oh, where's that located?

INFORMANT: It's located seventeen miles northeast of Bassett.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. What do you raise there?

INFORMANT: Well we do quite a lot of farming, we're out close enough the river to the land is, you know, fairly good sand loam and, and I think probably we have, uh, oh I'd roughly say a
35 hundred and eighty acres under cultivation.

FIELDWORKER: Oh, it's fairly good sized around here.

INFORMANT: Pardon?

FIELDWORKER: That's fairly good sized, uh, ranch around here, isn't it?

INFORMANT: Uh, no, ours is not so big, I say "ranch" because he does keep a lot of cattle there
40 on what he has, but, uh, we only have five hundred twenty acres out there, and uh—

FIELDWORKER: Do you have any cattle?

INFORMANT: I don't, he's got it well stocked, but, see I went out of the cattle business, uh, four years ago and just turned it all over to him to operate.

FIELDWORKER: Then you're sort of semi-retired right now, except for the insurance business, or
45 does that take most of (your time?

INFORMANT: I'd say) just tired, not semi-retired.

FIELDWORKER: [laughing] Just tired.

INFORMANT: No, I, uh, I'm not operating on the, on—just than we own the ranch, I mean I don't do any part of the operation of it.

50 FIELDWORKER: Yeah.

INFORMANT: And, of course my wife is busy and I try to take care of the insurance, that's—

FIELDWORKER: How many years were you on the ranch yourself?

INFORMANT: Well, all my life.

FIELDWORKER: All your life.

55 INFORMANT: That's really all I know.

FIELDWORKER: Oh.

INFORMANT: Yes, I worked on the home place and, through school and since I got big enough to work and then back in the thirties when the times were rough, I went for myself and been at it up to eight years ago.

60 FIELDWORKER: Did your father work it before you, or were you—?

INFORMANT: Uh, he, uh—

FIELDWORKER: I guess it was—

INFORMANT: He was on the place but not the one that I have.

FIELDWORKER: Oh.

65 INFORMANT: He, uh, my sister has the original homeplace {now.

FIELDWORKER: Oh I} see. Did you have to w-, get out and scrape and make that yourself then?

INFORMANT: Uh, {yes...

FIELDWORKER: It's pretty hard} to come by a farm, I know it's—

70 INFORMANT: Uh, actually, what we have we know how we got. What I mean, it's hard work most of it.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah. I know today if you want to start farming it costs a fortune.

INFORMANT: Oh yes, but of course when I started it was much different. If you had five hundred dollars you could almost start farming, you know, get what machinery, and of course it was horses here in them days and, and pick up a few cattle and go on from there but today, why, it wouldn't, wouldn't even get you across the road, I guess.

75 FIELDWORKER: No, not with all the machinery {and everything.

INFORMANT: No, it's—}and the overhead now is so much different, you know. Uh, them days our taxes was very low and everything else was for that matter, but uh, today, gee, I don't know, they say around forty thousand dollars to start up ranching today.

80 FIELDWORKER: Yeah, I've {heard even—

INFORMANT: And that's not the best starting either.

FIELDWORKER: Now I've heard fifty or over.

INFORMANT: Yeah, mm-hmm.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah, you must've gone to school right around here then too.

85 INFORMANT: I did, yes. The school was just a mile from the homeplace there.

FIELDWORKER: Was it a country school?

INFORMANT: Yes that's—

FIELDWORKER: The one-room kind?

INFORMANT: Uh huh, one room.

90 FIELDWORKER: {With the—

INFORMANT: eight grades}

FIELDWORKER: outhouses in the back?

INFORMANT: That's right, just exactly it.

FIELDWORKER: I knew one of those too for eight years.

95 INFORMANT: (They have some of them.)

FIELDWORKER: I had about the same thing.

INFORMANT: There was quite a bunch of us too, around twenty-five to thirty, you know, going to that school at one time, that was hard on one teacher.

FIELDWORKER: Just one teacher?

100 INFORMANT: Just one teacher too, on the whole eighth, eight grades. She had her hands pretty full.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah. 'Course those are pretty good days, I suppose, when you look back on them.

105 INFORMANT: Yes they were. You didn't have any money but then, however, you had lots of fun and I think the worry was less than fifty percent of what it is today.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah. What about the pranks you got into?

INFORMANT: Oh, it was, we had to do them all on foot or horseback, you know, we didn't have cars so, we done our share, I guess.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah. How do you like living in town now, after all those years {on a farm?

110 INFORMANT: It was,} uh, quite a shock for the first year, it really was because, you know being so active and all like you have to be if you operate a farm, and then coming up here, moving to town with hardly nothing to do, why, it was a big change.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah, I bet it would be. I know when we left the farm, I sort of missed everything for a while, but I was much younger then. Well what about, uh, Bassett itself then as a town,
115 what's {this like?

INFORMANT: Well, Bassett} is a good clean town, about a thousand pop-, a little over a thousand population. In fact it's a real nice place to live.

FIELDWORKER: It seemed awfully pleasant.

INFORMANT: Mm-hmm, it's, the people are all very nice and, and it's just kind of where a retired
120 person, you know, likes to be, uh—

FIELDWORKER: Yeah.

INFORMANT: among friends and people he's known most of his life and, and I think it's a thriving little town, a county seat, and we have a wonderful sale barn here, livestock sales I mean.

FIELDWORKER: Oh, I saw that, they hold an auction—

125 INFORMANT: {Every Wednesday.

FIELDWORKER: what is it?} Many people come in then for that?

INFORMANT: Yes, most, uh, most all our local stock, that is cattle, are sold through here.

FIELDWORKER: For how big an area?

INFORMANT: Well they did, I would say they draw from, the fartherest out would probably be
130 to a hundred and fifty miles.

FIELDWORKER: That's quite a ways.

INFORMANT: That's quite a ways, there's sale barns, but, you know, there's always something that's shipped.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah.

135 INFORMANT: A little (xx).

FIELDWORKER: Now I know that, uh, this is sort of a wild hay-producing area.

INFORMANT: It's a ranch country, yes.

FIELDWORKER: What about this wild hay, what do they—

140 INFORMANT: Well we have here, a, I think there's a few that has (baths) that (bead) on the wild hay, otherwise it's the largest, it's right in the largest hay-shipping point in the world, which—

FIELDWORKER: I don't think I've seen so many haystacks in any place before. Does this all just grow naturally and then they just cut it?

INFORMANT: That's right.

FIELDWORKER: There's no planting, or—

145 INFORMANT: No, it's just the prairie sod, and, and, uh, course now we're, there's a good many of them using fertilizers to, you know, increase the yield, and—

FIELDWORKER: Yeah.

INFORMANT: And, uh, no it's very good out here, very good climate and just about anything you would want.

150 FIELDWORKER: What about the history, I know it had sort of a colorful history, this town. Do you remember any stories of that, about the Pony Boy Gang?

INFORMANT: Well, you see, I was really— that was (a little), it all happened some before my time. I guess in the early days, they did have, uh, you know a lot of horse stealing and all that through here and, and it was pretty wild but, uh, that was pretty well over when, when I got
155 around to know very much about it.

FIELDWORKER: Yeah, I guess that was the last part of the eighteen hundreds, I suppose, when they finally tied it up. Is this the Nebraska centennial this year?

INFORMANT: Yes, this is Nebraska's centennial, hundred year.

FIELDWORKER: Have they had any big celebrations around here for that?

160 INFORMANT: Well, uh, of course we had, uh, yeah they have, over the state all over, I'm sure, and, uh we had quite a little celebration here with our centennial and Rock County fair, and of course the centennial combined with it they just had a pretty good showing, most everything.

FIELDWORKER: I notice they have a rodeo, do they have that every year here too?

INFORMANT: Yeah, mm-hmm, with their fair. I won't say just how many years ago that our rodeo,
165 we started holding this rodeo, I think it was about six, seven years ago that they combined the rodeo with their fair.

FIELDWORKER: Now it's sort of a annual occurrence, {I suppose.

INFORMANT: Yes,} that's right, mm-hmm.

170 FIELDWORKER: All right, Mr. Bassett is now going—excuse me Mr. Bassett. Mr. [beep] is now going to read a part of the story of Arthur the Rat.

INFORMANT: And I can start that right now, is that right?

FIELDWORKER: You can go ahead, Mr. [beep].

INFORMANT: Once, 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
175 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. 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 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
180 foot, for she couldn't bear to see the young rat so cold-blooded. "I don't know," was all he ever
answered, and then he'd walk off to think for an hour or more, whether he should stay in his hole
in the ground or go out to the loft. One night the rats heard a loud noise in the loft. It was 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. At last, one of the joists gave away and the
185 beams fell with one edge on the floor. The walls shook, the cupola fell off, and all the rats' hair
stood on end with fear and horror. "This won't do," said the leader. "We can't stay cooped up
here any longer." So they sent out scouts to search for a new home. A little later on the evening
the scouts came back and said they had found an old-fashioned horse barn. There would be room
and board for all of them. The leader gave the order at once, "Come on, fall in," and the rats
190 crawled out of their holes right away and stood on the floor in a long line. Just then the old rat
caught site of the young Arthur— that was the name of the shirker. He wasn't in the line and he
wasn't exactly outside it. He stood just by it. "Come on, get in line," growled the old rat coarsely.
"Of course you're coming too." "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
195 not fall down yet." "Well," said the old rat, "we can't wait for you to join us." Then he turned to,
to the others and shouted, "Right about face, march!" and the long line marched out of the, the
barn while the young rat 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 just 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 the
200 beams, rafters, joists and the whole business. 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 site of the young rat,
quite dead, half, half in and half out of his hole. Thus the shirker got his due and there was no
mourning for him.

205 FIELDWORKER: I knew once you started you couldn't finish or stop until you'd finished. Well
thank you very much Mr. [beep] for all of your cooperation.

INFORMANT: You're sure welcome.