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1950

### Folklore Term Paper: Pow-wow

John D. Trout III

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~~Jan. 15, 53~~

Folklore Term Paper

"Pow-wow"

John D. Trout, III.

POW-WOW

I, John D. Trout, III, a Junior At Franklin & Marshall College, have endeavored to compile a term paper for Folklore 11. This paper is made up of interviews with various people in Lancaster, Berks and Chester counties on the subject of Pow-Wow. There are ~~five~~ <sup>en-</sup>tries herein of accounts by the various people contacted and a brief history of the individuals which I could gather without jepodizing my chances of receiving a good account of their knowledge in this field of Pow-Wow, by being too ~~forward~~ <sup>forward</sup>.

I followed a questionnaire which I compiled to gather the following material. Hence, I will first mention the situation under which the material was collected and give a brief account of their name, vocation, locality and manner in which the material was given to me. Then I will present their knowledge on the subject of Folklore.

(Nota Bene: In view of the fact that I had previously devoted a considerable amount of time and effort to the compiling of aonther term paper for this course and on this same subject which was rejected, I trust that you will take this into consideration upon arriving at my final grade. This paper is not what I had hoped it to be owing to the circumstances of preparation on my part for final examinations. Thanking you for your kind consideration to this matter and trusting that I have not appeared rude or forward in adding the foregoing to this paper.)

# IN SEARCH OF POW-WOWS # 28

By John D. Trout, III

yes  
with  
→

This paper was submitted in a course  
in Folklore at ~~Franklin and Marshall~~ <sup>POW-WOW</sup> ~~Ed. I~~ <sup>Mania.</sup>  
J. G.

(2)

~~J. Gilbert Strickler~~ was born and raised in Manheim, Penna. ~~His vo-~~  
~~cation is that of a rural mail carrier in a vicinity where pow-wow is quite~~  
~~common.~~ His education was that of a high school graduate and as far as I  
could gather he is not supersititious but maintains a belief in some remedies  
of pow-wowing; incidentally, he is a member of the Reformed Church. This  
account was taken one evening while we were conversing over a bottle of beer  
and was quite informal. Hoping to gain some insight upon pow-wow, I lead the  
direction of conversation to the subject of shaving which I trusted might give  
me a lead on some old pow-wow customs. The method seemed futile until I  
mentioned the fact that I have a habit of cutting myself when in the process  
of shaving, and that I can't seem to be able to control the bleeding. Like  
lightning, he told me what he learned from his father concerning this fact.  
He asked me why I don't count backwards from fifty until I reach the number  
three and then my bleeding will have stopped. I informed him that I would do  
so and he stopped me short. He commented that he would have to do it for me  
the first time, but thereafter I would have the power to do this simple ritual  
myself with good effects. This was my first item collected and gave me confi-  
dence to embark upon a task which I thought impossible to do.

S. F.

For A Headache  
Mania,

~~Grace Fry~~, Manheim, Penna. was the second person from whom I gathered  
more material on this topic of pow-wow. Her occupation is that of a housewife.  
As for her education I found out by probing that she had quit school at the age  
of 16. She is a member of a church and attends regularly. This bit of infor-  
mation was collected one evening at a family gathering. I had no intention of  
devoting myself to a good time but wondered how and where I could obtain some

lore from one member of this group. I complained of a headache which was bothering me to the group and like wise that I felt as if I had a fever. Once again, I cleverly had struck on some more pow-wow, which my faking aided me in collecting. <sup>My friend</sup> Grace told me to come in the kitchen and she would fix me something for my ailment. However, when we got there, <sup>she</sup> told me that she had no remedy but wanted to get away from the group in order that she might tell me of a secret remedy of hers; she did not inform me where she had gotten it. She was all very mysterious about the whole matter and kept staring me straight in the eye. She bent over slowly and whispered softly in my ear that she knew I was a good Christian and asked me if I believed in God. I answered in a soft tone rather hesitantly that I did. She grabbed my arm and sighed, "Genug," whereupon she told me that when I went to bed that night I should take a Bible in my left hand, place my right hand upon it. Go to a window and open it and with my eyes closed repeat the Twenty-third Psalm; then I was to take three deep breaths and hold each one as long as possible and I should exhale very "hard" and then repeat the Lord's Prayer still holding the Bible and with my eyes closed but this time on bended knees. I was so happy that I almost didn't know what to do but then she informed me that I can tell <sup>no</sup> know one of what she told me and above all I must do this ritual in private with faith. We then joined the group once more but <sup>she</sup> Grace was rather quiet for the duration of my visit. She was very fluent in her account of my remedy and to my surprise made use of very good English.

### For Rheumatism

My next account took place in my home town of Shillington, Penna. The material was gathered from <sup>the father of</sup> one of my pals, ~~W. Father~~ <sup>A. H.</sup> Alvin Huyett was born in Shillington and made this his permanent residence for his entire life. He is a carpenter by trade and never received a good education. At this point I made my first mistake, but without any serious damage. Knowing that he was one of my buddies' dads, I approached him and asked him if he knew any pow-wow. He looked amazed and in his sense of humor asked me if I thought he was a witch doctor or whether I had a girl in trouble. I said no and he likewise gave the same answer

to my question. <sup>P</sup> Fortunately, his wife was present and asked him if he was ashamed to tell me what he does for his rheumatism. He actually blushed and acted quite embarrassed about the whole affair. Finally, after a bit of persuasion, he told me that he always took pine shavings which he had planed off of pine boards and placed them in his left hip-pocket of his trousers beneath his overalls. ✓ He claimed that on any damp day he would go to the lumber shed before going to work, shave a handful of wood from a pine board and place them as mentioned previously. His wife confirmed the statement that he does not suffer from rheumatism as severely as before. Unfortunately, he couldn't recall where he first heard or discovered this remedy. It was indeed an odd way in which to find out more lore of pow-wow.

For Toothache

With confidence, I now went out with eagerness to collect more knowledge on this subject. My pal back home and I decided to go to get the eggs from a farm which my parents are accustomed to doing so. I told my pal of what I was doing in way of a term paper and he agreed to help me all he could. <sup>M.</sup> ~~Mary~~ <sup>informant.</sup> ~~Casper~~, who is an elderly lady of about 76 years of age was my next victim. She owns a small farm outside of Pottstown, Penna. and sells eggs as a means of income since her husband died without leaving her sufficient funds upon which to supply her daily needs. My pal and I cooked up a skit which I'm sure would bring results; he was to pretend that he was suffering from a toothache which had arisen while on our trip to get the eggs. Knowing that Mary was always talking and telling tall tales to my dad, I figured that she would spout off in her usual manner. Here I struck a gold mine, as for my buddy, torture. <sup>P</sup> We approached Mary and my pal was holding his mouth with a look of anguish on his face. Mary did not seem to be concerned about his pain but immediately went into her dissertation about the world coming to an end. Seeing that this would get us nowhere, I asked my pal what his trouble was. Mary, who is almost illiterate, seemed to think that his sins were catching up with him. But upon prompting from me, Dick, said matters wouldn't be so bad if he had only something to ease the pain. Here I was afraid we hit a snag; Mary offered no aid. So I

asked her if she had any remedy in the house and she said no. I was getting nowhere fast; so to bring matters to a head, I asked her if she minded if Dick went into the house for some cold water to put on his handkerchief to try and ease the pain. She consented and we entered her broken down dwelling to find aid for my buddy and to help me pass the course in Folklore. After about ten minutes, I gave up and paid for the eggs and was about to enter the car, when Mary yelled to us to wait. What a relief! She said we should wait a minute and she would get something for Dick. We told her that he would get something at the drugstore on the way home and would see a dentist the next day. Then Mary flew into <sup>a</sup>verbal diarrhea cursing doctors, medicines, etc. She said she would cure his ailment even though it was against her will and better judgement to heal on a Sunday. She left us for a long while and went into the chicken coop and returned with a chicken and took it in the shed behind her house. After a long period of time she returned with a cup full of a red liquid. It was the warm blood of a freshly killed chicken. She gave Dick the cup and told him to take a mouthful and "Spritz" it around the place where he had the pain. Whereupon she told us how doctors are killers and how she could cure almost any ailment with her power of magic healing. I could see that Dick was really in agony so, after he completed this treatment, we promptly vacated the premises so he could buy a soda on me to pay for his trials and tribulations. I am quite sure though, that Mary would not divulge any of her "magic healing powers" to me or anyone unless such a skit would be prepared. She is very irritable and sometimes a woman of few words. This was the best item of my collection.

### For Bloating Cows

This next entry was collected in a round-about manner. I visited a veterinarian for whom I had worked while still in high school and who knew many farmers in the vicinity of Berks County. Seeing that he and I are great pals I told him of my paper on folklore, and asked him if he knew any cures which the farmers used for their sick cattle which he may have come upon in his years of practice. Here again I was quite fortunate for he brought to my mind a case

I attended with him in Mohnton, Penna. We could not recall the party's name but I remember what took place. It was a sick cow of a poor farmer which could not stand the loss of one cow in the least, else he would lose all the profit gained from this animal. All I remember was that the cow died a few days later after Doc treated it. He said that there was more to this than appeared on the surface. Many farmers believe in pow-wow which has been passed on from generation to generation and many don't believe in securing the aid of V.M.D.'s. to help the sick animal if possible. He said that the most prominent thing which he runs up against is the pow-wow treating of bloated cows. The farmers have a remedy of their own which if not successful, the V.M.D. usually isn't of much help later. The common practice among farmers with bloated cattle, is to take a rusty nail, dip it into sour milk or cream and then puncture the stomach of the bloated animal, which occurs from eating green grass which ferments in their stomachs producing methane gas. Many times the cow is cured by this method of expelling the gas, but if infection sets in, there is not much chance of a V.M.D. curing it, since the farmers will not call the V.M.D. until the animal is almost dead. Hence, the remedy of a rusty nail, sour milk or cream is still in wide use in many farms as a pow-wow to cure bloated cows or horses.

This is the extent of my collection and I trust it has been satisfactory, as well as enlightening to you. I enjoyed the role as a collector very much and have had some memorable experiences.

John D. Trout, III.