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[American lives, Postoffice workers]

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Project worker Abe Aaron

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Remarks

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Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

Form A

Circumstances of Interview

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Abe Aaron

ADDRESS 5471 Ellis

DATE July 7, 1939

SUBJECT American Lives Post Office Workers

1. Date and time of interview 6/26/39, 6/27/39, 6/28/39
2. Place of interview With B. D. at post office at Canal and Van Buren. With T. F. L. at home and at post office. With J. D. at Hyde Park post office, 46th and Cottage Grove.
3. Name and address of informant B. D., T. F. L., J. D.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

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5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

FORM B

FOLKLORE

Personal History of Informant

CHICAGO

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Abe Aaron

ADDRESS 5471 Ellis Ave.

DATE 7/7/39

SUBJECT Post Office Workers

NAME OF INFORMANT B. D., T. F. L., J. D.

1. Ancestry B. D., Italian T. F. L., Irish J. D., Scotch-Irish

2. Place and date of birth B. D., Chicago, (?) T. F. L., " 1907 J. D.," 1910

3. Family B. D., wife and child—Father a laborer T. F. L., Wife and child—Parents dead J. D., wife and three children—Supports parents

4. Places lived in, with dates

5. Education, with dates B. D., High school T. F. L., college J. D., one year of high school

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6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities
9. Description of informant
10. Other Points gained in interview

FORM C

FOLKLORE

Text of Interview (Unedited)

CHICAGO

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Abe Aaron

ADDRESS 5471 Ellis Ave., Chicago

DATE July 7, 1939

SUBJECT Post Office Workers

NAME OF INFORMANT B. D., T. F. L., J. D.

I

N's getting the gate. Liquor. I don't know, but it looks as if there's more guys get fired out of the place for drinking too much than for any other reason. But they give the damnedest

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excuses. N. was caught drunk on the route the other day. They caught him with a bottle on him.

I remember a couple months ago when they called him on that—he'd been reported for drinking while carrying. They asked him about it, and while they were about it, they asked him how come he didn't make the schedule too. He said, "How'd you deliver on schedule if you had the heart trouble I have. I have to stop every so often and take a stimulant." He even went and got a certificate from a doctors.

II

When we were temps, there was life in this damned old p. o. We weren't afraid to raise hell and move around and talk. And that damned Main was full of so many rumors. So a bunch of us got together and organized a rumor hook squad. There were five of us. Whenever we saw any of the guys who always had confidential information on what was going to happen—there're always scads of people like that—we'd jump up in the air, we'd leap up and grab a rumor, and then we'd pretend to read it: 242 were being appointed next week; 86 were being dropped; the whole list was to be put on in a bunch on the 15th; they'd decided to throw the list out; always something.

Post Office Workers

FORM C

A fellow gets worried about his job and he's like an old woman; about the job he's a hypochondriac.

III

In those days after we was done workin' we'd go on a binge. One day there was four 'r maybe five o' us. Fer some reason 'r other we was talkin' about suicide. We was talking' about suicide an' one o' the fellows disappears. We was on the bridge crossin' the river.

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We didn't hear no splash 'r nothin', but we didn't notice he wasn't with us till we was nearly across, an' anyway we didn't think. We all ran back on the bridge an' looked over the rail 'tryin' to see into the water. We couldn't see nothin!. After while we go to the P. O., we was gonna report it there. But there's this guy big as life in the swing room. He'd only stepped behind a pillar when we missed-him—he'd stepped behind a pillar to puke.

IV

This is the kind o' guy meet anywhere ya go. We got ta talkin' while we're workin', an' this guy, no matter who yer discussin', no matter who he is or what he's done, this guy, he pipes up: “Yeah, he was a homo, too.”

V

Sometimes there're cards comin' through that're pretty funny. Sometimes ya see obscene stuff too, but not very often. When we happen not to be workin' so hard, if the mail's light or somethin', and we see cards like that, we pass 'em around an' everyone reads 'em. I don't remember any one thing in particular right now-maybe later. One thing we got a bang out of, though, is the names the followers of Father Divine have on their mail. Let's see, there's Solemn and Peaceful, Bessie Blessed. names like that.

VI

This is the kind o' joke we pull on new fellows. There's a sub just come in to the station. He's been workin' a couple weeks already an his can's draggin'; he can't make the schedule OO you don't have no idea how hard it is workin' the Negro district. So we tell him we'll give him a hint. We tell him to leave number 1— open; it;s an office building an' there's a room on the second floor that's always open, the regular carrier always stops there to finish tyin' the mail he aint had time to tie up in the station. So he leaves some mail to separate in that room an' punches out in plenty o' time for the street. When he gets to this room, he finds it's a policy joint, and he comes back sore'r 'n hell.

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VII

I was luggin' my pack around one day. It was hot as hell an' my can was draggin'. If my can'd been made o' chalk, there'd of been a white line all the way from the station and back again. There're a couple o' little colored kids sittin' on a step, an' they're laughin' an' pointin' at me. One of 'em says, "Aint he lazy?", draggin' it out an' laughin' like hell. I stop an' I can't help laughin' myself. I say:

"No, I'm not lazy; I'm just tired, that's all."

They almost fell over, laughin' at that. One of 'em says, "No, you're just l-a-z-y, that's all, just l-a-z-y!" I still can't help laughin' at that, every time I think of it.

VIII

There was one tall guy workin' with us when we was tempin'. He was always goin' to lead a delegation to see the postmaster. We called him Tom Der Hoche. There wasn't nothin' in Tom Der Hoche but talk. But there was some guys who did lead delegations. Not from the temps though. From the subs. Those guys had guts, no one looks down on them.

IX

We was all sittin' in the saloon on the corner, an' this drunk comes in an' wants t' know where B. is. "Where is that boy, B.?" he yells, "That boy, B., he's got my check an' he aint delivered it yet, an' I sure needs it." He kept talkin' like that, shoutin' all over the place, an' one o' the colored carriers, L.—he's a big husky lad—, he says, "B. aint around. Anyway, you seem to be doin' all right for yourself, even without your check." The drunk swings around an' says:

"Who said that?"

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L. stands up. "I did," he says. L. was drinkin' coffee, an' he picks up the coffee cup, one o' these tall thick mugs. L. says, "I did. Ya gonna make somethin' of it." He's holdin' this coffee cup like he's gonna throw it.

The drunk makes a move fer 'is pocket an' L. steps up close. "Now don't you go for that pocket," he says, "I know what you got there; don't you go for that pocket."

The drunk, he stands there undecided. He's tryin' to make up his mind how far he can go with L. an' L. looks tough enough so he decides he's got a fight on his hands if he wants it. So he backs away about one step, an' you can see 'im tryin' to make up 'is mind. Then he says:

"What you gousin' 'bout? I have been workin' fer the government just's long as you have," an' goes out.

We all bust out laughin'.

X

Some people think b' cause you're a carrier you know where everyone lives, not only in the neighborhood but all over the city. An' it aint always some farmer either.

An' some people, especially the old ones, the old maids, like to tell you all their troubles if you give 'em half a chance. An' you're lucky if you make your schedule, even when the mail's only average, without stoppin' to talk to anyone.

The Negroes ride the carriers a lot. There's little they're allowed to object to an' make themselves heard, when they get the chance to beef they use it; you're always gettin' kickbacks when you're deliverin' in the Negro neighborhood. In a way you can't blame them.

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XI

We have a floral fund at the station. Some colored carrier's wife died and we sent her some flowers. The flowers were so mangy the fellows got together and sent flowers themselves. We pay ten cents each a month into that fund.