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Transcript of DARE Interview (1968): Georgetown, Delaware; Primary Informant DE002 (Tape 0232-S1)

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

5 FIELDWORKER: Make her supper or something. This is a recording of Dorothy [beep] made in Georgetown, Delaware, on May twenty-eighth, nineteen sixty-eight, by [beep]. You were telling me about some of your favorite recipes for flounder, and flounder's one of my favorite fish. How do you go about preparing one?

INFORMANT: Well, I take, we fillet our fa-, our flounder, usually, I don't like bone.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

10 INFORMANT: We, we take the fish, dip it in a quarter of a cup of milk and a quarter of a cup of water, mix it together, and add a teaspoonful of salt to the water and milk—this is PET milk—and um, dip the fish in the milk and water and salt solution and then dip it in, in your breadcrumbs. [ringing] Put it in a flat pan well with low sides, and um, [ringing] a well-oiled pan I guess I should say.

FIELDWORKER: (xx)

15 INFORMANT: Drizzle a little oil on the top of the fish and a few drops of lemon, and put in the oven at, at five hundred degrees, bake for ten minutes. It's delicious.

FIELDWORKER: Only ten minutes?

INFORMANT: Only ten minutes, that's why we like it.

FIELDWORKER: Uh-huh. And, does the fish come out pretty juicy that way or—

20 INFORMANT: Yes, never dry.

FIELDWORKER: It gets, does it get brown on the surface?

INFORMANT: Yes, it browns on top, evenly. The breadcrumbs brown evenly on top.

FIELDWORKER: Yes. Well that does sound good.

INFORMANT: Mm-hmm.

25 FIELDWORKER: How do you fix those hamburgers we had today?

INFORMANT: Oh, I just mix those with um, a little salt and pepper, and onion, fresh onion, and I put a little bit of um, um, what do they call that stuff for flavor? I can't even think of it, but anyway, I put a meat flavor in.

FIELDWORKER: You have some uh, some other recipes there that you uh...

30 INFORMANT: Well one we like very much, since my husband doesn't eat too many fried foods, we like to, um, cook our steak in the oven, and this we take, we tear off a long strip of aluminum foil, about eighteen inches long, and we put it, a nice, thick, juicy steak, maybe pound and a half, about an inch thick, in the center, and take an envelope of onion soup mix, pour over the, evenly over the top of the steak. Then we have uh diced vegetables like potatoes
35 and carrots and celery, and we put those on top and then put a few dots of butter and salt and pepper, and then seal it tight and put it in the oven for an hour and a half at, at four hundred degrees. And that comes out very nice and juicy.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

40 INFORMANT: Your vegetables will be, have the onion, if you like onion soup mix, will have onion flavor through.

FIELDWORKER: Yes. Did you ever try that with fresh onion? {Or (xx)

INFORMANT: No, no I've never} tried it with fresh onion, I imagine it would be good, just the same.

45 FIELDWORKER: I wouldn't know, I just thought, you know, I usually have more fresh onion around than I do onion mix, {onion soup mix.

INFORMANT: Than the onion mix, uh huh.}

FIELDWORKER: Oh, you were talking about some of the seafoods that are common around here. Uh, How do they fix those uh, soft-shelled crabs?

INFORMANT: Well, you clean those before they die, after they die you never use them. {So—

50 FIELDWORKER: I see.} How do you clean them?

INFORMANT: You, you you cut their eyes and nose out, we call this little section their eye-, you know their feelers like.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

55 INFORMANT: And then you lift the um, the ed- edges of the shell and take the dead man fingers out of each end, and then there's a little flap in the back, and you lift that up and cut that off, and this is all. Then you just wash it good and, and dip it in egg and uh, salt and pepper and flour, and fry it.

FIELDWORKER: How do you catch those? You mentioned that you were oh, that you were uh, going out soft-shell crabbing.

60 INFORMANT: We walk along in the water and look down. And um, they hi-, they like to hide, and sometimes if there's a an object in the water, they they'll hide underneath the object, and you'll see, where it looks like something has gone under there, and you'll dip down and there will be your soft-shell crab. And then again, you'll see in a hole, you'll see the object you know, and then you dip down and, and up'll come a crab, and sometimes, you find them hiding
65 underneath pieces of grass, floating grass too you will catch them. {It's interesting

FIELDWORKER: What do you catch them with}, did you say?

INFORMANT: Net.

FIELDWORKER: A net.

INFORMANT: A net. And—

70 FIELDWORKER: You don't attract those like you do regular crabs with a—

INFORMANT: With bait, no, no, the hard shell crab, you, you use a bait to catch. We usually go out on the pier and drop down our sinker with a piece of chicken or a fish head or something on and catch hard crabs that way.

FIELDWORKER: Do you ever buy your crabs?

75 INFORMANT: Sometimes.

FIELDWORKER: How, uh, you have to buy those, I mean you demand that they're alive when you buy them?

INFORMANT: Yes, you don't, if you, you don't use dead ones, uh-uh. Uh, well not hard crabs or soft crabs, either one. You cook the, you uh boil or steam them, whichever you like, your hard
80 crabs too, while they're still alive. Oh what a scramble. Some people take their hard crabs, and pour boiling water over the crabs, and break them apart, and just leave their bodies, and then go on and cook the body, well you don't have as much mess that way, I guess, but to me, that's a, a job, so I always just take the crabs and put them in a big pot with a little bit of mustard and salt and pepper and vinegar and boil them ten minutes and then break them apart, get them
85 ready to eat.

FIELDWORKER: How do you go about eating them or get them, getting the meat out to {eat them?

INFORMANT: Well, we, after we get the bodies all cleaned out, then we just pick the meat out. And usually we make deviled crabs or crab cakes or um, crab salad. Now some people take the
90 little crabs after they clean them, and roll those backs, the shell part, and um, sort of crush it, and put it in deep fat and fry it. But you'd almost have to wear gloves, to-, [laugh] you get so much oil when you're trying to eat them after you've cooked them in deep fat.

FIELDWORKER: {Oh.

INFORMANT: All} those little shell spaces you know will collect oil.

95 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Greasy.

FIELDWORKER: How about um, the uh, oh, deviled crab, how do you prepare that?

INFORMANT: Well, you make a white sauce out of, from milk, butter, and um, flour, and you add a little bit of nutmeg and salt and pepper, and usually what, sea-, you know, everybody
100 doesn't season their food alike, seasoning that you would like yourself. Some people put some uh, other sauces in to pep it up, you know, you put just whichever you like. And mix your crab meat in, make it into a, well some people use that for um, they'll put it in a shell and call it deviled crabs or you can bake it in these regular little um, shells, you know, um, regular crab dishes, you can buy regular crab shell now, baking shells. And you put your mixture in there and
105 put a dot of butter on top, put in the oven, it is already cooked so you only have to warm it, just brown it a little bit.

FIELDWORKER: And how about the crab cakes, how are they made?

INFORMANT: Well, there's several different ways to make crab cakes too, you can add potatoes, some people even add potato to make their crab meat go further, but we like just the
110 regular crab meat, and um, seasoned, sometimes we crush a little bit of cornflakes to make it stick together with a little bit of um, milk, and make your crab cake and fry it.

FIELDWORKER: Oh, did you mention something else made with crabs? Mentioned uh, deviled crab, crab cake, and I thought you mentioned something {(xx).

INFORMANT: Crab salad and crab cocktail}, that's all I know.

115 FIELDWORKER: Now what's crab salad like?

INFORMANT: That's with celery, and just like any other salad, me-, you take your crab meat and cut up celery and uh, I put a little bit of pickle in and, and seasoning and salad dressing and like a salad.

FIELDWORKER: I see. What's a paperback?

120 INFORMANT: Well, we get those paperbacks, I-I'm always sorry when I save a paperback cause he's not good for one things or the other, paperbacks or uh, um, they're just a stage in between the soft-shell and a hard-shell, and they aren't very fat usually they're poor and um, we like to throw them back if we um, realize that it's a papershell.

FIELDWORKER: Mm. And scallops, what are they like?

125 INFORMANT: I don't know too much about scallops except that they're a little um, they're cut I believe out of um, sharks, the shark meat, I think, and you just cut them in little pieces, they're us-, usually on a seafood platter in restaurants and places.

FIELDWORKER: I saw a man down here on the square in Georgetown selling clams the other day. Uh, do you ever prepare clams?

130 INFORMANT: Yes, we make clam chowder, and we make uh, clam stews, and we make deviled clams also. And the deviled clams are made a lot like deviled crabs, and you grind the clam. You also grind the clam for clam stew. You make your stew the same as oyster stews. I always put my, my clams on and cook them, they're ground so you don't cook them too long, would toughen. You usually cook them about two or three minutes and then uh, add, well I cook them
135 in butter, salt and pepper, just like a s-, oyster stew, and then um, take them from the stove and add my milk, set them back and just heat the milk to just, not boiling but just to the boiling point, then serve them— very good, oyster crackers.

FIELDWORKER: How 'bout clam chowder, how is that made?

140 INFORMANT: Well, you, in this case you cut your clam, you cut your clam up, sort of dice it, and dice potatoes, you can add potatoes and um, carrots and onion, and um, some people even put tomato in. Almost like a vegetable soup except that you use clams instead of meat, any other meat and it's rich, very rich.

FIELDWORKER: I had some clam chowder the other day and I had expected it to be the way you describe clam stew to be. But it, I was surprised to find it like a vegetable soup.

145 INFORMANT: Mm-hmm.

FIELDWORKER: Oh, what kind of clams do you like best, which kind do you prefer when you're buying clams?

INFORMANT: Well, I never buy clams, we always go out and catch clams.

FIELDWORKER: {Oh I see,

150 INFORMANT: And I}, I like to pick up the little cherrystones because David likes clam on the half shell. So, we try to get little cherrystone clams for that. And then we, we like the medium-sized clam for everything, I mean they're, they're more tender, those, you get the large clam

sometimes it'll have sand in it or it'll be tough and strong. So, we like the middle, the um, medium-sized clam. Or a small one.

155 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. The cherrystones, when you eat them, clam on the half shell, is that just raw?

INFORMANT: You put a, a cocktail sauce on it.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Or, and a little bit of um, horseradish.

160 FIELDWORKER: For a landlubber that sounds kind of rigorous to me. Something like sucking eggs, sounds like [laugh].

INFORMANT: Uh-oh [laugh], well they eat oysters on the half shell too.

FIELDWORKER: Yes, I know.

INFORMANT: Didn't you ever eat oysters or clam on on the half shell?

165 FIELDWORKER: No I've never eaten oysters on the half shell. {I've never sucked eggs either. [laugh]

INFORMANT: Oh well down here that's a, um}, everybody likes it, I mean they, they, in the restaurants they serve it they put-, even put ice, you know, you get a bowl of ice and they're sitting on the ice on the half shell.

170 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. Oh, what do you use to catch those clams?

INFORMANT: Oh you rake those, just like, that's work. You get blisters in your hand all, but that's one thing we use our boat for down the river is to go, um, down (to) the white house farm clamming, or across on the other side, you um, tie your boat and get out, you'll have a little float, you know, a rubber tube with a basket inside, and you throw your clams in. And you rake them, just like raking in the yard, just like digging potatoes or something, and when you're rake-, you hear a little squeal, you've struck a clam, see. And then you back up and you come dip down under and raise him up, sometimes you get one, two, three.

175

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. How many do you usually catch before you stop?

INFORMANT: Oh...

180 FIELDWORKER: Enough to give you blisters?

INFORMANT: Yeah. It all depends, but I think you're only allowed about a hundred each. There is a limit.

FIELDWORKER: I see.

185 INFORMANT: So if two or three go, then you can get two or three hundred, but just one, you're only supposed to get one hundred.

FIELDWORKER: I see.

INFORMANT: Not more than that.

FIELDWORKER: Oh, one person couldn't eat a hundred clams anyway.

INFORMANT: No. You know what we go clamming for mostly?

190 FIELDWORKER: What?

INFORMANT: To give away.

FIELDWORKER: I see.

195 INFORMANT: We have friends that'll say, "When you going clamming again? I'd, oh my, I would like some nice clams." We have one lady in particular calls us on the telephone every once in a while, "Haven't had any clams yet. What's the matter, haven't you been clamming yet?" So we usually try to get clams for our friends.

FIELDWORKER: How many does, does it usually take for one serving or one uh, say you got a meal of {eight people—

INFORMANT: Well you can—}

200 FIELDWORKER: —how many clams does it usually take?

INFORMANT: Well you can make clam chowder from a dozen nice-sized clams.

FIELDWORKER: I see. And uh, when you're eating clams on the half shell, how many is a normal portion?

INFORMANT: About six.

205 FIELDWORKER: Six.

INFORMANT: Six on a half shell, mm-hmm.

FIELDWORKER: What kinds of fish do they normally, do you catch your fish or do you buy those?

210 INFORMANT: Well, we used to catch them but anymore, uh, we have friends that go fishing and they drop fish off at the end of pier and, but if we going to buy, if we are buying fish we usually buy either rock or flounder in the wintertime, but now in the summertime we don't have to buy them.

FIELDWORKER: I see. How do you prepare those rock?

215 INFORMANT: We bake those. And um, we do a s-, do those similar except not as, uh, we use the five hundred-degree temperature for the, for the rock the same as the filet flounder. But, it takes more time, it, we usually allow a half hour, thirty minutes to, for a, a rock, well depends on the size a lot.

FIELDWORKER: Now, which size do you like best?

INFORMANT: We like about a two-pound rock.

220 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. And you bake them whole, you don't—

INFORMANT: We bake those whole, mm-hmm.

FIELDWORKER: Head and all, everything.

225 INFORMANT: No, we cut the head and the tail off and the fins off. Split it and we usually like to put a little bit of lemon juice, sprinkle lemon juice inside, and then we dip it in milk and breadcrumbs, and put it in an oiled, well-oiled pan and um, drizzle a little of oil on top, and um, bake at five hundred degrees, about thirty minutes.

FIELDWORKER: Oh, there was a game that I wanted to ask you about. Uh, comey comey, you mentioned the name of that, but I didn't get how it was played.

230 INFORMANT: Yeah well this is a, um, game that we used to play when I was young. We'd all gather in a room and uh, someone, course everybody wanted to be it, and so we let one person go outside of the room, and then we'd all decide upon an object, and um, for instance, we'd point to a picture, you know, and then when we all had it in our mind, what is was and we'd kind of look around, we'd look back at the picture we'd say, "OK, comey comey," and the ma-, the person coming in would say, "What do you come by?" And we'd say, "The letter 'P'," and he'd say, "It must be that picture. It's your pearls." "No." Finally, he'd say, "The picture," and everybody'd say, "Yes," and then somebody else would go out, and (then) we called that *comey comey*.

235 FIELDWORKER: I (see.

INFORMANT: Just a} guessing game.

240 FIELDWORKER: You never gave him anymore hint than the first letter?

INFORMANT: Well, we might look at it and look away, you know and...

FIELDWORKER: Oh. What games would you play when you all got together for a, oh, family reunion or something with kids? We had a big batch of cousins at home so, you know, we had a lot and I figure you said you had a large family, perhaps y'all had...

245 INFORMANT: Well, our children like to play a little bit of everything I think. But their favorite games anymore, I mean they're always watching television or putting puzzles together or,

horseshoes, they, they play horseshoes when we're down at the beach. Um, the girls have gotten so anymore that they've learned how to play solitaire, double solitaire, and they like to get off together and play solitaire. And, the boys get their boats and play a good bit out in the water, you know with boats so, but then when they have birthday parties then they, that's when they do, they play drop the handkerchief and things like that.

250 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Um, when I was young we used to play our own games, of course we used to go graping and, {and um—

255 FIELDWORKER: what's that?}

INFORMANT: Well that's the, the fellas line up on one side, and the girls line up on the other side, and the girl is down at w-, walks down one end and the boy down the other end and he says to the girl, "Where you going?" and she says, "I'm going graping." He says, "What are you gonna do if I come?" She says, "I'm gonna run," and she runs around both rows and tries to get back in place without him catching her. If he catches her, then she has to give him a kiss.

260 FIELDWORKER: Oh.

INFORMANT: Then the next one steps up and does likewise. Kissing games.

FIELDWORKER: Sounds like an interesting game.

INFORMANT: Yes.

265 FIELDWORKER: Did you have any others like that? Or similar.

INFORMANT: Well, I forget how to play them. I know a lot of games that we used to play and we used to play spin the pan, spin the bottle and, and uh, girls would sit in the row around and they'd spin a bottle and whichever girl it pointed to that fella got to, to uh, kiss, and we used to play post office but I forget how you play those games now. You know, time goes on. [laugh]

270 FIELDWORKER: Yes.

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 ask 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 nor m-, no more mind of your own than a greasy old blade of gla-, 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. "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 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 the rafters had all rotted through, so that the whole thing was quite unsafe. At last, one of the joists, joists gave away and the beam fell with one edge on the floor. The wall 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 scouts to search for a new home. A little later on that evening, the scouts came back and said that they found an old-fashioned horse barn where there would be room and board for all of them. The leader gave the order at once, "Companion [sic] fall in," and then 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 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 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," [clock chiming] and the long line marched out of 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 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, and down came the 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. But at last, one of them happened to move a board, and he caught sight of a young rat, quite dead, half a-, half in, and half out of his hole. Thus the shirker got his due, and there was no mourning for him.