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Farming Folklore  
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I have been conducting interviews on the topic of farming folk culture. I was particularly interested in the subject because I have never had the opportunity to meet and talk to people in this area of work, and all aspects of their lifestyle.

Before I started conducting interviews, I made a list of questions to follow as a basic outline. I found right off that the questions I intended to ask all seemed to come out in one statement. I expected to hear a lot about the almanac and other beliefs and superstitions.

Before I started collecting information I also made several telephone calls, to set up appointments for interviews. After making many calls, I had only two informants that were willing and capable of being interviewed. After the interviews, I had around 45 minutes of material. This was quite a disappointment to me because I really was expecting to have more people respond in a positive way. I'm not saying my interviews didn't go in a positive direction, I was just surprised to be turned down by two different people for an interview. I felt that the two informants that were willing to supply information made a sufficient sampling.

One of my informants was born into a farming family. He was the oldest male of four boys and had to learn the trade at a very young age. " My first farming experience with equipment was when I was five years old, with a John Deere tractor. It had a hand clutch rather than a foot

clutch". He farmed full time through grade school and high school, and scheduled his college classes around farming until the age of 24. At the age of 24 he decided continuing his education was more important than a family tradition. He felt that he met a lot of resentment because at that time farmers did not need a college education, and his family felt that farming was more valuable than a college degree. My second informant lived in a rural area but his immediate family did not farm. He helped out his grandparents who had a large farm, and he heard several tales that the older generations often speak of. He mentioned that the almanac was used and found to be helpful when planting and growing crops.

I honestly felt that the interviews didn't go as well as I planned them in my mind. I did feel that my informants gave a good response to my questions, but I would have liked more informants. I believe a way that I could have avoided such a small response would have been to avoid interviewing family members. However, I only know farmers within my girlfriend's family and it was hard to find someone to interview that I didn't know. I wish my informants could have looked at me as an interviewer rather than a family member. *it happens,*

I feel that my role as a family member helped with my interviews because they felt a trust and could open up and be honest. If my interviews could have been done with non-

family members it would have been more formal, which could be good, or they may have felt uncomfortable with me and withheld information. So, I'm really not sure if my status in the family helped or hurt my interviews.

My material can be broken down into the following manner:

- a.) Farming lifestyles
- b.) Remedies
- c.) Duties
- d.) Superstitions

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Farming lifestyles seem to be similar according to my informants. Work always started early in the morning and went very late into the night. "I got up at 4:30 and spent 4:30 - 7:00 at the barn and we had to get back to the house by 7:00 to get ready for school. We were usually out of school by 3:00 and we lived close to school so from there we'd go work in the fields until 5:00 which is milking time. 1 or 2 of us would milk until 7:00. Afterwards we studied, ate, and went to bed".

On the subject of remedies that were non-commercial, coal oil seemed to be helpful for cuts and skin irritations although "it's not as dangerous as gasoline, it is used in coal oil lamps and as fuel".

Duties on farms tend to be very similar. Both of my informants were familiar with dairy farming, but one informant had a very large dairy farm, as well as crops. The duties were fairly routine and changed very little. The only time duties in the field would change would be when the seasons changed, as far as when to plow, plant or

harvest. Milking on the larger dairy farm was done only twice a day, but on the smaller farm milking was done up to four times a day.

Neither informant seemed to rely heavily on the almanac or superstitions, but were familiar with both. I found that planting could depend on things such as temperature of soil, rings around the moon, or shadows in front of the sun called "sun dogs". My informant told me that, " I can remember something that my father and grandfather used to talk about in the summertime. It was called a sun dog. A sun dog is a spot, sort of a glow near the sun, sometimes we saw them on both sides of the sun. Anytime you saw one it meant we would be having moisture or rainfall". Another sign remembered was a ring around the moon. The informant said, " if there were one or two stars inside the ring it means rainfall or snow depending on the season". I found, as I expected I would, that my informants would respond the same. For example, I mentioned to my second informant any superstitions such as rings around the moon and his response was, " yes, that means a change in weather".

I tried to present myself to my informants in a manner which would make them feel comfortable. I honestly became so interested in what they were sharing that I sometimes forgot I was interviewing them. I tried to use gestures that conveyed my positive interest towards them because I knew what they were sharing meant a great deal. It was a whole system of values and beliefs that had been handed

down for generations. I feel that this made the conversation flow smoothly, and without much pressure on my informants.

✓ The material that I collected could be considered an aspect of folk culture because it is concerned with stories, values, customs and beliefs which are passed down informally. Farmers seem to pass down information so informally that they often share ideas with other farmers. I do not have this recorded, but after one interview ended, my informant told me a quick story of how farmers help each other. He related a story to me about a cattle truck with approximately 60 head of cattle. This truck overturned one night on the side of the road. It seems that nearly every truck which passed the wreck stopped to help the drivers and to help get some of the wondering cattle off the road, and nearby fields. My informant's brother who had stopped to help, got a broken leg during the chaos. A very confused and frightened cow kicked him. I found this story to truly show the unity of farmers and I wish I had that story on tape. When he began telling me the story, I felt awkward asking to turn the recorder back on. I just made mental notes of the details and thanked him for sharing it with me.

*good*

I feel that interviewing farmers erased the exoteric views that I have held. My focus was successful, although I found it hard to include all the information that my informants shared with me. I had always thought farmers were poor, but I discovered that their lifestyles were

sufficient for them. Farming was something that had been in the family for so long that another lifestyle was hardly ever thought about.

My personal interpretation of farmers is that they are protective of their traditions and beliefs. They hold tight to what has been passed down and may not always be open to new ideas. Farming seems to be something that is not for everyone and when it's not right, it can make a person so unhappy that they will break tradition and take criticism for years from other family members.