

[Tearing the Cat]

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 W. 69th St.

DATE November 9, 1938

SUBJECT "TEARING THE CAT IN HALF" - LOUIS JAFFE TELLS TALES

1. Date and time of interview

November 8th, 1938 from 6 P. M. to 10:45

2. Place of interview

897 Eighth Ave., place of business of informant

3. Name and address of informant

Mr. Louis Jaffe 897 Eighth Ave.

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

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

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

The informant was interviewed in his place of business, glazier and picture framer. There is a counter at the left, running the length of the store. In the rear is what serves as an office; the equipment is the standard second hand type found in stores of this kind, a large roll top desk, a broken chair, a safe, a typewriter. On the walls are framed pictures such as the Three Great days, showing graduation, marriage and birth; Night in Venice, the Blue Boy; Street in Naples, etc. Samples of blue glass, frosted glass, etc. are scattered all over the store.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE New York State

NAME OF WORKER Terry Roth

ADDRESS 47 W. 59th St.

DATE November 9, 1938

SUBJECT "TEARING THE CALF IN HALE"- LOUIS JAFFE TELLS TALES

1. Ancestry Lithuania
2. Place and date of birth Lithuania, [?]
3. Family Wife, and three children, boy and girl are married Third is a teacher.
4. Places lived in, with dates

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not given

5. Education, with dates Hebrew education in Europe

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

Glazier and picture framer for 37 years

7. Special skills and interests Likes to tell stories and wants to write a book

8. Community and religious activities

Is a officer in some Jewish Brotherhood organization

9. Description of informant 56 years old, about 5'6" weight about 155 lbs, farsighted; his squinted eyes do not hide the twinkle. Is proud of his thick greying hair, although he thinks his wrinkled face makes him appear much older than his 56 years.

10. Other Points gained in interview

Informant is an unhappy and lonesome man. Complains that he has no one to speak to. The children go their way, and his beautiful and clever wife doesn't seem to be around. As a matter of fact he hinted that she had recently left him. Was very worried at the time of the interview that Mr. Dewey might win the election and bring with him a wave of anti-semitism. Spoke a great deal about the plight of the jewish peope in fascist countries. Has lived and voted in this district for 33 years. Was wealthy but lost \$100,000 in Real Estate

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NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

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STATE New York State

NAME OF WORKER Terry Roth

ADDRESS 47 W. 69th St.

DATE Nov. 9, 1938

SUBJECT "TEARING THE CALF IN HALF"-LOUIS JAFFE TELLS TALES

"you tink it's goying to rain tamara (tomorrow?) Ef I'll know it's goying to rain tamara I voodn't advertise. I hav som houses opton. (Speaks into phone to American Want Ads) 'I vant to put in en ed fur unfoornished apotments. Dis is Jaffe. You hov de ed dere; landlord. Vell, so vill you take a new ed so maybe you ken feex it op. Unfoornished, fur, fife rums, moddin, refeegeation, 5 Emstedem Evenue, look me op dere. My credit's good. Next time I ask for Miz Jones.' Tell me, you tink Friday is better? Vhatever you say, Miz Jones.' Now, Miz Rutt, tell me something. I hev in my mind to write a book abut such tings happen to me. Of course I'm not so ejicated bot stories I ken give you two towsend pages. Maybe your boss ken come to see me. I dont vant I should get reech from dis. You tell him I'll geeve him full valuble merchandise. You tink maybe I'm a full (fool), tell me, you tink I ken do it? It's not dat I tink someting vunderful hoppens to me but I know some good stories. It's really very hod (hard) fur me to tell you vun like dis. Ef you come into my store end you talk to me I tink of someting I know. Den I ken tuck (talk) fur hours. Bot to stot cold like dis is hod fur me. You tell me someting.

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It's your job to write stories. You tell me vun foist, den maybe I ken tuk to you. Also, how ken I tuk to you ven you dunt vatch me. I know you write it but kent you look et me vunce in a while. I like to see your face when I tuk. Not dat I mean anything wrung by it. Vun ting you should know, I'm a gentlemen, I say it's easy to crull (crawl) in de mud but it's hod to crull out of de mud. I dont know, to some people I ken talk a lot. Vunce I told a story it

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lested tree nights and de people dey came each night and said, Vell, Jaffe, finish op, so I conteenud end dey liked it. So now, you tell me vun.” I did.

“Now, Miz Rutt, here's somting I remember. In de uld days I close my business et seex o'clock. Acruss de strit from me dere vus a drug store, a Mr. Schrader, where I used to go sometime in de evening maybe to play a little casino, pinochle, who knows. I used to go in dere in de beck of de store where vus a table end a few chairs, and hav an enjoyable evening. Vun Saturday night I said to my vife. “Vhere are you goying?” “Vell", she says, 'I'm goying over to my modder,' so I says, I'M goying acruss de strit and maybe hev a poker game. Ef it's ull right I'll be beck abut tvelfe o'clock'. So I vent in de beck of de drug store. Dere vere udder man dere. Leon Trotsky, you know him, he used to come, in dere. He vus an editor dot time in a Russian noosepaper, so ve sit donne abut fife of us, Trotsky and some store kippers. Ve had a good game and ve played a little lungur. Abut tvelfo o'clock, his vife she brut donne tea and pancakes. 'I know you like potatoe pancakes, Mr. Jaffe', she says, so natural ve drink tea and eat de pancakes. Vhen a a vomen goes to all dat trouble, vhat else? So abut two o'clock I hed a vary lucky night, I vas ahead of de game about tree dollars.

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Ull of a sodden I hear a holler in de beck uf de door. I vunder who is dis. My vife. She stands dere hollering, 'Ef you are not coming home you know what I'm goying to do, I'm goying to cull op Police Qvuters'. Trotsky says ve dunt like de idea. You vill hef to go home. So I took my money and vent home. Vhen I get up opstairs, ve lived two flights op, she starts to holler end scream so dat de neighbors dey run out in de halls naked in pajamas. De more'n I beg her listen, de more she hollers. I didnt know vhat to do vid myself. Vhen she hollers sommore, I vant true de people. Ef it vood heppen today I vood be smot (smart), I vood know to pay \$2.00 at a hotel. Bot I dindt know abut such tings den so I vent over in de Pock (park). It vus summer time end I suppose I fell asleep. Ull of a sudden I'm avake. A policemen says 'Vhats de metter, mister.” Efter ull, I vasn't a bum, dressed nice. So I vent home. Vhen I came home it was eight o'clock. No vun vas home

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dere so I took a beth and I shaved. I vent out to a lunch room end I valked around fur a while. Ven I came home my vife was asleep. So I vent into de kitchen end made myself a bit end vent to sleep. De next day she begins again. 'To tink I should merry a gambler. Never in my family! Den it comes out. Dat Saturday night she was coming home frum her modders, she meets a neighbor. 'Vhats de metter, Mrs. Jaffe, you're alone so late. Where is Mr. Jaffe'. 'He vent over to Schrader to play cod'. 'Oy, gembling, you let him he should gemble away ull his money dere. It's de end fur you, Mrs. Jaffe. My husband he should only tink abut gamling I'd geeve him to de police'. So she got so voiked op she came fur me. She begins to neg me and neg me so finally I wanted to get revenge at her. If she vas home I vood tuk to myself out loud. 'Oh my god, I'm sorry I vent tonight. I lust tvelfe dollars'. De next night I vood come back 4 end say, 'Vhy kent I stop dis gambling, a twenty fife dollar loss is too much for vun night'. It vas just a bluff. Idindt lose a penny. All de time I vas sitting in de pock every night. So she vent to my fodder and says your son became a gembler, and he made me promise det I vood never play cods again. It happened det I vasn't de fellow dot tore de cat (cat) in hof (half). You don't understend dot? Happened in Europe dot a man fell in luf vid a goil. Ull his friends dey varned him, if you vill merry dot goil you vill hev a terrible life because she hes a terrible temper. You'll be sorry ull your life. Vell, he said, I'll take a chance, so he merried her. Efter, she started negging him he vas goying crazy. Everybody was right. No metter vhat he done or vhat he said vas no good. Finally vun night she sotted in again end de cet vus running around in de middle uf de floor, end he got so excited dot he picked op de life cet and he tore him in hef like dat (with gestures). Ven she saw dis she vas frightened like crazy dot a men ken be so med dot he ken take a life cet and do dis ting. So she crulled to him on her hends end knees. 'I'll do anything you vant only promise me, never, never, to tear a cet in hef again.' Dis is only en illustration. It just happened dot I dindt tear de cet in hof so I vas to suffer. My vife, she vood now be better trained.