

[Folklore of Stage People]

Duplicate

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York State

NAME OF WORKER Terry Roth

ADDRESS 47 West 69 Street

DATE 2/14/39

SUBJECT Folklore of Stage People

1. Date and time of interview

During the past week

2. Place of interview

Gus and Andy's Restaurant 146 West 47 Street

3. Name and address of informant

Nat Raynard George Nagle Harry Miller NAMES NOT TO BE MENTIONED

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

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Miss Everett

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

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

Gus and Andy's restaurant, at 146 W 47th Street, is a a favorite meeting place of the theatrical crowd. In appearance, it is quite ordinary. As you enter, to the left there is a long bar displaying such signs as "Our Private Stock Rye—Average Age 4 years, 25¢; Dawson Scotch, 25¢, a listing of "quick orders" served at the bar; extra charge if served at tables. Seating capacity, including a mezzanine, is about 110. The color scheme is dubonnet and cream, carried out in dubonnet upholstered chairs, and a decorative wall mural, depicting scenes of old Greece; the chariot races, athletic meets, etc. Music all day long by [Musak?], an automatic playing piano.

The sign outside says: Gus and Andy's serving the best to the best since 1912. And the menu bears the tale of it's growth on the cover.

"The Evolution of An Apple"

Back in 1912, Anthony Pournaras, realizing that the founding of a successful enterprise depended upon the quality of his merchandise, set himself in business

Description of place of interview. (continued)

at our present location by selling apples.....only the best for the price.

A very inauspicious start, to be sure, but the verity of his homely philosophy was to be vindicated.

From an apple to a fruit stand ([?]): from a fruit stand to a fruit and candy story ([?]): from that to a light Luncheonette and Delicatessen ([?]): and from that to a modern coffee shop

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and restaurant (1927). His progress and expansion was positive proof of his unshaken belief in quality.

In 1930, when vaudeville, whose artists were our friends and customers, officially bowed to radio and talkies, and then exhaled its last breath, Anthony Pournaras died. Later a new era began for his old establishment.....a new show business..... a new deal.....and a new home for the apple, on October 21, 1934. After extensive alterations the present Bar and Restaurant made its debut.

With a seating capacity of 110 including the studio mezzanine, we endeavor to present in a comfortable and pleasing manner, our club luncheons, our full course dinners and our famous blue plate dinners. Our bar serves only the best liquors and caters to the most discriminating in the vicinity.

Through all these years the type of our business has been changed to suit the times and demand, but the underlying principles and character of our establishment have remained the same.

25 years in business is our mark of success in serving good food.....as wholesome as the symbolic APPLE.

Gus and Andy Pournaras

Nat Reynard

I was born on Second Avenue and Sixth Street and the only recreation we had would be gone 'ta dance halls. We went to seven dances a week and one matinee Saturday. Naturally, we were all good ballroom dancers. So the first [venehur?] we had was a ball room dancin' act with a goil from school and then I had a dancin' school with George [Deins?]. He had a dancin' act with his little goil I used to go around with. Later she wuz his foist wife. We usta go and give exhibitions for dancers for a cup. [Doins?] would be the

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judge, so I won the cup. Then I would be the judge, so [Doins?] won the cup. And the little goil would run to show the cup to her mother and then we would take it away from her. After the dances we all went down to Chinatown fr' [charmein, charmein?] with rice for two, twenty five cents.

At our dancin' school we had mostly foreigners that wanted to loin how to dance and the goils would sit on one side of the hall and the boys on the other side. And we couldn' tell the Orchestra to play a Waltz or a One Step 'cause the pupils would know what the dance was gonna be, so we had signals with the leader, like play number 1, which meant a fox trot.

Then I got married. My wife was in the Follies, [1910?], and we had an act together for [15?] years. Then we separated and I went to the coast. I used to stay with Jack Benny and George [Doins?]. I got a few picture jobs out there and after a while Ben Blue left his wife and we lived together. Then I came back East and now I got this bunch of refugees. It's goin' good, but we only got two more days for the managers to see the act and maybe we'll get advanced bookings.

When I had that set with [Regan?] that I told you about, his home was in Boston. He was Irish Catholic and I was a Jewish kid from the East Side, so we slept together with a picture of Mary [Magdallen?] with a cross over the both of us, [both?] very happy. Here's a cute story. We were in Evansville, Indiana 2 when the Flu hit it. All the theatres closed and we lay there for about three weeks. I was just a kid from the East Side, never out of town before, about 17 years old. And we lived at the hotel where we got very popular in the town with the goils. An Irish from Boston and a Jew from the East Side—we were a novelty. Most of the actors were only in town two or three days but because of the Flu we were there three weeks so everyone got to know us. Our finances began to get low and the hotel cloik says to us. "Why dont you move over to the Y.M.C.A. It's a whole lot cheaper."

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As far as I'm concoined it's just a hotel and it's only 50 cents a night so we check in. In the afternoon we go downtown and pick up a coupla goils and bring them back to the Y.M.C.A. for a drink. We're goin' up to the elevator when the desk cloik stops us. "You can't bring goils in your room". "Whaddy mean", I say. "It's only afternoon. We just want to sit around and talk." "You can't do that here", he says. So we checked out that same day.

I did a little writin' after a while. But my real hobby is helpin' a lot of people. That is what I love to do. In fact, if I was a rich man and could afford it, I would just go around and make them happy. I could! No kidding about it. Also, I love to sit around in Cafes. I don't bother with politics. I dont even read about it. They don't interest me. I don't think those things should interest anybody. Things that are bad for the human bein' shouldn't interest them. Like moider cases, or things like that, I don't read. Politics I don't bother with 'cause I feel that the government in America is a great government, a greet institution. And they know what they are doin'. If I could help, I would be glad to. War? I don't believe in it. I wouldn't go, only if it made people happy. Religion? I associated with all kinds of races and creeds and it don't bother me at all. In fact, I was in a bill with a colored act fellow named Shelton Brooks. He wrote "Darktown Strutters Ball" and "Some of These Days." I used to rowin' on the lake with him. And I remember 3 we were sittin' in the park, Shelton and I, and there wuz a coupla goils sittin' on another bench and they probably just saw the show. So Shelton says, "Nat the goils are floitin' with you". "Shelton", I said, "what am I gonna do with you?" "Oh, tell them that Ah'ma Indian".

I have a great sense of humor and I always usta stand outside of their dressin' room, Shelton and his performers, and just to listen to their conversation, anything they would say would be funny to me, even about the weather. It was rainin' one night and we wuz all out in the alley when Shelton goes back into his dressin' room. Ah'm standin' by his door and I hear one of the fellers say to Shelton. What you afraid of. That the lightnin' is gonna get you?" Shelton said to him. "If It gets me, leave it look for me. I aint gonna stand out in the open where it can see me?"

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This one you'll like. In Chicago while I wuz wo'kin' with my wife, when we weren't married we had separate dressin' rooms and naturally I'd give her the best room. So one night the manager comes up to me and says, "Nat, you're dressin' with those Indians on the bill." "I don't want to dress with no Indians. Put me in the boiler". That was a new kind of thing for me, dressin' with Indians. But he says, "That's all we got". So I said allright. So I walked into that dressin' room and just as I'm comin' in, I hear four of five of those Indians [convoicin'?] in Jewish. The act was called an Indian act but it had one Mexican, one Indian and the rest wuz was Jewish. And that was the foist time I ever felt at home with a buncha Indians. You went away and never said goodbye to me, You left no address where you're going but you'll agree That I can call your love right back where e'er you be My heart is a wireless station, can't you see My eyes they shed tears when they think of the years That they saw you makin' love. My ears start to boin, then I know that they yoin For your stories of heaven above. My lips seem to say that you'll come back some day They still believe that you are true, So please hear my plea and come right back to me, My heart is callin' you.

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Here's a cute prologe I wrote for my act. I used to do it.

I'm a Prince of Comedy. To make you laugh I must try, Maybe I'll make you screaming bye and bye If you don't, I'll tell the King on you. I have no voice of that there is no doubt, And when you hear me sing you'll soon find out. So if you don't do as I tell you too, I'll tell the King on you. So on bending knees I ask you please Do me a fovor and laugh with ease. And if you don't, I'm tellin' you true I'm tellin' the King on you.

And lots of people don't know how I can do it because I don't read books. I went to school and high school, but I never read a book. And when I played in New York I never lived in a hotel until I lost my parents. I never stayed down on Broadway. In between shows I would go home and have dinner. Sometimes when I went on the road I took my father with me. He was Russian, a butcher on the East Side. And my mother was French. In fact, that's

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how I got my name; it's her maiden name. My father used to speak Yiddish in the house but my mother always used to fight with him about it. Only, when I brought friends home to eat or something, then he wouldn't speak Jewish. If you ask me, actors are like gypsies. Their imaginations is almost like them, only they don't live like them.

Did you know that there are more Christian Scientists among actors than among any other group? Science is a wonderful thing but I don't practise it. Most of the performers are very noivous and superstitious and all that readin' and studyin' with science is better than anything else. They have a lot of superstitions like you're not allowed to whistle in a dressin' room. And Jack Poil; if you touched him on [the?] ear, he'd run after you for blocks to touch you on the ear. Me, if I have a week's engagement and I don't get paid, I know somethin's wrong. That's how I'm superstitious. Some performers are crazy about crossin' in front of one another back stage.

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In the good old days I used to like to sit around in Cafes and meet my friends and talk to them and play cards. On Saturday afternoon we would pick some little kids and make up a box, with ice cream. Another thing about me that interests you, I never sat in a theatre in between shows, like the rest of them do, even it I had five or six shows a day. I'd get dressed and get out of the theatre. Maybe it's because I'm so nervous and I had no make-up.

I never read a book in my life. Lots of people don't know how I can write things if I never read a book. But it's my imagination. I can think up anything. Like, I wuz never in Africa or India but I could write a book about it, just from imagination. And when I was 17, I never saw the country or trees. That was before I took to the road. And I used to write poems about the country, just from my mind.

Here's a cute poem I wrote: I thank you for the flowers you sent, she said
As she smiled and nodded and drooped her head. I'm coitin that what I said last night
By sending the

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flowers proved you were right. And as they walk and talk beneath the bowers He wonders who the hell sent her those flowers.

I can only remember a serious one I wrote 20 years ago.

George Nagle - SO NAME TO BE USED

“You know, there isn't such a thing as mind reading, and once a famous magician was ast if there really was such a thing and he said, in order to confuse the gut, “I don't know, but I can give you a demonstration. I know a woman in New York, (they were in Chicago then) who can read your mind over the telephone”. So they met in the room that night about 11, after the show. So this is Chicago and the magician told them, the said, “as I told you, there's a woman in New York can read your mind over the telephone”. He quite deftly led up to a card trick which wound up by one of the men in the party selecting a card which happened to be the six of clubs. He said. “I'll call this woman on the telephone and then I'll let you talk to here, and you'll see for yourself whether there's such a thing as actual mind reading”. He called a number, got the woman on the telephone, then turned the phone over to the party whose mind was to be read. The party got on the phone and was told to concentrate on the number of the card and then was told how it was a six of clubs. She didn't tell it to him immediately. She got firing all kinds of questions at him, when he is born, when his father and mother was born, how old he was, so forth. Here's the way the trick worked. The woman on the other end is a plant. She knows the call is coming. When the phone in her room rings, she starts to count, 1, 2, 3, and when she reaches six the magician says “hello”. She immediately says “clubs, diamonds, hearts, spades.” When she reached clubs he says “hello” again. In that way is explained the number and suite of the card without hardly any conversation. Then he toins the phone over to the victim. All the poisonal history she's got from a previous conversation with the magician.

I woiked with the greatest of them all. In order to go down through the audience you had to be very quick and very fast. You can't make any mistakes. There are a certain number

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of tricks that's planted. By a previous arrangement, we'd say that after the sixth trick, we would start taking the customers. Say that it's the sixth trick. It has been finished. Now the seventh trick, which is 2 already known to one on the stage is to be a watch. As you're finishing your sixth trick, you toin casually to the row behind you and you say, "Let me have a watch, please". Immediately three or four watches come out. In a glance, it doesn't take you long to pick out a standard make like a Hamilton, Ingersoll, etc. without the audience noticing that you favor one type. So you immediately look and experience tells you which is the watch to take. So without making it appear obvious, you pick out, say, the Hamilton watch, "What have I got in my hand?" The word "what" means that you have a Hamilton. You've already told him at the end of the sixth trick, even before you asked the audience for a watch, that the trick coming up is to be a watch. Now, if I said, "Here is something in my hand", the word "here" means an Ingersoll. In all cases the first word is the give away. The next thing is to cur him on the time. For instance, he's come on the stage at ten o'clock. This stunt takes place between 10:05 and 10:10, so now you got to cue him on 7,8, or go 9. "Dan you tell me the time", "What is the time", "Will you tell me the time". The foist woid again is the cue, and after he tells you the time you make one reply, and your reply is the answer to the next trick. You have already whispered to the people behind you, "Let me have a bill". So, without making it too obvious you pick out a fiver but don't take it yet. You say to the magician as he is giving you the correct time, while you are holding the watch in your hand, "That is correct", or "You are correct" or "That is right". Anything with three words, that is the answer to the next trick which you haven't done yet. Then you say, "The gentleman has handed as a bill", meanwhile taking the fiver, "What is the denomination of the bill?" By the three words in the previous question, you have told him it's a five dollar bill. You immediately reach over and say, "What kind of a tie is this man wearing?" He says, "a polka dot". You are not going to ask the tie question until you reach a polka dot tie, "What lodge does this man belong to?" "The Elks". You are not going to ask that question until you come to an Elk pin. We used to rehearse every morning for an hour or two and go over the 3 things we would have to do. If there's any difficulty between the feller on the floor and the person on the stage and they miss a cue,

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you can always toin around to the Balcony and say. "Will you please be a little more quiet up there". Then you start over again.

Here's a real stunt. You go into a town where subscription seats are sold weekly and you find out the name of some woman who comes to see the foist performance every week. You find out her name is Mrs. Jones, she lives a short ways out of town. So two weeks before your show plays there, an advance man goes out to see her. Gets her name and address, of course, from the theatre, and he always tries to get some woman who has a child going to school. About 11 o'clock in the morning he knocks on the door. He talks himself inside because he's demonstrating a new silver polish, and he wants to polish all her silver for her, loving cups and all, and it won't cost her a cent. What woman likes to polish silver! And anyway, he talks himself into her good graces 'cause he's a nice guy, making it still understood that he is not selling anything, having no sample kit or anything like that. He does a good job polishing everything in the house and gets up a pleasant conversation until the youngster comes home from school for dinner. Of course, the natural thing is, he's ast to sit down and have a cup of coffee too. He entertains the kid with some stories and gets himself foither into the graces and of course, there isn't anybody will tell you more about herself and her family than a mother. Having got all the information you want out of her, you take your leave, telling her that if she ever wants to buy silver polish, be sure to ast for this coitin brand, but she couldn't find it in the 48 states if she went looking for it. The stuff is all written down and filed away. Two weeks later the magician comes to town. The same woman is sitting in row B-1. The polish [man is?] concealed somewhere in the theater and identifies her to the cue man. And at some time during the performance you got to woik on her. He tells her all about herself and she never gives a 4 though that she told all this to a silver polish demonstrator two weeks previous. She immediately tells everybody what a great mind reader there is in town, and, before the end of the week, they pack in. After that foist performance the rest of the audience selected are plants. It was easy to do this in the old days because 90% of your house was

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sold by subscription to people that went religiously to the theatre, and they had the same seat.

Here's an old plant. A fellow goes into a theatre and puts down a tenner for his tickets. The cashier gives him a five, the number of which has been copied by the magician, and the rest in singles. The usher is tipped off to seat this guy and reports back the seat number. Having no time to spend the bill between the box office and the theatre itself, he still has it on his person. You know the seat he's in so you work up to him, toin to hi row and [say:?] "Let me have a fiver, please?" If this guy takes one out you can be sure it's the marked one, because if he had another one in his pocket he wouldn't have changed a ten, and you find that this always works. You take the bill out to his hand and glance at the number and you see it's the right one. You're still on the last trick so that if something slips up and it isn't the one he got from the cashier, you can cue the magician when you answer the trick he's finishing up. Here's another trick that astonished a group of professors who tried to figure it out. We're sitting in the office one day, the magician, myself and two professors, one of the professors with his leg up on the desk. So the magician led into a card trick. And the card trick led up to four aces. When we all got through the [ace?] of hearts was missing. He turned to one of the professors. "You got a knife?" The feller takes a knife out of his pocket. "Now, rip the sole of your friend's shoe open". He thought it [was?] a gag but he did it and there was the missing ace. They tried to figure out this trick for years but nobody ever could. Here's what happened. This magician was in a shoe store getting a shine a few weeks before and he sees this professor's house man bring in the boss's shoes. So after the 5 guy leaves, the magician gets the shoe maker to put an ace of hearts in before he soles the shoes. In his pocket he carries around an identical deck, including an ace of hearts. He waits until he is with the professor and he's wearing those shoes, and then he works up to the card trick. He knew that if he waited long enough he could use that trick, and that's way he publicized himself. Always figuring ahead and leaving plants for the proper time.

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I might as well tell you that the man I woiked for and who all the stories are about is Houdini, the whitest guy that ever lived—and one of the cleverest, too. Because I woiked for him and helped him in his act, of course, I got to know all the goings on about his tricks. There is a fortune in the stuff I know, but my code of honor is too strong for me to give it out. In fact, maybe you better not mention his name at all, just say when I woiked for a famous magician, 'cause his brother is now troupin' and I wouldn't want to hoit him any. There's one thing you oughta know about Houdini. He always insisted that everything he did could be explained. There was nothing to all this psychic [phenoneman?], or vibrations. Oh, some people have another sense. Houdini thought that, too, but all of his stuff was easy to explain if you knew how. Before he did a trick he used to say all this but nobody believed him, He has a great contempt for professors, and all the educated scientists. The reason for this was that after he demonstrated a trick in front of such an audience, they would retire to their laboratories and make up charts, pages long, trying to figure it all out scientifically. Then they would show him all the figures and he used to call them damn fools, because it was so easy and they couldn't figure it out.

I was with him when he died. Did you know how that happened? We were at the McGill University, in Canada and he was demonstrating before a large group of professors and students. One of the things he used most in his famous burying and escape acts was breath control. He was showing them the one 6 where he stand on the stage and someone from the audience comes up and punches him as hard as he can right near the stomach, on the appendix. Sometimes he had the student use a very large wooden hammer. And many doctors couldn't understand how he could live though this. Well the trick was in the way he prepared himself for the blow. He had a way of flexing himself, without it being obvious to the audience, so he couldn't fell the blow. On this night he called up a student and told him where to hit him when he gave the signal. Someone was talking in the wings and in that minute when Houdini toined around to see what it was about, relaxing himself at the same time, the kid swung at him and his appendix bust. Imaging that! If the kid had

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hit him a minute sooner, or if Houdini hadn't relaxed himself, everything would have been allright. But he died. That's ironical, isn't it?

Maybe you were too young, but do you remember his famous burying himself alive trick? He used to have himself buried under sand, or in a glass coffin in a tank of water, and when they would pull him up 35 minutes later he was alive. He did that by breath control. I remember there was a guy and they advertised that on a coitin night this guy would have himself lowered in a glass coffin in full view of an audience, up at the St. [Nicholas?] Rink. Houdini was out of town at the time and he sent me a wire to go up and see this act. And I did. And I saw the fellow put in this glass coffin, lowered into the water, and when they brought him up 35 minutes later he was alive. I wired Houdini about the trick and he ast me to hire this guy for him, which I did. Houdini came back and then he included this in his own act. You see, there's a coitin amount of oxygen in that coffin. If you have breath control and breathe very slowly and calm all the time, there will be enough oxygen there for 35 minutes. But say you're excited and yo start gaspin' for breath, why then the oxygen is used up in a coupla minutes. That's all there was to it. But it takes a man of iron nerves and a tremendous amount of control to be able to do it.

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“How's it by me? Say, a lot's happened since I saw you last. Sure. I got a pink slip, and I got back on again. No kiddin'. I just called up Edward and told him how important I was and he put as back. This is everybody's struggle. You figure it out. Did I ever tell you how I foist got on? So I finally wind up bein' a bum an the Bowery—don't quote me on this.

I was walking along the street, broke, and I met the head of one of the projects and I ast him for a job. He took me upstairs and I went to woik immediately. “Now”, he said, “before you got paid you got to get on relief”. And then he explained that I could go to work, sign the time sheet even without a work number. I ast him how I could got on relief, so he threw up his hands and said, “everybody for themselves”. Now, I was living, at that time, in a hotel. Not the Ritz or the Plaza. But a hotel. So I went to the relief office in the district and

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after waiting twelve hours to see somebody in authority, I finally did. My application was toiled down immediately because there was no relief given to anybody who lived in a hotel. Understand, my hotel bill had not been paid for three weeks and I was gonna to be put out. I ast him what requirements they were and he said, "that you had to live in a foinished room, pay no wore than \$2.50 a week and do your own cookin'". I called his attention to the fact that it was against the law to cook in a foinished room, but that was out of his department. Inasmuch as I had a job and I wanted to keep it, it was up to me to get on relief. So I ast a woman who was on relief whar she thought I ought to do to cut the red tape. She said. "Go down to the Bowery, tell them that you're broke, which you are, and make them give you some kind of relief. And no matter what that is, that's classified as relief; it would entitle you to a relief job."

So immediately, it was on a Saturday morning, I went down to Lafayette Street and the man in charge told me to come back Monday. I stood there and hollered as loud as I could. "I slept in the subway the night before, I had nothing to eat for 36 hours, and I got not place to sleep tonight". So he gave 8 me a ticket to sleep in the lodging house, which I immediately put in my pocket and forgot, because I could bunk with someone over the week end. Of course he told me to come back to see him Monday morning. I forgot about the ticket and went to sleep with a friend. Monday morning when I went back to him, he saw my ticket wasn't punched, that I didn't sleep down in the lodging house. I had to think fast, so I told him I had gone out to Newark to work in a theatre and had slept there over the week end. He told me that I had to use the ticket, and he gave me a new one. This ticket called for a [delocks?] lodging house on Eighth Avenue. And I had to use it. This I took back to the job I was woikin' and they filled out the necessary papers, requestin' my transfer from relief to the woik project. These papers were filled out and sent over to the proper man to be signed so they could start on the way. Unfortunately, ten minutes before the papers were on his desk, he was fired, and he wasn't re-instated for six weeks. And my papers lay there all that time. And eight weeks later they finally went through and I received my foist pay check. All during this time I had to sleep in the lodging house, sign

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out every morning, check in every night, and no chance of sneaking off any other place. I explained to the feller in the lodging house, however, what it was all about, and he gave me a little extra privileges. He allowed me to sleep in a dormitory where there was only 60 men instead of 100, and I didn't have to get up at six o'clock to get out. 'Cause in those places the bell rings at six and you better get out and look for a job. And don't you think I slept for one minute. It was nothing at three o'clock for the cops to come in lookin' for someone with a searchlight in your face. At the [delocks?] place an Eighth Avenue, when the bell rings at six, you have to take a shower, so if you were lucky to sleep next to a steady client of the place, it wasn't so bad. At least you know he'd been rinsed off that morning. But the first 7 weeks I was down at the Municipal house on South Ferry, the old abandoned Ferry house, where the floatsom and the jetsum of the world congregated, 9 real down and outers. All night long the coughing kept you awake, and most of the guys drifted around so that most of them hadn't washed for some time. By the way, when you leave these joints you get a ticket, entitles you to breakfast at some place nearby.

Harry Miller

I must tell you about the Ziegfeld Follies of 1916 when I was in the chorus. And to make a few extra bucks I was dressing a guy, doing little things for him, like getting him a glass of water, things like that, so in view of that, I got, what you call an "in" with the guys there. In that show we had the grandest bunch of two fisted troupers in one room. We opened the season here in the New Amsterdam Theatre, and they conducted the Follies Midnight Court every Thursday night after the show, at some tavern. The procedure was, they had regular subpenas made out, a little risque, and they were made and drawn up in the names of certain outstanding sports who could take a ribbing. They would find out from the feller's closest pal about some little touchy subject, something they could blackmail him on, something not so kosher. Maybe it would be something he had bragged out. Then they would bring charges and sometimes in the court they substituted phony names in the questioning, but they did it so that everybody could recognize who was the guy behind the false name and everybody was wise to his identity. Three or four of us were deputies;

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Bernard Granville was Judge; Bert Williams was Chief Magistrate; Will Rogers was the Attorney for the Defense; W.C. Fields was Bailif; and Don Barclay and Sam Hardy were the Prosecuting Attorneys. And, Believe Me, those guys were merciless. When anybody got in their clutches he had to know how to take it.

The procedure went like this. They would send out the deputies to bring in the guilty man and then the charge was read to him in court. Then he was given his choice of facing a jury trial, at 50¢ a juror and \$2.00 for the defending attorneys, or immediately throwing himself on the mercy of the court, and believe me there was no mercy. They had all sorts of rules in connection with the conduct of the court. Like, for not removing his hat he was fined 50¢, talking to the judge, 50¢, sneaking a drink, \$2.00. Sometimes the judge would stop the court, duck down under his desk and take a sip, put his hands in his pockets and pay his fine right away. And a great source of revenue was 2 our Bailif, Fields, who had to have a nip every few minutes to refresh his memory, but he had a special wholesale rate of a buck a drink. All this money went to pay for the feed, the finest you ever saw. Just fit for kings. The finest smokes from Owls to Corona Coronas. And one man was the sponsor for the dinner. For instance, Granville made magnificent spaghetti and he would go into the kitchen and take care of the feed. On other nights, Williams, who was an epioure of the highest sort, would take charge of the kitchen. Now, when the guilty man came before the court, all the officers would hold an open conference, treating the man like he was already convicted. They would rattle off the maximum and minimum for the charge and work it up so that the guilty person would be forced to interrupt and put them straight on certain facts and when he did this, of course he was fined. And his own attorney would join in, building up the case against his client. And the jury would take up the cue at once. Well, I'm Telling You, it was the funniest stuff you ever wanted to witness. In the middle of it all, Fields would start juggling and doing his Honest John act to convince the jury of his integrity. And Rogers would ring in something homey. And you know the kind of stuff Williams was famous for. Mind you, all this was done in dead pan. Just as serious as in a regular court.

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I remember one night there was a guy playing in a show in town that the Midnight Court was trying to get something on. Well, one night he saw his darling wife off on the train, she going back to their home and a few minutes later he picks up a hot looking blonde, that he was trying to make for a long time, and they go to a nice quiet restaurant. There they're sitting in a dark corner and he's getting there fast. Already he's at her elbow. A couple of us had a warrant already made out for this guy and we spot him with this dame, 3 she was a lulu all right, so we wait for the right moment and then we tell the waiter to have him paged, that a coupla guys want to see him in the lobby. He sends back a message that he can't be disturbed. We should see him some other time. Then we march into the restaurant and up to his table. "You are hereby summoned to appear before the Midnight Court" I say, and hand him his summons. Well, you know it's an honor to be selected to come before the court and for a minute he's all puffed up and trying to impress the dame, but then he remembers where he was when we so rudely interrupted him, so he says, "Listen, you guys, make it next Thursday. Can't you see I'm very busy?" "Oh," we say, "resistin' arrest. Come along, you lug." And he's pleading on the side. "Give me a break, fellers. Can't you see———" you know how it was, talking from the side of his mouth, winking to us, but we play like we don't know what's on his mind. We get on both sides of him and pick him up and rush him out of the joint, all the time he's calling back to his dame. "Wait for me honey, I'll be back as soon as I can", etc. etc. When we get him before the court they sure gave him the works for resisting arrest. That guy was taken for \$45 and we had some swell feed that night.

That court was the most wonderful thing I ever witnessed, but it finally broke up when Fanny Brice put on pants and tried to sneak in. You see, no women were allowed. And Ina Clair tried to crash, too. And in Detroit, a bunch of Fairies started a fist fight to get in and the thing got so disorderly we had to give it up. Those fairies had one with them he was some tough guy, and when he socked, that Molly sure delivered one home.

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This is very funny. With all my [years?] in the show business this was a new one on me. I toured with Tip Toes and we had several spotted weeks of ones and twos and we were playing up through Canada or New England where this happened. We were sitting in the lobby of the what's the name, I guess Hamilton Hotel, you'll got a kick out of this. So we're sitting in the lobby and watching 4 them register, the salesmen and travelling men coming in on the same train were lined up there in front of that window like it was a box office and we noticed a couple of kids a boy and girl, they looked like show people and they're standing there in line with the rest of them and the girl looks pretty nervous. So I go up and ask her if anything is the trouble. "No," she says, "we're just registering. We're doin' the act". Well, that don't mean nothing to me so I don't pay any attention. So that night, I have a boy for a quick change, to do a few things for me and he picks up a little extra change, and I ask him what is doing the act. "Don't you know? One registers and the rest of us sneaks up and we get a big bunch in and then we split the ticket".

The next morning I'm checking out and taking care of my bill with the Greek who owns the place. All of a sudden the boy comes down carrying two huge suitcases. He tells the Greek to give him his bill in a hurry. He's got to catch a train. And in the meantime I hear steps scurrying down the stairs, one after another they're running out of the place. The greek runs after them hollering to come back. The kid hollers. "Hey come here, I gotta catch a train" so the Greek comes back, looks suspiciously at this kid but he hasn't got a thing on him so all he can do is take the kid's money. That's how they worked doin' the act all over the country."