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**Transcript of DARE Interview (1970): Washington, District of Columbia; Primary Informant DC014 (Tape 0229-S1)**

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

FIELDWORKER: This is a recording of Mr. George E. [beep] made at Washington, D.C., on June twenty-fifth, nineteen seventy, 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. 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
- 10 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. "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 into the loft. One night the
- 15 rats heard a loud noise in the loft. It was a very dreary old place. The roof let the rain [laugh] 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 way, and the 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 their leader. "We can't stay cooped up here any longer." So they sent out
- 20 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 there would be room and board for all of them. 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, in the line, and he wasn't exactly
- 25 outside it—he stood just by it. "Come on, get in line!" growled the old rat coarsely. "Of, 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 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 marched out of the barn  
30 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 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—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.  
35 But at last one of them happened to move a board, and he caught sight of a young rat, quite  
dead, half and, half in and half out of his hole. Thus the shirker got his due, and there was no  
mourning for him. Bye, bye old rat.

FIELDWORKER: Would you like to tell us something about your occupation Mr. [beep]?

INFORMANT: Well, I've had several good jobs, I suppose the best job I've, I can't say really  
40 which is, which one is the best. Worked at the Library of Congress for thirteen years, nine  
months and twenty-five days. As an arranging alphabetize (of) foreign languages. Pretty good  
job.

FIELDWORKER: Do you speak any foreign languages?

INFORMANT: Can't speak English too well. But that was my job.

45 FIELDWORKER: Uh-huh.

INFORMANT: It was a pretty good job, met a lot of interesting people. I met, uh, several  
dignitaries. Quite a few people. Then I uh, drove a cab for a long time here in Washington.  
Almost twenty years. Met a lot of good people there. I don't know which one was the best. Cab  
driving or working in the library. I like to read, meet people, but I, I don't know.

50 FIELDWORKER: What kind of things do you enjoy reading? Fiction? Non-fiction, uh—

INFORMANT: Well, uh—

FIELDWORKER: History?

INFORMANT: Well, anyth-, almost, uh, anything that uh, will hold y-, I don't read *Whiz Bangs*,  
you know, uh, that old funny stuff, I don't read that junk. I read a lot of autobiography. And, uh,  
55 well, a, a lot of uh, uh non-fiction. Belong to, uh, a lot of, uh, well I, I subscribe to a lot of  
magazines, *Psychology Today*, and *Playboy*, that's not a bad word, I mean, you know, but I  
mean, it's good uh, good magazine, you get a lot out of it, I read that uh, I turn to, I, before the  
centerfold I turn and see where "Ribald Classi-, Classic" is, you know? You ever read it? Terrible  
stuff in (that book). Some pretty good stuff, no kidding, it's real good stuff.

60 FIELDWORKER: Are, are you retired now, or—

INFORMANT: Well the—

FIELDWORKER: Vacationing, or?

INFORMANT: Uh, I'm vacationing right now. Not looking for anything in particular. After working, uh, thirty years not having anything, you know, I mean, uh, why go out and work  
65 another thirty? I would still wind up with, with nothing, you know what I mean? Or have anything. I know, and, and, people say, uh, uh, I should get married, but no.

FIELDWORKER: You've never been married?

INFORMANT: Oh yeah, twice. Yeah, so, uh, I'm a grandfather!

FIELDWORKER: Ah!

70 INFORMANT: Yeah.

FIELDWORKER: Have you always lived in Washington?

INFORMANT: Yeah.

FIELDWORKER: Born here?

INFORMANT: Born here, yes. Anything else? [distortion]

75 FIELDWORKER: (xx)

INFORMANT: (What was that?)

FIELDWORKER: Let's see, Mr. [beep], the other day you were talking about, um, the war, I think in Vietnam or something like that? Do you recall exactly (what it was you were saying)?

INFORMANT: Well, I ca, I can't really understand the war in, uh, Vietnam. I'm, I'm against it all  
80 the way. I mean, uh, eh, it's a lot of, a lot of people say it's, uh, the heads of the nation, are, are getting rich at the expense of a lot of youth, you know, and, and the future of this country is in, i-i-is in the hands of of the youth, I mean, that's where it is, I mean, if you kill them all out all the old fogies like me, we're (xx). Our brains are all clouded, one thing, another, brainwashed, in sense of, in a sense, I mean the, the war is useless. A, to, until, u-unless it's a, a, uh, the guys  
85 that want the war is making some money from it. Like uh, this man, uh, from Russia, Khrushchev said that, told us that in the fifties that he was gonna bury us and not fire a shot. And he's doing it, because that's where all the dope is coming from, in, by the Russians bringing it in here. And yes, the Whites fighting the Whites, the Blacks fighting the Blacks, and the Whites and the Blacks fighting and, and it's a lot of dissention and it's, it just don't make sense, I  
90 mean, it, b-because, uh, uh, you catch these youngsters on dope, and, uh, eh, uh, they turn into vegetables, just like potatoes or a hedge or a piece, a blade of grass. They just run lose unless somebody takes a hold of it.

FIELDWORKER: Why do you think it is that so many youngsters today, uh, take dope?

INFORMANT: Well they upset it, there's no work for them, there's nothing to do, and it's just  
95 putting them off into th-, uh, into a thing, uh, uh, uh, it gives them a false support or something

like that. And most of them, uh, that take, t-t-t-, uh, take, that take this dope, you know, they just go off and dream, you know. They think that they're great, and when they get back, it's just nothing, just bag of nerves, itching and carrying on, stupid, won't take a bath, and everything.

100 FIELDWORKER: Uh, do you think it's a good idea for the eighteen-year-old to have the right to vote?

105 INFORMANT: Oh definitely, definitely! They, a cat's mind is ready at eighteen, it's a lot of uh, uh, look at this little boy over here, he's fourteen, he, and, I don't know how true it is, they say he has an IQ of a hundred and eighty. And, and I know it's something wrong when they say Agnew has an IQ of a hundred and forty-five. So it must be running backwards, you know, I mean, I mean, A-Agnew uh, uh, this girl, this movie star, Jill St. John, her IQ is supposed to be a hundred and forty-five. Could be. But, uh, I've never conversed with either one of them, but, I did, I have read, uh, his statements and things, I know the, the reporters are not putting things in that's not true, you know, but I don't, I just don't think that Spiro Agnew's IQ is a hundred for-  
110 them trees, fifteen minutes.

FIELDWORKER: Did you go to high school in Washington?

INFORMANT: I've never been to school in my life.

FIELDWORKER: Where is it that you, uh, get your training, your education?

INFORMANT: A-association with people. That's it.

115 FIELDWORKER: You never had any formal education?

INFORMANT: Don't need any.

FIELDWORKER: But that's not what I'm asking.

INFORMANT: No. Oh I went to high school, sure.

FIELDWORKER: What high school did you go to?

120 INFORMANT: Dunbar.

FIELDWORKER: That's supposed to be the finest high school, or was at one time {{xx).

INFORMANT: At that,} at that particular time, yeah.

FIELDWORKER: When was that exactly?

125 INFORMANT: Oh, if I tell you that, I tell you my age, and I'm ashamed of both of them. Two (places), where I was born, and then Washington, too. I'm not so afraid of Washington now, because we can vote. But, uh, u-up until a few years ago...

FIELDWORKER: Why were you ashamed of Washington?

INFORMANT: Because you couldn't vote, you know, and people think that you, uh, people think that uh, Washingtonians are, uh, uh, they lack something, maybe they do. They don't  
130 wanna work, they think that, that's not true, I worked all my life. Always had a job, always could get a job. But I just can s-stay away from the races. I like the races, and I like to, I like to drink, and I like girls, you see.

FIELDWORKER: And you think that you can't do that in Washington?

INFORMANT: Oh, you can do it here in Washington, you see, that's why I say I'd, I'd never have  
135 it, at, you know, I-I don't have, don't have a bank account, you see, cause I, I make fifty dollars a day, I go out and spend seventy-five. That's the truth, I don't have anything!

FIELDWORKER: I, I was told that the true native Washingtonians, especially the negro  
Washingtonians, was a very proud group, perhaps uh, somewhat lazy, but very proud, and that  
140 therefore he would refuse, uhm, uh, all handouts, you know, uhm, unemployment compensation, or welfare, that's the word I'm looking for, and that most of the people you find in these days in Washington on welfare {are Southerners, xx.

INFORMANT: And they, and that's right, that is the God's honest truth,} and that's the, that's  
145 where all our trouble come from. Those, uh, immigrants. That's what I call them. Dirty immigrants, they won't take no bath, they don't shave, they don't do anything! Lay on the corner, drink that wine. Scratching, I don't even get next to them. Walk on the other side of the street, that's true! The heck with them people.

FIELDWORKER: (xx)

INFORMANT: How many? What else did he say? Now, I've heard these girls, that have, you  
150 know, that are, that have been here, say a year, six months, and they are sent down there, and tell their sisters to come up! One little girl came up here about four months ago, brought fourteen babies! Fourteen! And she's only thirty, thirty-six or thirty-seven years old. And her sister put her in a nineteen sixty-seven—what do you call it?—electricas, or e—

FIELDWORKER: Buick Electra.

INFORMANT: Uh, Buick Electra, took her downtown and signed up for the welfare. She gettin'  
155 four hundred of them natural dollars (xx) a month.

FIELDWORKER: Whose, whose mo-, who's paying for this, this welfare money? Who's {(xx)

INFORMANT: You and I,} but I mean actually we can't really, uh, condone these sort of people,  
160 because they have to eat a-a-and, and things like that, but, uh, what they taking out of our taxes, eh, it, it amounts to about, uh, say, about seven-and-a-half cents a day that we contribute, but I mean so where it really doesn't touch us, but where we feel the thing is when you, uh, have to send this thing in in April, and then, uh, the man has already taken three hundred dollars out of your, your pay for that year, and then he come up and say, "Man, you owe me a hundred-and-a-quarter more," I mean see then that hurts then, then that's when you

165 wanna go out and knock everybody in welfare in the head. You see I don't, I don't believe that  
there's one woman round the corner there, over there on Eighteenth Street. She has, uh, she's  
getting four checks. Four! Now I'ma show you how she's getting. She's getting for her children,  
her daughter, who got drunk one day and ran into a tree, she has some children. Then her  
husband, he, uh, he was killed in the, uh, service or something, and she didn't take that ten  
170 thousand, you know when they gave it, so, uh, she's getting that monthly. And then, uh, well  
anyway, she's getting a, a, maybe around seven, eight hundred dollars a month! And you know  
where that money go? In the whiskey store! Yeah! Go right in the whiskey store! A-a-a-and,  
and, and, and wine be floating around there. Yeah, and get the man, meet the mailman on the  
corner, the mail said, mailman said, "Hi Susie!" She say, "Hi Charles!" (everything). He say, "You,  
175 oh you all right today?" "Yeah." And in between the checks they borrow money from different  
ones and pay quarter on the dollar. It's a fabulous thing down there on that corner. Yeah, that's  
the, that's the truth!

FIELDWORKER: E-economically speaking, how do you think this could be improved?

INFORMANT: Well, make these people go to work, just tell them, just say, "I'm not going to  
give you anything more!" And if they don't wanna, do them like the Germans did, put them in a  
180 concentration camp. Yeah, it's the only way to get rid of them! Have you ever seen a dope  
addict? That's a miserable-looking thing. He, he's, he, th-th-they, you can't trust them, you can't  
believe anything they say, you can't, you can't, you, you think you, I'm here and now if I had to  
go upstairs to the, to the restroom, and leave him down there, he'd be long gone, he'd take a  
lamp, chair, anything he figured he could pick up, I tell you, a dope addict's terrible, they'll send  
185 their mother to jail. Because they know they can't get any dope in jail, see. So they, eh, if they  
get caught with some dope he'll say, "Man, this ain't mine, it's my mother's." And then they'll  
see the old woman, sixty-five years old, poor, she ain't gone live long (xx), and they, they give  
her fifteen years in jail. And he out there where he can get some stuff. You see them dope  
addicts is terrible people. It's just something just has to be done. And I have the answer for it.

190 FIELDWORKER: What's that?

INFORMANT: Put them right out there in the big field and spray them with gasoline and set a  
match to them. Anybody I be-, I know you gonna say that's no way to treat a human being, but I  
don't think those people are human, they won't work! (Won't) work, sit around and wait for  
somebody to give them something. And, and do you know that the, uh, the Black man actually  
195 thinks that the world owes him a living. It don't. It gives him a chance to make a living, get up  
off his rump. And, and go to work. His hands are not put on back. You see, work. Ain't nobody  
give a, loo-, do you see anyth-, have you ever seen anything on money say "give"? The closest  
thing I've ever seen on money like "give" is "five." Five-dollar bill, or five cents. See? Give  
somebody some. Yeah, your relatives come shack up with you, three and four month at a time,  
200 won't pay no rent, sit there and eat, (xx) never happen in my house, that's the God, (xx) gonna  
go out and work, you can believe that. [laugh] I'm not fooling. Sure. Hate thinking about that  
people.

FIELDWORKER: (xx)

INFORMANT: Anybody don't want, won't wanna work, he s-shouldn't uh, uh be eating, right?

205 And he'll never eat none of mine. Give me something. I'll give him something! (Like a) slap  
across his head.