

[Fatso's Mistake]

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FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Frank Byrd

ADDRESS 224 W. 135th Street, N.Y.C.

DATE March 22, 1939

SUBJECT Pullman Porters' Stories

1. Date and time of interview March 20, 1939 - 2:30 P.M.
2. Place of interview Smalls Paradise 135th Street & 7th Avenue New York City
3. Name and address of informant Leroy Spriggs 200 W. 135th Street New York City
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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Bar

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

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NAME OF WORKER Frank Byrd

ADDRESS 224 W. 135th Street, N.Y.C.

DATE March 22, 1939

SUBJECT Pullman Porters' Stories FATSO'S MISTAKE

“Set up another one, Mike, then I've got to go.” Leroy said. “I'm late,”

Mike came down from the other end of the bar, refilled the two glasses and went on with his crossword puzzle. Leroy began where he left off.

“I walked into this guy Fatso's place to collect the nickels from the machine. That was while I was working for the Gabel Music people, the year before I got this porter's job. There sat Fatso playing Tonk with Pretty Boy Matthews. You know Matthews, the plain clothes cop who works out of the [thirty?] - second precinct? Well, I been knowing him long before he ever thought of being a cop; we were kids together back in the old days in [thirty?] - fourth street. Matthews had done me a lot of favors too. So, in a way, it ain't up to me to tell Fatso that he's playing Tonk with a cop who's dressed up like one of the truck drivers or longshoremen who hang out in his place. 'Cause if I hip him, Matthews will know I'm responsible and it won't help me none in my racket, see? Still, Fatso is a good customer

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of mine and I often take twenty-five or thirty dollars out of his machine in a week. So, I'm in the middle. 'Course I hates to see this guy Fatso go to jail seeing cap/=

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as how he's just getting started in his new joint; I figures it would be a shame to see him fold up without giving the place a chance.

“Well, I fumble around with the machine for awhile, count my change and start over to Fatso with the receipt. Then I get the idea of writing a note on the back of the receipt which Fatso has to sign. So I quickly scribbles; [?]”

“I think the guy you're Tonking with is a cop. Don't sell him no drink.”

Then I hands to Fatso to sign. He sees my note and says kinda salty-like:

“Don't you think I know how to run by my business, ol' man?”

“That's all I need to hear. I grabs up the receipt, hustles back to the machine and gets ready to get outs there as fast as I can when Matthews says:

“Well, Big Boy, I'm broke. Gue'ss I'll be going.”

“Aw don't go man,” Fatso pleads. “Stick around and get even. I'll give you a deuce on that fine watch you're wearin. We can play one hand for that an' if you wins, that'll put you even.”

“O.K.” Matthews agrees, taking off his watch. They he plays the hand and Fatso beats him again.

“Looks like I can't have any luck.” Matthews observes. Give me a drink and I'll go get a new bankroll. How much is it, a quarter?”

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"Yeah, if you want a double." Fatso tells him.

"All right, lemme have it. I got just a quarter left."

Fatso brings out the drink but it's easy to see that he don't believe Matthews story about having more dough.

"Well, pal," he says, "I always collects in front. You don't mind, do you?"

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"No, I don't mind." Matthews says, reaching into his pocket. "Will it be all right if I pay you with this?"

He pulls out his police badge and throws it on the table. Fatso takes one look at it, measures the distance from where he stands to the window but just as he's about to try for it, Matthews reaches over and slaps the cuffs on him. Not until then does Fatso realize his mistake.