

OCCUPATIONAL FOLKLIFE: AN EXAMINATION
OF THE EXPRESSIVE ASPECTS OF WORK-
CULTURE WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE
TO FIRE FIGHTERS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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OCCUPATIONAL FOLKLIFE: AN EXAMINATION OF THE
EXPRESSIVE ASPECTS OF WORK CULTURE WITH
PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO FIRE FIGHTERS



by
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A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The primary thesis of this work is that occupational culture is shaped by the work processes involved in producing a product or providing a service. All of the expressive forms of interaction in the work place are linked to and shaped by the ever changing work process and its effect upon work behavior. Using extensive examples from a number of occupational groups, particularly fire fighters' work culture, the forms and varieties of the expressive aspects of worker interaction are examined. These forms range from substantive to ceremonial work techniques; physical, social and ideological customary activities; as well as various forms of verbal expression from the basic naming of tools to group verbal critiques and narrative sessions and finally to the elaborated personal experience account. By arranging these expressive forms on a continuum from the most mundane term to the more recurrent central narrative sessions and finally to the more unusual individual narrative performances, it is possible to determine those expressive modes of interaction which form the critical center of a worker's occupational folklife upon which the bulk of worker interaction (verbal and non-verbal) is judged. An initial section places this model in a

disciplinary and historical perspective and a concluding section details the preliminary results of an applied study of urban fire fighting culture based on the theories suggested in the dissertation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I began the fieldwork for this dissertation as an undergraduate folklore student at the University of Oregon in one of Barre Toelken's folklore seminars in 1969. Little did I know that an afternoon and evening drinking beer with some of my old smokejumper buddies would lead to the past eleven years of fieldwork and research as an occupational folklorist. Yet somehow every group I studied, each one of the thousands of workers I have met and the hundreds I have interviewed and worked with has taught me just a little more about how occupational culture is shaped and passed on from one person to the next. I hope that this document in some way captures those insights and bits of information in this academic treatment of the subject while it also reflects the genuine honesty and frankness with which I was treated by virtually all of the people I have worked with over the years while is also imparts, I hope, some of their humor.

As the title of this work indicates, I draw heavily on fire fighting cultures for my examples. Although this might in some way skew my data, I think that in their conservatism, regionality, traditionality and unique role in society, fire fighting cultures reflect many of the growing pains experienced by other previously

homogeneous, white male occupations. At the same time, the increased use of helicopters and automatic explosives in forest fire control, and sophisticated sprinkler systems and automatic distributing nozzles in urban fire fighting, reveal that this occupational culture is experiencing technological innovation and change that parallels changes in other lines of work.

There are a number of people who have made it possible for me to complete this work. At Memorial University of Newfoundland, Dean Fred Aldrich and his staff went out of their way to aid me during my graduate work and the University also provided me with a fellowship and assistantship support that made it possible for me to concentrate on my studies. In the Folklore Department both faculty and staff were extremely supportive and helpful. I would particularly like to thank Professor Neil Rosenberg, my dissertation supervisor, for his close reading of an earlier draft of this work, and also to Professor Peter Narvaez for his assistance as a member of my committee. Additional thanks to Professor Kenneth S. Goldstein for encouraging me to attend Memorial University of Newfoundland, a decision that I am extremely happy that I made. In addition, I would like to thank my fellow students in the Folklore Department for their challenging support and encouragement, with special thanks to Martin Laba and Martin Lovelace for their open sharing of their

ideas and criticisms.

Finally, there are three folklorists who I would like to acknowledge as an appreciation of their influence and support over the years. The first is Barre Toelken who introduced me to the field, challenged me to work in contemporary occupational culture and illustrated the need for and feasibility of applied folklore research with his Native American projects and articles. The second is Robert Byington, who introduced me into the wider, non-academic field of applied folklore, taught me how to deal with the inevitable institutional structures one has to confront in order to achieve the applied ends I was seeking, while he also served on my committee and gave me critical objectivity when I needed it the most. And finally, a special thanks to Bess Lomax Hawes who gambled that my idea for an applied folklife project with urban fire fighters could succeed and then continued to fight for and support the project even when my energy and confidence began to wane.

This work is dedicated to fire fighters everywhere in the hope that through a better understanding of themselves, they will become better understood and appreciated by the public they serve.

"I don't get paid for what I do . . .
I get paid for what I may have to do."
(District of Columbia fire fighter)

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CHAPTER I

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA FIRE FIGHTERS' PROJECT

Although there has been little if any systematic applied folklore research outside of the Works Progress Administration's projects in the nineteen thirties and forties which were designed to create jobs and return indigenous American culture to the folk, there is an entire sub-field of applied anthropology dating back to the eighteenth century which has developed models for cultural intervention by anthropologists.¹ The methodologies and philosophies of this interventionist field have been debated for some time, yet the basic theory behind this type of research has been succinctly summarized by Roger Bastide who writes that:

Applied anthropology (entails) . . . observation, elaborations of an hypothesis (here a practical one not an explanatory one) and the experimental verification of that hypothesis within the field of research, which becomes a laboratory. Once again it is the science of planned action rather than the science of planning thought.²

Borrowing from this field its dedication to using the insights of cultural study for practical ends, my project was designed to determine not only the reliability of the specific occupational folklife hypothesis upon which it is based, but also to test the utility of the

findings to the occupational community being studied.

The specific research upon which the fire fighter's project was born grew out of fieldwork and presentation plans generated during the Smithsonian Institution's 1976 Festival of American Folklife in Washington, D.C. I arrived at the Smithsonian in December, 1974 and immediately began laying fieldwork plans for the preliminary 1975 festival with Robert Byington, Peter Seitel and Archie Green for conducting "field surveys" or short, superficial fieldwork excursions that would be used to mount public presentations of occupational culture based on some aspect of work process that could realistically or symbolically stand for the actual work experience. Working with truckers, for example, we designed a loading platform with a dispatcher's area to provide the public with an opportunity to see a break bulk terminal in action and also sit in while truckers told stories about their experiences on the road. Yet there were some tremendous discrepancies between our somewhat naive fieldwork observations, our selection of aspects of occupational culture for presentation, and the presentations themselves.

Using the trucker's presentation as an example, I spent four days and nights on the road with various trucking firms throughout the northeast riding with the drivers, staying in truck stops and sleeping in sleepers over the

road. Since this was one of my first "field surveys" I wasn't really sure what I was looking for except skills and processes presentable on the mall. By the time I stumbled back to Washington, I had a number of, hastily recorded tapes of drivers screaming their answers to my questions over the rear of the truck, some out of focus photographs and a vague idea for a presentation which I described in the following manner:

Since the primary folkloristic interest in the actual driving situation lies in the oral interaction which takes place, this aspect could be adequately presented in a performance context in which particularly good storytellers who are or have been truckers could relate their experiences or legends to an audience. Excluding the possibility of moving vehicles, the erection of a small dock with a stationary tractor/trailer on one side and perhaps a straight city rig on the other with enough room for a dispatcher's office and a trucker's lounge seem most feasible.³

This report illustrates a few of the limitations of our approach. Due to the presence of a large number of traditional, genre-oriented folklorists on the staff, we were still looking for raconteurs who could tell the legends (or "show the customs, sing the songs") of a trade while at the same time we were trying to present contemporary occupational culture as it existed in the work place-- something that nobody had ever tried before in a folk festival context. Yet somehow it was taken for granted that we not only knew what we were looking for in the field (which we didn't because our generic blinders hid

the true expressive culture from us) and secondly that once we had our processes, we knew how to stage them so that the public wasn't crushed under an avalanche of modern machinery while the worker just stood by and explained how "it" worked. An equally important concern was the peculiar perspective of labor unions toward public presentations of any kind beyond a trade fair union label show where union public relations men hand out buttons and pencils with union labels on them and tie balloons into animal shapes.

The results of this superficial fieldwork, lack of informed academic support or understanding of the real aims of the program from the more traditional folklorists, and the duplicity of unions involved were predictable. To provide just one example, the night before the 1975 festival was to open, the Teamster's Union refused to donate any of the trucks, dock equipment or personnel they had promised us because they were "having some trouble with local companies." After taking our appeals almost to the congressional level, we gave up and put together a shell of our presentation with local truckers voluntarily manning what looked to all the world as the location for festival garbage pick up. We actually had park service trucks stop at the end of the first day and back up to our "dock" thinking it was just that. It was a complete disaster from beginning to end and one folklorist stated after she had toured the site, "I don't

know what this shit is, McCarl, but it sure as hell ain't folklore."

Obviously a retrenching was in order prior to the gigantic 1976 festival in which we would be working with over seventy labor unions over a three month period. In an attempt to establish this presentational approach to occupational culture as a legitimate activity and to provide some theoretical background to our efforts, I wrote a draft of the article which forms the basis for the theory section of this dissertation. In that article I attempted to link the festival research to an evolving interest in occupational culture from a more complete, ethnographic perspective, not just a perpetuation of the generic approach to occupational groups that had us seeking raconteurs and work songs. I also sought to illustrate that the techniques of work as well as the verbal aspects have both an expressive dimension and an important role in shaping occupational culture. At the same time, Peter Seitel, who was working with the transportation unions, suggested that we place more emphasis on induced-context narrative sessions to try to recreate at least some of the ambience of normal verbal exchange. And Bob Byington began hiring additional fieldwork staff for occupational research and also began to act as a bulwark between the more traditional folklorists (many of whom continued to be obsessed with the almost moribund singing labor movement of the thirties and forties) and

those of us trying to work with this new approach. Our final major hurdle was the monolithic union structure itself which had to be titillated, cajoled, browbeaten and stroked on a one-to-one basis. Ultimately we developed a methodology for planning, researching and presenting occupational folklife in a public festival.

A complete description of this methodology would be much too lengthy to detail here, but in brief our approach to this material proceeded in the following manner. Once we had received a positive response to our inquiries to various unions in a trade (for example, the construction trades involved over thirty unions alone), we would arrange with the international to send a fieldworker to any place in the country where we could get a fairly comprehensive or representative view of what the actual work of the trade involved. Rather than trying to capture the entire occupational experience or locate good singers or storytellers, we sought to identify within the work flow those key techniques that could be made understandable to the public yet at the same time would represent (if only metaphorically) at least an aspect of the occupational experience. In the cement industry, for example, we developed a presentation showing how powder monkeys set and design their various charges on the quarry face. Using a model of a cement kiln, we showed how rock is crushed, heated, and turned into clinker and then crushed into cement. Finally, we set up a small lab with an

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experienced laboratory technician who illustrated how he mixed different types of cement for different types of use. Although the union and the more traditional folklorists were skeptical about this presentation it turned out to be one of the most popular and informative ones that we mounted.

In March of 1976, I began work with the fire fighters by meeting with the International Association of Fire Fighters' President, William "Howie" McClennan in Washington. I told him about our plans and he immediately introduced me to Kenneth Cox of the District of Columbia Fire Fighters' Association--Local 36, the Washington, D.C. local. After riding with a few companies and talking with a number of fire fighters, I wrote up a field report suggesting that in addition to narrative sessions in which fire fighters could present their experiences, we also could construct a frame building in which they could exhibit their fire fighting techniques through a simulated fire situation. After much discussion with the folklorists and the unions, we agreed on the basic plan and the presentation went ahead.

Initially the fire fighters were accommodating but not particularly motivated. They liked the idea of public relations but thought that trying to explain and demonstrate real fire fighting techniques would just bore the public. As time went on, however, the numbers of fire fighters asking to volunteer for participation in the

demonstration grew rapidly. Toward the end of the two week period, their presentation was one of the most popular; due to public interest, our ability to keep it primarily focused on work techniques and narratives, and (perhaps most importantly), the increasing desire on the part of the occupational group members themselves to participate. Festival participation by members of this occupational community had penetrated the culture to the point that members of the group were interested in discussing additional opportunities for presentation of their work culture beyond the actual festival itself.

In late October, 1976, I was invited to a meeting at 17 Engine in northeast Washington to discuss my ideas for additional research and presentation of fire fighting culture with members of the executive board of the local union as well as the union president, Dave Ryan. Based on that discussion, a number of ideas were generated including the following: 1) fire fighters kid themselves into thinking that what they perceive as reality, based on a highly esoteric traditional occupational culture, is actually the way things are; 2) most fire fighters are too proud to ask for help in any situation or to readily admit fear; 3) fire fighters are "peculiar" people who have a self-image unique to their occupational culture; 4) in order for me to understand fire fighters I would have to live and work with them for at least a year; 5) an honest book or presentation of fire fighting culture

would help fire fighters by giving them "an expanded insight into who and what they are"; 6) I suggest a book be divided into technique, custom and narrative with breakdowns of the truck, engine and squad and a discussion of officers; and finally, 7) if such a book were written it might be of use in training rookies new to the trade.⁴

In the hope of keeping this interest and momentum generated by the festival alive, I took my idea to Bess Lomax Hawes at the National Endowment for the Arts, Folk Arts Program, in an attempt to get some suggestions about where I might turn for funding. The project which I envisioned at that point as a book-length or similar appropriately in-depth presentation of fire fighting culture, was to be directed at the fire fighters themselves, not at an outside or academic audience. Surprisingly she suggested that the Endowment might possibly fund such a project if it were 1) applied for by the union itself, and 2) the main result was designed to increase community awareness about the occupational experiences and perspectives of the "folk group"--the D.C. fire fighters. I then (in June, 1977) drafted a rough proposal to that effect and sketched out an outline budget with a heavy emphasis on "soft matches" (the commitment of union officer space or services rather than hard cash) because I knew that the union wouldn't be able to put up much money for this type of project. I then left it to the

union to decide. In September the union submitted the letter and the proposal to the Endowment (see below) and the project received approval and funding in April, 1978 with the project date set to begin in June of that year.

I was teaching in Canada at the time and therefore did not actually begin work on the project until September, 1978. The proposal letter contained the following information:

September 23, 1977

Ms. Bess Lomax Hawes
Director, Folk Arts Program
National Endowment for the Arts
Washington, D.C. 20506

Dear Ms. Hawes:

The Fire Fighters Association of the District of Columbia was organized in 1901. This Association has strived to improve the lot of the uniformed forces of the Fire Department, has been actively involved in the history and traditions of the Department, and strived to improve the delivery and services to the community. We have been active participants in many community efforts over the years and are long standing members of many community groups and associations in Washington. In 1971 we published a book, 100 Years of Glory, which is the only compiled history of the D.C. Fire Department. Our goals now, as always, go far beyond those of a more traditional labor organization.

We believe firefighters comprise the most unusual group of public employees and perhaps a unique group among all occupational pursuits. Although we make up a segment of the professional firefighting force we are sometimes surprised at the unusual displays and attitudes of our membership. It is not surprising to us that those outside of our profession fail to understand why men choose firefighting as their profession for this is not an uncommon question for a firefighter to ask himself.

There are many theories as to why firefighting has always been a sought after field of endeavor to the extent that even with today's demands on time many men and women actively volunteer their time to serve the community as firefighters. The varied schools of thought range from job security to dedication to serve others and from a thirst for excitement to contentment in doing nothing, but no one set of motives seems to be consistently applicable to all firefighters. It is a fact that the fire service is primarily comprised of men that come from some other fields of endeavor to become a firefighter and often with a significant reduction in tangible benefits. Perhaps the lure is like that attributed to the sea but even those who have made the transition can not accurately identify the moving force. We consistently find it difficult to portray ourselves to the community in a way which will identify who we really are and thus be better understood and accepted. It is our belief that a more in-depth understanding of firefighters, by the community and by themselves, would enhance the age old battle of protecting lives and property from the ravages of fire.

One of this Association's more recent endeavors at serving the community was our participation in the Folklife Festival sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution last year. Through this activity we were introduced to the concept of occupational studies by specialists who can objectively analyze an occupational group. One of those specialists, Mr. Bob McCarl, took a particular interest in our profession and several hours of discussion gave birth to new insights into our work. It was here that the concept of an in-depth look at professional firefighters was born.

The Fire Fighters' Association of the District of Columbia, Local 36, represents the members of the District of Columbia Fire Department, and although its elected representatives respond to the political and economic needs of fire fighters, the actual work experience and its perception by those both within and outside of the fire fighters' community were almost too close for any one member to view objectively. We feel that by employing the services of a specialist in occupational folk-life like Bob McCarl, we can accomplish two very important goals: 1) to better understand our occupation and ourselves by opening up our work group to in-depth perception and documentation by

a trained fieldworker, and 2) use the information that is collected to improve internal and external communication in the community. We propose that McCarl be housed in one or more station houses in the District for a period of approximately a year and that he be allowed to participate in and document all aspects of a fire fighter's daily round from cooking and cleaning to riding the apparatus, from night work and rotation of shifts to experiences both on and off of the fireground which might provide him with an in-depth familiarity with our work. At the end of the documentary period, McCarl would write up his findings for presentation to the members of the Association. The scope of this material will be cultural rather than economic, political or statistical, that is we will be perceived and documented through what we do and say, not on the basis of externally derived information although this information may shape and be shaped by our occupational experiences. The Association, based upon the results of McCarl's findings, will have a number of options concerning the uses to which this material may be put. Union publications, film, radio programs, skills demonstrations, series of community workshops or the establishment of a local firefighters oral history/folklore archive may be employed to use this information to best advantage by replaying it to our membership and the community we serve. The fire fighters of Washington, D.C., like fire fighters elsewhere, are a family--a family with a history and traditions--stories about the good times and the bad, accounts of heroes and clowns coupled with a strong pride in our skills and the work that we do. Like any family, however, we can always improve and benefit from the observations of a professional yet humanistic outsider. We have become convinced that these stories we tell about our own behavior as fire fighters, when they're told, how they develop and persist (or fail to) are an important key to the understanding we seek. This is why we are particularly interested in having a specialist, like Bob McCarl, an ex-fire fighter himself and interested in collecting our stories, undertake this study for us.

To this end we are asking you to consider a proposal that the National Endowment for the Arts help us in this effort. We are uncertain of the results of such a study and are not articulate in applying for programs of this nature. We are

enclosing a proposed budget which we feel would be sufficient to conduct the study. If we may better represent or explain our position we will be pleased to receive your recommendation. Thank you for considering our proposal and we anxiously await your reply.

Sincerely,

David A. Ryan,
President, Local 36

Having won approval for the project from the union and the Endowment, we had another major hurdle to overcome: the District of Columbia Fire Department itself. Like many large urban institutions, the department was loathe to have an outsider research its inner workings because (as the fire chief explained in his letter of August 1, 1978):

I regret that I must deny your request but I feel that it would be too disruptive to the members and might in some ways interfere with the efficient operation of the department.⁵

From the time of my arrival in Washington around the end of August until the end of September, I tried every argument I could think of to change the chief's mind. The apparent cause of his fear was the racial conflict going on in the department at the time; he felt that my research might in some way exacerbate the problem. Finally, with support from the newly elected mayor, obtained with considerable assistance from the union which had backed him in the election, the chief relented and I was given permission to participate in all aspects of fire fighting life from the actual fire fighting attack to living in any fire

house in the city.

My first actual day in the field was September 22, 1978. My strategy was to visit as many fire houses as I could during the first month to get a feel for the approachability, racial balance, amount of fire activity, and personal responses to me and my project. Having had some dealings with one of the busier downtown companies during the folk festival research, I returned to that house, stated my objectives to the company and then returned there the next day to begin my preliminary survey. After staying there for about a week, I went to other fire houses in the city, spending anywhere from two days to a week working with the fire fighters in one platoon to get a feel for their different running areas while I attempted to solidify my goals and approach to the project.

By the end of October I had spent time in four fire houses in different parts of the city, had attended training school to gain some of the basics of the attack and the equipment (particularly the mask) and then returned to 16 Engine (the downtown company) which I had chosen as my preliminary target. I chose this house for a number of reasons including the fact that I knew a number of the men there from the folk festival experience. The company also had a good mixture of older and younger men and it was a tight, "running" company; the area covered by this particular house varied from high rise apartments and businesses to tenements and single-family dwellings; the group seemed

comfortable around me and interested in what I was doing; it was accessible by mass transit; and it was a double house (an engine and truck company) as well as a chief and deputy's house. It had almost everything I needed except a good white/black ratio (there was only one black fire fighter in the company) and a female fire fighter. These aspects of the culture I thought I could document once I had spent some time working with a more traditional, homogeneous group, which proved to be the case.

My research goal from the outset was to produce a type of accessible documentation that would allow the fire fighters to gain a different perspective about themselves. As stated in the original proposal, the form in which the data would be presented could be

... a union publication, film, videotape, radio program, skills demonstration, series of community workshops or the establishment of a local fire fighter's oral history/folklore archive.

Later, in September, 1978, this was refined to two specific goals: a booklet which would provide an overview of my research findings in a format that would be easily accessible and understandable to fire fighters themselves, and secondly, an oral presentation in which I would discuss my findings, show my photographic documentation, and provide a forum in which fire fighters could assess the validity of the project and perhaps suggest future uses of the material. As I state in one of my letters of appeal to the fire chief:

I feel (and the Endowment is funding the project on this basis) that I am being paid to document the work processes and experiences of urban fire fighters and in effect act as a mirror--a means of reflection through which workers in this trade can better understand themselves and perhaps be better understood in the community. Therefore whatever I collect is theirs and they as a group control it.⁶

Even though I had worked in occupational folklore both as a participant in a variety of occupational groups and later as a fieldworker while at the Smithsonian, I wasn't exactly sure how to begin such an undertaking as a full-time job. I had begun a journal to keep track of daily events and observations and I augmented that with hastily written notes that I kept in a small pocket notebook and then expanded in the journal after work. Although I wasn't at first aware of the emergence of particular interactional scenes, I was confident that by first locating and documenting the key techniques of each individual assignment on the fire ground (technicians, officers, bar, hook and axe, layout and line positions), I would gradually begin to better understand the work processes that shaped and informed the other elements of occupational experience. I was, in other words, immediately putting my theories of occupational culture to the test.

In addition to participating in the daily housework and cooking, I also stuck with either the truck or the engine company during the fire runs, participated in the attack as much as possible without slowing anyone down (mostly by helping with lights and fans or humping hose up

stairwells), and began carrying my cameras and a pocket tape recorder wherever I went. I also started interviewing each individual in the company to compile biographical information, gain a greater insight into their particular responsibilities on the fire ground, and gave them an opportunity to question me about my background, motivations and experiences. This provided me with a large amount of specific data and allowed me to become personally acquainted with each man individually and in a sense negotiate my goals in the project with his point of view. As soon as possible after each interview I would make a log of the tape so that access to the materials would be facilitated.

I developed a tape log system of tape classification when I did the index to the Working American's tapes after the festival in 1976.⁷ Faced at that time with the task of providing access to over three-hundred hours of tape, I decided that it would be foolish and wasteful to pay someone to transcribe the whole corpus. I therefore listened to each tape and jotted down notes and counter numbers off of the tape recorder as I went along. If a fire fighter, for example, was describing his ride to work, a fire they had yesterday and asking what's for dinner on a tape, it would appear as

Watch desk: FF's W, S, P, and Y (their names)
 P: (signs in at desk) Talks abt. getting flat on way to work--lucky had spare
 S: Asks about second alarm
 P: Not much to do on fire--monitored water supply, picked up a lot of pump time--asks what's for dinner

Once the log has been completed for each tape, then indexing the material is made much easier and selected tapes can be transcribed where complete transcription is warranted.

Photographically it became immediately apparent that I was in way over my head. Fire photographers spend years perfecting their technical abilities in photographing fire fighters at work. As long as we were in the house I could take my shots at my leisure with no difficulty at all. But as soon as we responded on a call, the speed with which everything happened, coupled with my desire to stay with the company as they crawled down a smoke-filled hallway, made it impossible for me to visually document the work techniques as they unfolded on the fire ground. Eventually I had to stage many of the techniques in order to get them on film and even then the individual companies moved so fast when just "walking through" the steps of a fire fighting attack that I missed portions of the process. As scenes began to emerge in both the fire house (around the watch desk, fire critiques after a fire) and on the fire ground (racking hose, overhauling a burned out ceiling), I could more competently anticipate the occurrence of these significant interactional periods and photograph them as they unfolded.

On a daily basis as new fire fighters would be detailed for a day or night to 16 Engine, I would have to

explain my presence. In the initial stages of my research I would talk about the folklife festival, occupational culture, etc., but soon learned that that did little to explain why I was standing in a group of fire fighters taking pictures and recording their comments as I racked hose with them after a fire. As I got a little more confident, my explanation included the following information:

FF: What are you doing this for?

Mc: I was hired by the union to document how information is passed from one guy to the next, say from an experienced man to a rookie. I try to figure out the tricks of the trade--what you need to know to be successful at any position in the trade. Right now I'm concentrating on stories and skills and just trying to figure out what the stories are about and how the skills are learned. When I'm done this will go into a report that I then turn over to you guys. 8

Yet I found that in my attempt to explain the purposes of the project to the fire fighters themselves I became more conscious of how their perceptions of themselves differed from what I was seeing. An incident that occurred in early December illustrates one aspect of this discrepancy:

December 7, Thursday: Nothing much going on until about 2:30 AM when we got a run to 12th and T, NW for a large apt. bldg. (apartment building) w/ heavy smoke--2nd alarm. . . . (A lengthy description of the fire is given here. It was a very hot and smokey fire in the stairwell, probably set on purpose. A number of people were injured and taken out of windows, off the fire escapes and led to safety by the fire fighters.) Once the overhauling began in the foyer of the building, Chief Casey started sending people back in. . . . At about this time a middle-aged black man came hollering down the stairs about the condition of his apartment window. It has been punched out even though (as he

said): 'There weren't no motherfuckin fire in my room!' He demanded to know what the fire fighters were going to do about it and increased his yelling and hysterics when the news photographer began to shoot the stairwell (with a television camera). The fire fighters were all very tense and quiet with the exception of a sergeant who told the guy to cool it or he'd give him something to really complain about.⁹

On the way back to the house this incident caused a gripe session about the stupidity and ingratitude of blacks that continued in the fire house for about half an hour. The fire fighters had just done what they considered an excellent job putting out a very hot fire in a crowded tenement late at night. They were looking for gratitude, not criticism even though the man doing the complaining could easily have been the victim of an overzealous truck man itching to bust a few windows. It became more and more evident to me that not only would I have to document the fire fighting culture as I saw it and as I determined that the fire fighters themselves saw it, but I would at the same time have to find a way to reflect my more objective view of them back to them without appearing too critical. In my attempt to do an applied ethnography I would have to first generate as objective an account as I could and then present that account in a framework that provided me with an opportunity to negotiate my perception of fire fighting culture with theirs.

As time went on in my fieldwork I began to become aware of the repetition of not only technique and behavior both on and off of the fire ground, but also of narrative

sessions and even individual stories and repertoires. This redundancy relieved some of the frustrations I was feeling concerning the vast amount of data I was amassing and it also freed me up to range a little more widely in my research beyond the "quality spaces" like the watch desk, sitting room and hose racking areas where I had been spending most of my time.¹⁰ Having been in the same house with the same group for almost five months by this point, I started interviewing fire fighters' families, retired fire fighters, and attending retirement dinners. I also had gained the trust and acceptance of the group to the extent that I was a participant in the pranking and horse-play and felt as though I actually could lend a hand with the work if not as an equal then at least as a recognized associate.

It was at about this time, however, that my sponsor in the labor organization began to question my methods and the reliability of my data if I continued working with just this one company. I had relied on this man's judgment and support to see me through all of the procedural hassles and problems that arose when we first began the project, and although I knew he was right about the reliability of the data, I also was aware of how long it had taken me to gain the rapport and openness I was only just then experiencing. I was beginning to get the feel of being a participant and not only was it a pleasurable experience, it was also giving me a tremendous insight into the unique

cultural view of at least this group of fire fighters. As

I state in my notes:

January 9--Dave wants me to go to at least two other houses and although I can do it, it may force me to rethink my strategy a bit . . . , he places the study in a much too political framework but then maybe it is highly political. ¹¹

March 9--Finally sat down with Dave abt. moving to a new station and he went through the roster and decided that it should be 8 Engine, Truck 7 on Platoon #3 because there was a good cross section of blacks on that shift. As per usual I felt as though a lot of the things I should have said--particularly about union cooperation, and the lack thereof, should have been brought out, but weren't. ¹²

I finally agreed that although I thought it would ruin my rapport with 16 Engine, it was time to move to a new house which I did in the middle of April, 1979. In order to maintain contact with my original company, I returned there at least once a tour, and although I was still accepted, this move changed my relationship with this company but perhaps improved my objectivity by making me less reliant on personal relationships and more professionally independent. It was almost as if I had served an apprenticeship and now (with Dave's goading) I was going to try working as more of a journeyman.

The new house had a heavier concentration of black fire fighters, was in a totally different type of area (a residential, older neighborhood, primarily black with large single family dwellings), and provided me with a much different perspective. I learned quickly about the totally different cultural perspectives of blacks toward

the fire service, witnessed some of the racial conflicts that arose in the house, and saw the isolation and drawing inward of individuals who for one reason or another felt alienated from the company or just couldn't take the slower pace of being in a house that got few actual fire runs due to their location. At the same time, however, I began to compare my new perspective to those I had to those I had formed at 16 Engine and found that although there was resentment on the part of the blacks in the company about discrimination in the department, they were (for the most part) more tolerant of the whites than the whites were of them. It again confirmed a growing awareness on my part that the majority group of white fire fighters were insulating themselves in their slowly eroding, homogeneous and traditional occupational culture while blacks and as I later discovered, women, continued to make inroads into the group carrying with them their own unique cultural perspectives that carried over into their occupational experiences.

By the end of September, 1979, I had spent an additional two and a half months with a heavy rescue squad while I also maintained some regular contact with the downtown and residential companies. I decided to leave the field after that and organize my data so that I could begin to write it up. I had accumulated at this point almost two-hundred hours of tape from recorded informal sessions to dyadic interviews, hundreds of black and white

photographs and color slides, field notes and notebooks and a dizzying amount of impressions and observations swimming around in my head. I also had developed some very close friendships with some of the fire fighters and without that personal encouragement at this point in the project I question whether or not I could have completed the most difficult phase of the project, the organization, conceptualization and writing of the ethnographic sketch.

I began with the black and white photos by organizing the negatives and then the contact sheets chronologically. I then removed all of the tape logs from their envelopes and read through them and my field notes a couple of times to get a broad picture of what it is I had in hand. The third time through I began to jot down categories of information suggested by the material itself, or tried to choose topics broad enough to capture a good sized chunk of data when I sifted it through these broad meshed screens. The categories that finally comprised the index included the following:

- Accidents
- Axe (a truck company position)
- Bar
- Characters
- Close calls
- Critiques--fire critiques
- Customs
- Drill
- Engine company/truck company
- Engine officer
- Father/son/family/wives
- Fire house camaraderie
- Individual fire houses
- Joking behavior

Layout (position in an engine company)
 Line
 Motivations to be a fire fighter
 Narratives
 Officers/aides
 Orders/terms/communications
 Policy/fire fighters (relations between)
 Pranks
 Public view of fire fighters
 Pumper driver
 Rescues/first aid
 Riots (the 1968 riots)
 Rookie experiences
 Second job (fire fighter's part-time jobs)
 Squad
 Teachers
 Technique
 Tiller
 Tools/apparatus
 Trends in department/changes
 Truck driver
 Truck officer
 Wagon driver
 Watch desk experiences
 Women

By going through each tape log and transcription I then noted the date of the tape, who was speaking, their topic of conversation or narration and the transcript page number or log page number. A sample index citation would be given in the following format:

Accidents

Nov. 26--W--Time steamed kids--interior attack	p. 3
" " PVC fumes--once real bad	p. 4B
" " Being overweight--bad on heart	p. 5
" " Hidden back problem--bad clinic doc	p. 8
Dec. 6--FL--Hurt back on floor when slick	p. 2B

Working from five to eight hours a day, this portion of the project took me over five weeks to complete. Had I tried to transcribe every tape it would have taken that many months and I seriously doubt if I ever could have completed the ethnography in the allotted time.

Once I had completed my index the next task was to block out the ethnography itself. Based on the material that I had on hand and my knowledge of the culture, I outlined a document that would serve two purposes. It would first return to the fire fighters a picture of their occupation that was based primarily on their own words and stories yet at the same time place that folklore in a unique perspective. And secondly, provide enough visual and glossarial information in the booklet to give an outsider a glimpse into this occupational world. This development of a bridge language between not only the occupational and academic cultures, but also between the occupational inside view and the outside world is perhaps the major challenge of applied folklore using the ethnographic approach. The original index I developed was broken down in the following manner:

- Introduction
- Motivations to be a fire fighter
- Fire house life
- Work techniques
- Pumping water:
 - Blacks, whites and women
 - Occupational stereotypes
 - Officers
 - Narratives
 - Accident accounts
- Conclusion
- References
- Glossary

I wrote the motivations chapter first, but once I had completed it it became obvious to me that the most salient determinant in an individual's choice to become a fire fighter was ethnic and familial background and

therefore I incorporated most of this material into the chapter on whites, blacks and women. Having chosen my categories and developed an index to allow me to locate virtually any narrative in the corpus, the next task was to choose representative narratives that would illustrate my argument and at the same time be of enough interest themselves to carry the flow of the overall account whether it was read by an outsider or a fire fighter. The selecting of representative narratives for placement in an ethnographic framework designed to be read by insiders and outsiders is something that few folklorists and anthropologists have been adequately prepared to do. I will briefly illustrate, therefore, how I arrived at most of my choices.

Folklorists have gone from the listing and collecting of items of folklore to an awareness of the need for contextual information surrounding that one item, to an appreciation of the varying levels of meaning suggested by very subtle changes in context in a whole chunk of ethnographic description. Yet no matter how deep or "thick" our understanding of the inside view, our description of it is much "thinner" because we are forced to let the written part stand for the ethnographic whole.¹³ By concentrating on the work techniques of an occupational group we are isolating a more "critical center" of the occupational culture because most narratives, joking relationships, nicknames, customary behaviors and activities both comment on and reflect these techniques as I have

illustrated. The job of an ethnographer is to select examples which most provocatively illustrate to the occupational group members themselves the center of that critical stance from which they are evaluating their behavior. At the same time, however, the more esoteric techniques that take place farther away from the central processes of the work flow must be carefully weighed in such a presentation because the more elaborate and detailed the description, the more difficult it is for outsiders to "see into the culture." This can be mitigated somewhat by concentrating on the central modes of expressive behavior which have been isolated by placing them between Neumann's polarities of mundane and unusual forms of expression. An organization of data that has informed this entire approach.

In the booklet "Good Fire/Bad Night" which is the final ethnographic sketch generated by the project, I can provide a specific example of how this location of the critical center aids the ethnographer in his selection of a representative narrative or behavior. In the section about the wagon driver I had indexed over forty separate observations, anecdotes, stories and insights relating to this key position in the engine company. These entries ranged from passing observations about good wagon drivers setting the pace for the engine company, to stories about wagon drivers going the wrong way to a fire, to accounts of wagon drivers withholding route change information from

fill-in drivers so that the latter wouldn't look competent enough to challenge their right to the position. Yet as I went down the list of stories and went back through the personal accounts of wagon drivers describing their jobs, it became clear to me that one critical thing was central to the wagon driver's job, timing and anticipation. I therefore wrote this section of the booklet in the following way:

The wagon driver (under the direction of the officer) is the pace setter of the engine company. It is his job to take the appropriate running route to the fire, to place the piece as close as he can to the fire building without blocking other companies and to deliver the water and monitor the water supply to the engine company when they are inside. From the speed with which the company leaves the house to the pace set over the road and finally the timing of the water to the line man, the wagon driver determines the rhythm of timing of the entire attack. In the following account the most important part of his job, anticipation, is described:

FF: And I've had other things that I learned about from older guys and never forgot. This was before I was a wagon driver, but it was a lesson that stuck with me even through the times that I was a wagon driver--here's one that I did find several occasions to use. We had a bowling alley fire. We had gone in with a line and I don't know what length line, it was probably the longest line we had. And we had to go in and work through the little office spaces that they have in the foyer portion of a bowling alley, and down through and all the way over to the side and we were working toward the side where the pins were. And I'm on the line. And I get about a third of the way to go, and we've run out of line. So now we're thinking we better go back and lengthen the line. So we start back but we hadn't gotten fifty feet back and here comes the wagon driver dragging two bags of stand-pipe hose. And he'd anticipated. Nobody told him to do anything, but he had anticipated that this was a large, deep building and there may be a need. And all he was going to do was just bring them up close so that in case we needed them,

there'd they be, and there we were. It looked like something we had drilled for, the most important part was that he had anticipated. So many times after that, you know, as a wagon driver after a company would go in and I'd make my hook ups. I would remember that and if it fit the situation, grab one of those bags and take it in so that it was there if they needed it.¹⁴

This story provides a glimpse into the critical center of the wagon driver's job because it reflects an ideal performance of technique as retained in the story. This ideal performance (and others like it or related to it like stories of mistakes or screw-ups of ideal performances) then become reference points at the center of the occupational experience against which all performance (past, present and future) are judged. The folklore, then is that selected critical comment (chosen on the basis of its centrality to the work process) which best describes the central technique of a given occupational process and is used as an example with an ethnographic frame broader than just that specific storytelling situation itself. The job of the applied folklorist is to not only document and present the storytelling context, but, perhaps most importantly, to show how these expressive forms are used in a given culture by incorporating large chunks of ethnographic background and attempting to define the critical center upon which expressive forms are manipulated against that background.

Rather than working as a collector of data whose primary interest is the cross-cultural compilation of

texts, a folklorist taking this applied approach must be willing to develop a language which serves as a bridge between cultures. This bridge language is directed primarily at the cultural group being studied and its basic purpose is to present the inside view by using examples illustrating techniques and narratives that describe the critical center of the cultural experience in the hope that this new perspective will result in an increased awareness of cultural reality. At the same time, however, enough of the esoteric reality has been filtered through the folklorist's perception that the inside view becomes understandable to outsiders as well. The mirror that I hold up as an applied folklorist says as much about me as it does about the people I am presenting.

There are two final points about this type of research that need to be mentioned prior to my concluding comments. Regardless of an individual folklorist's or ethnographer's intent, the material he writes in the description of a culture become a public statement about that culture. Caveats about accepting responsibility for misinterpretation, constant review by trusted insiders, and comparisons to parallel work by other investigators are all necessary checks and balances. But once a document is published, there it stands. It is therefore incumbent upon the investigator to recognize and perhaps make explicit his biases and goals in doing the research. He must also anticipate early in the process that many of the

most moving and powerful aspects of the cultural experience must be left out of the description, either because they are impossible to honestly portray to an outsider, would undermine or betray covert aspects of the culture, or aren't adequately understood by the investigator herself. When we assume the role of cultural description and presentation we speak for the members of that culture (at least that is the way they will perceive it), and therefore our fabrication of their reality must not only reflect their cultural view, it must in part be based upon it. To do otherwise (publish the "objective" reportorial account without regard for its impact on the community) is to hide behind academic cant and/or exploit the very cultures we have sought to understand and advocate.

Conclusion

The following section attempts to compare the results of the fire fighter's project (to date) with the backgrounds, theoretical hypotheses and basic premises upon which it is based.

The basic motivation of early occupational folksong collectors was to document an indigenous American expressive form--cowboy songs--in order to prove the existence of a unique folk idiom in this country. This impulse was maintained by later occupational folklorists like Korson, Beck, Hand and Green who sought to portray the role played by folksong and narrative in expressing the changes, struggles

inequities and hardships of workers in an emerging capitalistic state. Yet with the exception of Boatright, none of these investigators actually turned their attention to the work itself, to the actual processes and techniques upon which these "collectable" expressive forms were based. Even contemporary folklorists like Nickerson and Bell place the verbal material in the foreground and relegate the actual work process to the background information (see Appendix A).

The primary reason for this concentration on verbal forms is that as folklorists they are trained by artifact collectors, must tailor their research in this direction, and until very recently (with the embracing of linguistic models and theories advocated by Hymes, Abrahams, Glassie and Bauman) they had no reason to be interested in the broader ethnographic context in which these expressions occurred. Due primarily to my exposure to cultural advocacy work done with Native Americans by Barre Toelken and Theodore Stern at the University of Oregon in the sixties, my firm grounding in a long term exposure to fire fighting and fire fighting culture in the Pacific Northwest, and my often disastrous but occasionally successful presentational efforts while at the Smithsonian, I gradually constructed a model that stressed the primacy of technique in shaping all other expressive aspects of occupational culture, and saw within that framework the opportunity to use the documentation generated from such

an approach to address recurrent problems or issues in the work place.

This model is cumbersome, however, because it is like a patchwork quilt made up of examples and pieces drawn from various disciplines and types of research. Rather than inheriting a traditional methodology or theoretical approach that could be shaped by contemporary research, I found a loose and spotty interest in occupational folklore that merely allowed traditional folklorists to occasionally turn their interests toward an occupational group when the opportunity arose. Hopefully as additional research is conducted in the field by researchers who employ explicit approaches to their material, this eclectic, patchwork model will be refined, refuted or revised. Based on the fire fighter's research, I can make some tentative suggestions about the directions in which these revisions might lead.

As stated in the preceding examples drawn from the fire fighting cultures cited, even though everyone is judged by their performance on the fire ground, a few of the group members (often technicians, truck drivers, pumper drivers, and tillermen) have little to do with the actual attack of the fire once it has been ventilated and the water supply established. Often these less active but senior members of the company will compensate for their more passive role in the work process by taking on extra responsibility within their areas of expertise and

competence. An older pumper driver, for example, might do all of the cooking in the house, stand extra watches or clean up the sink late at night; while an overweight truck driver might do extra body work on automobiles or figure income tax as a compensation for his necessarily slower performance on the fire ground. As a culture, an occupational group is an organic collective and there is a place for everyone in the group as long as they make a contribution that is sanctioned by the other members. The heavy emphasis on technique stressed in the model might cause an investigator to neglect these important compensatory skills in the work place while the data suggests that there may be a level of social equilibrium between technique performance and basic social interaction that is as yet undefined.

Another problem with the model is that it is too compartmentalized. Technique, custom and verbal expression are externally derived categories that have little esoteric currency. A retirement dinner, for example, is a customary event that show-cases narrative performance and verbal interaction, much of it based on technique performances. Perhaps the only way to realistically portray the interplay between these expressive forms as they shade into each other is by documenting them in full length ethnographic films. Considering the state of the art right now, however, that seems to be a particularly expensive undertaking that would have little institutional support until we have

demonstrated the validity of the approach in smaller pilot projects such as the one I am completing with the fire fighters.

A third criticism of the model is that it doesn't place enough importance on extra-occupational concerns and activities as these flow around and through the work culture. Family backgrounds and concerns, recreational interests and organizations, sexual patterns, artistic and media interests, hobbies and part-time jobs, volunteer activities, religious backgrounds and other outside interests all affect an individual's participation in an occupational culture. Although I recognize the importance of these concerns within occupational culture, my inability to adequately document the area of occupational interaction I have already delimited makes me hesitant to attempt anything more comprehensive in initial ethnographies. Again as more in-depth ethnographic projects employing a number of investigators are attempted (as they were in the Yankee City projects), then opportunities for these other aspects of occupational culture to be adequately studied will increase.¹⁵

The final question regards the utility of the applied approach and its future in the discipline. The booklet "Good Fire/Bad Night" was distributed in March, 1980 and a month later I returned to Washington and presented my conclusions and slides at a morning meeting open

to all fire fighters. Only about forty men showed and the basic consensus of their opinions was that the book "told it like it is" but don't expect them to do anything about it. One officer said that it was the most accurate statement about fire fighting that he had ever read, but since fire fighters are the most apathetic group in the world when it comes to change, they probably won't ever do anything about the suggestions and concerns expressed in the book. A number of the younger fire fighters are optimistic about using the materials for training and discussion, but as yet nothing substantive has come of those interests.

After having spent almost two years on this project, I was so involved in the concepts that I somehow thought that their articulation would lead to action. It may yet, perhaps it is too soon to tell what, if any, effect the material will have. If nothing else, however, it is an accurate portrait of fire fighter's culture in 1980 and as such provides an excellent opportunity for comparison in the future. At the same time, the experiences, frustrations, fears, joys and techniques learned in this first attempt at application will make the next efforts in applied occupational research that much better.

CHAPTER II

A MODEL OF OCCUPATIONAL FOLKLIFE

The study of occupational groups in urban and industrial settings by folklorists demands not only a new theoretical basis for the study of lore, but additional theoretical justifications for the relationship of oral material to the closely related work techniques with which these verbal materials are bound in the work setting. The use of models such as this by fieldworkers as they collect and interpret their data is made doubly difficult by the unique constraints imposed upon the folklorist in the collection, application and interpretation of this kind of material.¹ The following chapter outlines such a new approach to occupational culture and suggests a few of the unique challenges facing researchers in this field.

Occupational culture is inextricably linked to the work processes and micro-environments in which it functions and therefore the study of these processes demands a comprehensive view of the relationship between the forms of communication and the context in which they occur. Context here is not viewed as a variable background which influences the nature of a performance, occupational contexts are part of the communication itself, i.e., aspects

of the occupational environment as they are manipulated by the worker can themselves be interpreted symbolically.²

In the analagous situation, Levi-Strauss details the effective use by a shaman of ritual manipulations (use of the non-symbolic in a symbolic manner) that communicates a symbolic course which guides a woman through a difficult childbirth.³ He points out that

. . . for instance, putting the cheek of the patient in contact with the breast of the analyst. The symbolic load of such acts qualifies them as a language. Actually, the therapist holds a dialogue with the patient, not through the spoken word, but by concrete action. . . .⁴

A parallel situation exists in modern industry where often "actions speak louder than words," and the pranks of tying a man's sweater to the lath and plastering it into the wall or nailing a lunch bucket to the floor or workbench illustrate this language of the occupational environment.⁵ This form of communication extends well beyond the gestural,⁶ and approximates that described by Birdwhistell as (non-verbal--patterned, behavioral communication)⁷ or what Levi-Strauss has termed the language or science of the concrete through which an artist (or worker) communicates through the manipulation of objects or materials.⁸ Just as there are varying levels of latitude, ability and involvement in the artistic environment with regard to these manipulations there are parallel levels in the work context,

Each occupation demands the ability to do something whether it is repeatedly screwing a nut to a bolt on the

assembly line, framing a structure, machining the parts for an electron microscope, or mopping the kitchen floor. In each case, the worker must make decisions and manipulate objects to produce the desired result and it is in the manner and appropriateness of the manipulation (its "technique")⁹ that the occupational network is born and perceived by other workers. What is important in this technique is not its inherent danger, difficulty or traditional nature, but the way in which it is influenced and interpreted by others in the work group. Technique reflects the "working knowledge" (what you need to know to do the work)¹⁰ of a specific work group and as it is passed from one worker to another through imitation and instruction, begins to reveal a pattern of interactions that is unique to that particular group and almost invisible to the outside observer and often management.

The term technique is used rather than skill because as Kaufmann points out:

The difficulty is that we continue to use one word, 'skill,' to signify both the things that a man can do with his hands and the things that he knows with his head. They are not comparable and merely to say that a worker is 'skilled' is to say nothing of the changes continually reshaping his job.¹¹

Technique is also a more useful term because it indicates a form of interaction with tools, environment and other workers that connotes expertise and esoteric knowledge, while at the same time it provides a more specific referent from which work processes and patterns of behavior can be

viewed. Some occupations, like tool and die making, generate a more evident technique than do others, like assembly line work, because of the number and diversity of the processes involved and the varied criteria upon which a "craftsman" is judged by other group members. In all occupational groups these criteria reflect the major technical concerns of the work group primarily while on the job site or in the company of other workers. At other times an individual may participate in groups or experiences totally unrelated to work. This does not minimize the impact of occupational culture upon a worker's expressive repertory, it merely makes a distinction between cultural roles as this individual moves from one group to another.

Technique, then, is the pattern of manipulations, actions and rhythms central to the function of an occupational group which are prescribed by that group and used as criteria for determination of membership and status within it. The primary technique of tool and die making is the shaping of positive/negative molds by removing metal from both halves,¹² while the primary technique of glass work in a molding factory is the smooth coordination and movement of raw glass into the kiln, out again, into the mold and then into the Lehr.¹³ Technique is the "shaping principle" of an occupation, and its transmission from one group member to the next forms the basis of

internal and external concepts of a particular trade. Within the occupation it is known as "knowing the trade," or being "a good mechanic," whereas outside of the work group it is generally referred to as "skill" or an individual is simply referred to as a member of a general work group (carpenter, teacher, dancer, etc.) who has "been at it a long time," is "well respected in their trade," or "really cares about their work."

An example will illustrate the pervasiveness of work technique upon the culture of a work group. In his study of the workplace of longshoremen in Portland, Oregon, William Pilcher states that

There is a general distinction between the ship and the dock. Much less of the behavior described takes place when longshoremen are working on the dock than when the same men are working on board ships, and what does occur is much milder in tone. It is also possible to distinguish between the kinds of work performed on the ships. On ships where logs or long steel beams and plates are being handled, or where the work is especially arduous, seemingly bitter mutual verbal abuse is almost constant and mock assaults are very frequent. On other shipboard operations, this behavior is not serious in appearance and clearly conveys a sense of easygoing good fellowship as it does among men working on the docks.¹⁴

The work process or flow of the longshoreman's job is moving bulk goods into or out of a ship and "stowing items so that they will not shift or fall . . . or chafe into shreds."¹⁵ This technique (actually a constellation of techniques gained over years of experience) demands physical as well as oral articulation and as can be seen

in the preceding description, there is a direct relationship between shipboard and dock technique and their accompanying expressive behavior. I am suggesting that in the work context these two forms of interaction are parallel modes of communication which are perceived and used as such by the workers themselves, i.e., there are situations in which the work group provides for the "emergence"¹⁶ of performance (verbal and non-verbal) from beyond the daily work flow and conversational background or environment of "meaningful" noise surrounding the work situation.¹⁷

In order to distinguish communication through technique from daily physical interaction, it is necessary to discern a pattern through which meaningful or communicative movement, manipulation and rhythm (the performance of technique) can be separated from that which is not meaningful--not all activity can be loaded with shared meaning, thus becoming symbolic.¹⁸ Erving Goffman's concepts of substantive and ceremonial rules of conduct are particularly useful in this regard.¹⁹ The daily movement of materials on and off the dock, taking a patient's temperature or welding a continuous window mullion are daily activities of a longshoreman, nurse and sheet metal worker which must conform to certain rules of conduct that facilitate their completion, i.e., they aid the worker by giving him a charter or code of technique that has little

or no expressive implication.²⁰ At other times, however, the individual worker may use these same techniques in a performance context. The longshoreman, for example, may strain in mock helplessness to get someone to give him a hand or he may use a high vantage point to make an obscene gesture with a pole or other piece of equipment; the nurse makes the thermometer into an "airplane" to coax it into the child's "hangar"/mouth; and the welder slowly and carefully repeats his welding technique so that an onlooking apprentice can learn the correct processes. These performed techniques are based upon ceremonial rules of conduct which have their

. . . primary importance . . . as a conventionalized means of communication by which the individual expresses his character or conveys his appreciation of the other participants in the situation.²¹

They are work techniques that communicate substantially as patterned, normative charters for daily activity, and ceremonially as "task-embedded, sign-vehicles,"²² that use the work environment as a performance context taking the tools, materials and even normative activities of the work place and giving them symbolic significance. This expressive dimension of technique, however, is inextricably tied to the other two forms of communication in contemporary industry, verbal art and custom. The relationship between these three modes is based primarily on the work flow itself and therefore there are strong parallels between

substantive and ceremonial rules of conduct that pervade the entire work culture. This relationship will be explored in greater detail in the following sections.

Gregory Bateson, in a discussion of primitive art, states that the determination of meaning in creative action or "skill" is based upon the

. . . interface between the conscious and the unconscious. . . . The sensations and qualities of skill can never be put in words and yet the fact of skill is conscious.²³

He illustrates this concept with a quote from Isadora Duncan in which she states that "If I could tell you what it meant, there would be no point in dancing it."²⁴ Bateson interprets this as a comment about the distinction between artistic process and the verbalization of that process, but it is also applicable to the distinction between technique and oral expression in the work place. Both technique and oral expression reflect varying levels of complexity and sophistication from the use of jargon in a sentence to the performance of a fully developed occupational experience narrative with opening and closing markers and coda;²⁵ and from the gestural shrug through the highly developed gestural sign language described by Meissner;²⁶ to the complex techniques of a model maker in a tool and die shop within a large manufacturing plant. Much of this communication (gestural, verbal, technical) is substantive in that it merely aids daily interaction by providing a charter for it, whereas occasionally it will

be used in a performance (ceremonial) capacity to address a particular issue or make an individual statement. The choice of expressive mode is significant because there are statements that can be made in one mode that cannot be made through another. The tool and die maker, for example, has to show the apprentice how to mill a certain piece of stock because words would not communicate the most useful information. In a reverse manner, the industrial accident account must be verbally presented for obvious reasons. Just as there are media which are more appropriate for various kinds of artistic expression, occupational contexts shape expression in distinctive ways that reveal the structures of working knowledge upon which they are based.

Between the oral and the technical modes of communication lies the gestural. This mode can become highly elaborated in the occupational context where noise and isolation force workers into a form of communication that is non-verbal yet requires an individual to make and interpret symbols which have syntactical relationships like sentences and do not require the interaction between the body and the working environment (as does technique) to make the meaning known. Meissner makes a useful distinction between "instrumental" and "expressive" communication in the sawmill which parallels that I have borrowed from Goffman, and he provides the following examples:

When an executive toured the plant with one younger and two older women, the setter signed the following sequence on one pass: big-shot-over-there (pointing) three-women. On the following pass he continued: one-woman-twenty-five-figure (outlined with hands) just-right. . . . This message came through only after a second try, and on the fourth pass he finished with: she (pointing) my-girl-friend.

This conversation network also served technical functions. The head sawyer once gave a light signal to the leverman which would have resulted in sending a work piece to the wrong destination. He told the setter: I-push-button-wrong-tell-leverman. The setter transmitted the message successfully to the leverman, allowing him to retrieve the piece by reversing rolls and sending it to the right place all in a matter of seconds.²⁷

The first paragraph describes an "expressive" or ceremonial mode whereas the second describes an "instrumental" or substantive mode of communication. In both cases, sign language is used in a performance context in which the setter presents information in the sawmill context in a prescriptive manner that indicates a type of message is being communicated, i.e., the actor is conducting himself in a manner that signals what type of information will be forthcoming.²⁸ The relationship of this gestural language to technique in the above example is exemplified by the periodic punctuation of the passing carriage. This also reflects the interstitial nature of gesture as a communication mode which functions between technique and verbal expression, i.e., technique is communicated through total involvement of the body with the work process, while gesture and sign language combine elements of specialized

body movement that require at least a partial removal from work processes to allow signing, while verbal communication refers to the work process but is almost totally reliant upon using rhythmic breaks or pre/post/lunch periods for communication through oral means. In the actual work context the situation is complicated by the fact that an individual or group may engage in all three forms almost simultaneously and therefore the only possible way they could be documented would be through film or videotape.

Although gesture is an important form of communication in occupational setting it is rarely as highly developed in most work situations as it is in the mill described by Meissner. Noise and isolation can force workers into a reliance upon non-verbal forms to such a high degree,²⁹ but in-group verbal expression still occupies a prominent place in the communication networks linking individuals in modern industry. Stories about first days on the job, accident and unusual occurrence accounts, jokes, jargon, the use of nicknames, bullshitting, ragging, and stories about particular characters and individuals are common topics of talk. Even though this aspect of occupational experience is perhaps more easily accepted by the folklorist as a legitimate body of material because of the attention paid to it by early investigators, it is no more easily approached and understood than technique with which it is closely tied.

The occupational experience story (or allusions to stories known in common about the boss or quick insults or bits of joking behavior expressed in passing) is the basis of oral interaction in an occupational group. As Siegfried Neumann points out these oral expressions begin to exhibit a middle point concentration (when viewed by the ethnographer) between the day to day concerns of group members on the one hand and unusual occurrences or dramatic event stories and accident accounts on the other.³⁰ Neumann's middle point concept is useful because it reveals that the occupational expressions of a particular group form a continuum from the mundane (patterned conversations about lunch, overtime, etc.), to the central or middle point (accident stories about a recurring exposure in the shop like a dangerous catwalk or a particular job or machine that chronically concerns the group) to the extreme (introduction of a new, job destructive piece of equipment or an on-the-job fatality). By viewing the expressions of a particular work group in this manner, the details and recurrence of middle point expressions as they function between the mundane and the extreme become a distinguishing characteristic of the group. And when viewed as an adjunct to the shaping principle of technique, they provide a basis for comparison to other occupational groups. The shaping principle of making cement, for example, is the flow and precise mixture of various

minerals and elements as they are crushed, fed, baked and finally mixed and sacked. The techniques of workers in this trade demand an awareness of this flow and the ability to keep huge trucks, conveyors, test and electrical equipment in twenty-four hour operation to feed the insatiable kiln; while the oral expressions reflect a middle point concern for incidents that stop the flow: hands caught in the conveyors, trucks disabled by quarried rock, kilns and equipment damaged by meddling supervisors, and men injured by people too eager to get damaged equipment running again.³¹ The middle point approach provides a basis for comparison between groups in a given occupation or between occupations while at the same time it reveals the major concerns of the occupational community as expressed through oral media.

Most work-generated verbal expression is related during breaks, or at a time when work is not being done before or after the work day. The communications usually have a specific genesis (a near-miss account recollected by a similar incident that day, or a story about one person that reminds someone of a similar character) and they are often told in the verbal shorthand of jargon or in fragmented form. The same expression told to an outsider (or to another audience not indigenous to the work setting) requires greater elaboration and explanation that extends the account and radically alters its form and refocuses

its function.³² For example, a fire account or fully elaborated occupational experience narrative told by an urban fireman to a fellow fire fighter might take two minutes to recount with such compacted terms as "we had a roast on our hand--the Loo told Lewis to take the nob." The same story told to an audience of outsiders demands the explanation of these terms which not only extends the narrative, but also refocuses its function from specific to general education and entertainment.

A good raconteur can skillfully weave explanations of jargon throughout an occupational narrative and still retain the dynamic relationship to the described action. A story told about a construction man's bar, McGuire's Pub in Washington, D.C., as told to an audience at the 1976 Festival of American Folklife adds credibility to the contention of the lather telling the story that a craft attitude and separateness still pervade urban construction work. The same story, redacted and told to a lather just arriving in the capital would communicate an entirely different range of information, not the least of which might be a recognition of a place where this entering tradesman might make job contacts.³³ What is interesting about this phenomenon is that while occupational narrative is highly group-specific, it can retain its integrity and inherent interest outside of the occupational environment even though it is extended due to the translation of jargon.

It has, in other words, the potential for being a highly pervasive and adaptable form. This adaptability is reflected in the popular borrowing of such phrases as "we have to tool up for a new job," or "the deal was short circuited," even though in the festival situation inside communications like these are told (related rather than acted) or at least performed out of context rather than "fully" performed in the occupational milieu.³⁴ Both the festival and the work context are viable from a folkloristic point of view even though the former is artificially framed and must be viewed with regard to the rules upon which the original performance was based in the work context before truly representative comparative work between the two environments can be attempted.

Linked to the preceding expressive media of technique and oral expression are the customs generated by the work experience. As Tönnies has pointed out, custom falls into three general categories: 1) customary action or habit, 2) a rule or norm of action, and 3) a will or "psychic disposition which sets into motion and pervades a certain action."³⁵ An example of the first is the routine followed by an older tool and die maker arriving to work, putting his coat on the rack, wiping down the machine, and placing the stock on the jig with a regularity generated by years of habit and repetition.³⁶ Secondly, a rule or norm customarily followed in the work situation is

exemplified by the prescriptions placed upon the activities of a rookie in fire fighting or an apprentice in the printing trades. The rules demand that these individuals act in a certain way and perform obligatory tasks like cleaning up, making the coffee, and being general "gophers."³⁷

The third level of custom (in which the collective will of the group is both exemplified and "set into motion") is illustrated by the custom followed on construction sites of walking off the job after a work related fatality,³⁸ sending an apprentice for sky hooks, board stretchers or even glass rods to weld a broken window,³⁹ or through the wearing of a particular kind of dress that is only acceptable when a certain status is achieved as in the polka-dot hats worn by pipeline welders.⁴⁰ Returning to Goffman's dichotomy, examples one and two could be viewed as substantive modes of conduct while the third illustrates the ceremonial mode through its use of the natural work context in an expressive, symbolic manner to mark transitions. If technique is the central shaping principle of an occupation which is reflected in and commented upon by oral expression and gesture, then custom and ritual mark movement into and out of the group and maintain its solidarity and separation.

The techniques, gestures, oral expressions and customs which comprise the communications network of a

particular occupational group are theoretical constructs which have been posited in an attempt to provide a background against which specific investigations of these elements of occupational culture can be analyzed in some depth in the following chapters. In the actual work situation all of these cultural elements are fragmented, inverted, and continually mixed with outside concerns of a popular or familial nature (to name just two influences) that interact with the work culture by constantly borrowing from and adding to it. It must also be pointed out that the contemporary industrial "rationalization"⁴¹ which results in a continued division of work tasks into a greater number of less fulfilling techniques (while at the same time a counter movement is demanding a greater variety of techniques from specialists in repair and technical service jobs)⁴² results in a network of defensive communications which are an integral part of any occupational group. Georges Friedmann provides a clear example of the causes and results of this network when he writes that

good toolmakers at the Etablissements Renault, former pupils of trade schools, have told me how important for them was the date of the application of a new system which they felt injured them. From that moment they shammed and 'faked' like the others. Where skill exists it may be intentionally degraded under the influence of the economic and psychological conditions of the company.⁴³

This shamming and faking (often developing into sabotage) takes many forms that cut across the expressive levels discussed above and in many ways forms a counter expressive

culture that shapes and informs the entire work experience. As folklorists, we must be aware of this aspect of our field by attempting to understand and interpret how such counter technique is learned and used in the work place. The question of documenting and reporting this information is an entirely different matter and one which forces the investigator to deal openly and honestly with the people with whom he is working.

In this discussion I synthesize from a number of theoretical approaches in developing a theory of occupational culture. My division of occupational experience into modes of communication reflects the anthropological/linguistic foundation of this approach. I have also gained a great deal of insight into occupational experience through the accounts of work group members who have participated in an emerging genre-occupational autobiography--that has great value for increasing our understanding of inside perspectives.⁴⁴ Occupational cultures hold great promise for increasing our understanding of the rule underlying work communication processes, particularly if we keep in mind the simultaneity and variety of the modes of communication and don't exclude one in favor of another. A continuum from conversation (substantive) to full performance (ceremonial) exists on all levels of occupational communication. As more in-depth fieldwork is conducted, new modes will be discovered and revisions of this

preliminary model will enable us to better understand the variety of ways in which expressive elements are structured and used.

We will never get such an opportunity, however, as long as those inside the work place view the ethnographer with suspicion and as anything but another worker practicing the techniques of his or her occupation. Unfortunately there is justification for that suspicion and this is a stigma as insidious as the distinction between "white" and "blue" collar workers or as destructive as the exclusion of women from the work place, and it is the main reason that this rich research field has gone largely unexplored.⁴⁵

The model of occupational folklife outlined in this chapter suggests that the study of occupational culture must consider the importance of work processes and techniques as a basis for generating the other expressive forms in the work setting. In the chapters that follow, the three major aspects of occupational expression, technique, custom and verbal interaction will be explored in some detail.

CHAPTER III

THE CENTRALITY OF WORK TECHNIQUE

The preceding material has illustrated the importance of understanding the work techniques of any given occupation as a means through which other forms of expression and interaction can be understood. Work technique is central in shaping occupational culture because it is in the process of work, its timing, rhythm, movement and the interplay between worker and environment that all other opportunities for expression are provided. In an attempt to illustrate the importance of this concept, I begin the chapter with an examination of the communication of work technique in a fishing scene in which I participated in a small fishing "outport" village south of St. John's, Newfoundland.

The data upon which this and the following chapters are based was generated in a variety of fieldwork situations. The smokejumper material was "researched" from 1965 to 1969 when I was employed in the occupation to which I later returned as a fieldworker in 1969. The general occupational examples (construction trades, etc.) were documented while I was a fieldworker for the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife from January 1975 to December

1977, and again in 1978 and 1979. The fishing experience cited below was based on a fieldwork project I conducted while I was a graduate student in folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland. All of the urban fire fighting material was the result of over eighteen months of intensive research with the District of Columbia Fire Fighters' Association from September 1978 to March 1980. The nature of that project is explained in detail in the final chapter.

On the morning of August 6, 1977, I accompanied a commercial fisherman out to his fish traps set off of the Newfoundland coast at Bauline, a small fishing community about thirty miles south of St. John's. I arrived at the wharf by 4:00 A.M. and as I waited in the darkness I could hear the opening and closing of doors and the clunk of rubber boots on the gravel as the fishermen in the community walked down the hill to their boats. By 5:00 A.M. I was seated in the stern of a small trap skiff (a homemade work boat constructed by the fisherman himself) as John R., his son and brother and a fourth man eased us out into a calm but overcast sea. There was little conversation as we headed down the peninsula to the traps--the pocketa-pocketa of the engine echoing off of the steep rocky cliffs and wooded hills of the coastline. Just at the time we were settling into the rhythm of the swells and the motion of the boat, John shut off the engine and we glided

smoothly to a bright orange float as the two forward men stood up, hooked their arms under the suspenders of their rubber pants and put on their woolen mitts. The silence of the entire operation that followed was broken only by the sounds of an occasional grunt of exertion, a fish thrown into the mid-ship room, a gaff hook or dip net bumping against the gunwhale, or the surf breaking on the rocks to which the cod trap itself was attached. Grabbing a gaff hook, John's son fished out the central or span line of the traps and the four men pulled us into the center of the nets by passing the line over the bow of the boat and pulling on it in a hand-over-hand coordinated manner.

A cod trap in Newfoundland is essentially a large net box weighted at the bottom with lead sinkers. There is a single entry way or door through which the fish can enter the trap but out of which it is difficult for them to escape. Each corner of the trap is supported by floats and by hauling in the vertical or rise lines the fisherman harvests his catch. John's son began hauling in the first line and the net at the bow while his father began the same operation at the stern. The other two men stood behind them and either helped to haul the trap in with a quick hand-over-hand motion or repaired broken meshes with a quick stitch of the netting needles. It took ten minutes to haul the entire trap up into the skiff. The catch was

pitifully small, ten to twenty fair sized cod with a sprinkling of mackerel and flounder.

Throughout the entire operation--hauling, repairing meshes, extricating fish from the trap, and even leaning out over the stern to disengage a fouled linnet from the propeller--each man was continually reacting to and coordinating his movements with the activities of the others in the boat. But not a word was spoken. Finally, when the entire trap had been returned to its original position and the motor started, everyone sat down and lit up. As we turned in a slow arc to head for the other traps, John said simply, "Fookin tides," indicating that the late season tides had been responsible for the poor catch. And as we headed down the coast to Mobile and the next trap, everyone in the boat stared off at the horizon or toward the bird islands and nodded in silent agreement.

The central concepts I am concerned with in this scene are the relationships between verbal and non-verbal communication in a work context and how, as an ethnographer, I can distinguish between significant, expressive behavior and instrumental movement. Before these questions can be answered, however, it will be necessary to establish a theoretical relationship between verbal and non-verbal interaction in general. I am suggesting that in the work environment, work techniques provide a focus on the significant behaviors that externally characterize

a particular work group and are at the same time the central media through which the group internally communicates.

The harvest of fish off of the Newfoundland coast is still a culturally pervasive occupation in that the entire social and technical complex of this work constitutes a major part of the daily lives of the people who live in the outports or fishing communities. From the fabrication and repair of gear to building of boats and the transportation, processing and eating of fish, the techniques of the inshore fishery influence the nature of interaction in these settlements. As industrialism (the introduction of long liners and mechanical means of hauling nets and traps) imposes a greater division of labor upon the fishery, a more dramatic work/non-work dichotomy is exerted on these previously undifferentiated spheres of interaction. This modernization has not, however, had a tremendous impact upon the specific fishing techniques employed by the fishermen. It has merely altered the relationship between work/non-work situations and has supplanted hand-made nets, floats, boats and methods of producing power with commercially made products that continue to be used in historically proven ways. The setting and hauling of cod traps, salmon nets and jigging are all practiced today in much the same way they have been in past in the designated familial spots along the coast.

Only through an understanding of the entire range of work behavior will it be possible to view that behavior from the fisherman's or worker's perspective. Once that has been accomplished, we can begin to appreciate the subtleties and fine points of specific communications. This knowledge can only be gained through an initial understanding of the work techniques involved because in the world of tools, machines, materials and highly stylized forms of behavior, these techniques comprise the primary mode of expression via both verbal and non-verbal means. The information that is passed through these channels ranges from the substantive "conversation" of hauling a trap (a daily interaction in which no words are spoken) to the expressive or ceremonial teaching of boat construction (in which an experienced fisherman/boatbuilder dramatizes normative verbal and non-verbal behavior in an attempt to communicate his techniques to a novice). In any occupation, cement work, tool and die making, ethnography, or coastal fishing, now or in the past, the relationship of the individual to his tools, machines, physical environment, formal and informal work processes and (most importantly) fellow workers is central to both the accomplishment of work and our understanding of it because it is from these processes that all expressive behavior is derived. If we begin with the process and don't limit the initial approach to a certain type of generic mode or product, the chances are best for efficiently discovering the insider's point

of view.

Work technique has previously been defined as the pattern of manipulations, actions, rhythms and expressions which are the result of the interaction between an individual, his gear and his work environment. These patterns are essential to the accomplishment of a task, prescribed by the work group and used as criteria for determination of membership and status within it. There is a constellation of work techniques in the fishing scene described earlier. The entire passage from the time we reached the trap until John's comment about the tides can be usefully regarded as a unit of behavior made up of hierarchically arranged sub-segments. Beginning with the assumption of positions in the skiff there is a continuous series of periodic cause and effect activities that result in an ever expanding and adaptable range of further activities. To provide just one example from that scene: at the end of the sequence of activities resulting in the entire trap being hauled, the linnet is either in or around the boat. The next series of interactions is a reversal of the first series and each man pays out the line so that the trap resumes its former position beneath the floats. Half way out, John notices that one of the linnets is caught on the boat's propeller. While he grabs a gaff hook (thus causing everyone in the boat to stop and look because a new pattern of behavior is begun in response to John's movement) the others stop and slacken their lines along the

gunwhales of the boat so that when John places his hand on the tiller and leans out over the stern to unhook the fouled linnet, he has enough slack to free the line. He frees it, puts the hook down, returns to his former position while the others resume their previous postures and the preceding series of paying out the lines is resumed. John's movement itself was enough to suggest not only a change in behavior (stop paying out the trap), but what should be done instead (provide slack).

The experienced worker doesn't make fewer mistakes, he just doesn't follow them out to the point where they become a block to further, anticipated behavior.¹ Had I been hauling the trap in the above description, John would have had to verbalize and explain his request to stop paying out the lines because my inexperience would have caused me to assume that I could complete this task and move on to the final objective. I am result oriented exclusively, while the experienced worker completes each segment of behavior in orderly and smoothly rhythmic steps relying on the environment and other workers to dictate his actions rather than on sometimes unnecessary and cumbersome verbalization to describe it. Taken as a whole, the nod of a head, steering of a boat, twist of a gaff hook, passing of a line and flick of a mesh repairing needle, are repetitive behaviors that reflect a habitual frame of interaction. They are stylized behaviors that coordinate daily activity and therefore reflect a concern for

substantive communication. The non-verbal mode is comprised of material objects which in their juxtaposition and manipulation pose a sort of non-verbal interrogative which can only be articulated using the socio-technical complexes at hand (the setting and hauling of the trap). The answer to this non-verbal question is a luke-warm affirmative (indicating that the catch was hardly worth the effort) and the paradigmatic response is a verbal hypothesis explaining the reason for the result: the "fookin tides."

There is sufficient evidence in the literature to substantiate a claim that people in occupational and other groups can and do communicate through the manipulation of tools and materials as well as through unaccompanied gesture and verbal expression.² We must, however, go beyond the observation of superficial, non-verbal behavior to get at its use or meaning and as I have suggested previously, this requires an attempt to "approximate as closely as possible the emic situation."³ This is Pike's pre-structural first step to any ethnographic investigation. Although I am only superficially presenting his complex model here, his concept of the behavioreme has important implications for the study of verbal and non-verbal behavior in an occupational setting.

Pike defines a behavioreme as a unit of verbal or non-verbal behavior that can be structurally

isolated within a particular group and is viewed as having a hierarchy of elements, a beginning and end and a cultural purpose by the group members themselves.⁴ The trap hauling scene is a behavioreme as are the loading of a truck at a truck dock, the wiping of lead cable in a manhole, the cleaning of a house, and the attack of a burning building by fire fighters. Work technique is simply the set of postulated behavioremes which it is the job of the ethnographer to discover and document in its natural habitat with the intent of viewing it as it is viewed by the insider. Pike's concept is particularly useful because it suggests that this behavior may be either verbal or non-verbal. Therefore the motions, gestures, rhythms and short-cuts used to tighten a ratchet on a tow in the St. Louis harbor comprise a segment of work behavior or a primarily non-verbal behavioreme that could later be presented in verbal form as a personal experience narrative. There may be more expressive license in the verbal account because the behavior has occurred in the past and a verbal treatment may concentrate upon specific elements to the exclusion of others out of normal, temporal sequence as discussed in the work of Labov and Wallletzky.⁵ It may also be possible, however, that the ironies, tones, styles, and dramatic intricacies of non-verbal behavior are being expressed with as high a degree of subtlety but we don't have the technical or conceptual ability to document or

interpret these expressions. An occupational sociologist, Jack Haas, has done fieldwork with ironworkers that suggests that although fear is a part of the work, the expressive behavior exhibiting a lack of fear is indispensable to the cooperation necessary between two workers in the trade. Therefore even the slightest balance-gaining-stumble or steel-grabbing gesture is read with incredible closeness even to the point of giving names to these inappropriate, fear exhibiting faux pas like "sea-gulling," "cooning," and "cradling" the steel.⁶

Actual research into the area of work technique (outside of the "rationalizing" time-motion studies done by the Gilbreths following Taylor's model in the 1920's) was done by the British during World War II and published by these industrial psychologists just after the war in a journal entitled Occupational Psychology.⁷ In one of the earliest of these articles, the pioneer social psychologist F.C. Bartlett, who had been working with Royal Air Force bomb squadrons to measure and improve their accuracy and efficiency, suggested that skill (read technique) is not a sequence of continuous activity but is in reality a discontinuous series of effector/responder chains of actions in which each separate reaction is based on specific and anticipated stimuli, and these chains eventually result in an achievement or product which is merely the final part of the process.⁸ This is a useful insight into work

technique in that it forces the investigator, to view work activity not from a product-, but from a process-perspective. The exterior of a finished house or the fact that a building is no longer engulfed in flames, for example, say nothing about the quality of the techniques used to build the structure or to put out the fire. This is a level of judgment and esoteric evaluation that only insiders can determine and articulate into a critical verbal and non-verbal framework.

In a second part of his article on human skill, Bartlett suggests that each skill or technique has a key feature of rhythm, posture, anticipation of response or central activity that is unique to that portion of the work process.⁹ A hose wagon driver in the District of Columbia fire department, for example, may speed into intersections (braking sharply at the last minute and charging to the next intersection to do the same) in an extremely aggressive way to get through traffic by intimidating other drivers. Another wagon driver may accomplish the same task using a short-cut on the median strip or just pause for a brief second in a more rhythmic manner at each intersection until he can determine a safe way to weave his way through traffic. Both achieve the same results, but the latter driver (because of his smoother, more cautious approach which doesn't endanger the men on the back step) would be viewed as exhibiting timing and technique closest to the ideal

performance. Again as Bartlett points out,

There is one characteristic which crops up over and over again in descriptions of expert, skilled performance. The operator is said to have 'all the time in the world to do what he wants. . . . ' What is impressive is the absence of any appearance of hurry in the whole operation. There is no jerkiness or snatching, no obvious racing to catch up in one part and forced sauntering to make up in another. The 'time' that is spoken of is really 'timing'. . . .¹⁰

This reflection of central or key technique exhibited through unhurried rhythm and timing can be illustrated in yet another example of fire fighting work process. In the following situation a truck company, which is responsible for ventilating a structure, placing ladders to the windows and roof and rescuing anyone trapped in the building, exhibits competence in performing a key technique:

(The scene is the watch desk in the front of the fire house. The man telling the story is a young fire chief who is surrounded by four other fire fighters and myself who are listening to his account).

Chief: And I thought I was pretty good when I went to 4 Truck and I found out that those guys had a very high level of professionalism. One of the little things they did . . . is that when they would get to a building they would pitch in, the outside guys would immediately pitch in with the portable ladders. But one of the little things that they did before doing that, the axe man and the hook man would see to it that whatever ladder it was that they moved with toward the building, they'd see that their hook and their axe were leaning beside the front door. And then they went on their way doing the rest of the things that they could do. Now when they got finished putting up the portable ladders and got ready to go in, that's where it would be. They'd grab it and go

on in. In the meantime, though, if somebody got up there and somebody needed something quick, the engine officer, or the chief or the aide--all the different people who came running through that door, saw that axe and that hook sitting there and somebody yells, you know, give me the hook, quick. O.K., zip, no running all the way back to the apparatus or anything, there it is right by the front door and they could grab it and take it in there. So that was a little piece of efficiency 4 Truck to this day does--and I don't know of any other company in the city that does.¹¹

This narrative underscores the fact that the mere accomplishment of a task (all truck companies eventually take a hook and axe into a fire building) does not reflect the quality or ability of the technique performances that resulted in that accomplishment. By being aware initially of the basic techniques needed to accomplish a particular goal or product, and evaluating those techniques on the basis of the key technique suggested by the practitioners themselves (usually in the form of qualified personal experience narratives) we can gain a closer approximation of how the insider judges a good performance.

Yet, as Bartlett points out, when asked directly, most experts in any field will answer questions about proper technique with responses that describe not how to do a particular thing, but with what and when to do it.¹² We cannot, in other words, gain a tremendous amount of knowledge about key techniques through direct questioning because the expert practitioner thinks less consciously about ways in which it is done physically than he does about the appropriateness and timing of the technique and

the anticipation of his future responses. This suggests that perhaps there are levels of technique upon which a worker bases his perception of what it is he does. In a later article in Occupational Psychology, C.A. Mace describes some levels of skill that may provide us with a way of approaching technique for ethnographic purposes:

What we call physical skill (it is not purely physical) is the ability to produce some required effect, or group of effects through bodily movements guided by sensory and perceptual cues. There are also intellectual skills in which generalized knowledge and imagination play an important part, and social skills in which subtle emotional reactions to personality and subtle expressions are the chief determinants of the required effect.¹³

Simplified, these types of skill (physical, social and ideological) suggest that there may be ways of interacting with various types of stimuli from the physical, social, and ideological environment which demand responses on one or two or perhaps even all three levels simultaneously. As an individual develops an ability to anticipate these stimuli, his responses become less conscious and he begins to anticipate what he thinks will be the next or even the fourth or fifth step before he even gets there. Consequently when questioned about any one particular technique he can more easily place that technique in a continuum than he can describe it in isolation. As illustrated below, this should suggest to the ethnographer that the critical comments of a group of specialists discussing a particular work activity (based on a shared evaluative network or

critical canon) will yield much more meaningful data about all three levels of technique than could any individual answering the direct questions of even the most astute investigator.

As an example, in the fire fighting culture these levels of technique might be broken down in the following manner: the actual fire fighting situation in which the individual is coping with the physical element of fire represents physical technique. At the same time, however, he must rely on the collective actions and responses of his fellow fire fighters to advance the hose lines, throw the ladders and supply the water, as well as verbally evaluate the fire after it is over, clean and maintain the equipment and the fire house and define his place in the group. All of these latter involvements require social as well as instrumental techniques. And finally, as he moves up the administrative hierarchy, he spends more time directing the group using social techniques to achieve physical results. These directions, however, increasingly rely on individual philosophy (ideological techniques) which are under the constant scrutiny of both the administrator, his peers, and those he directs. As he proceeds up the command structure, it appears as though rather than leaving one level of technique to pass on another (say the physical to the ideological), an officer in the fire service accumulates a constellation of physical, social and ideological techniques

that must be maintained as an ever-expanding background from which specific techniques are drawn. Mace verifies this in the following passage:

In all but the simplest skills we may distinguish between two factors in cognitive control: (i) situational information and (ii) general knowledge.¹⁴

He goes on to provide the following example:

The general knowledge that a plumber needs is that which will enable him to do what he wants to do under a variety of conditions, and will enable him to say why he does it. . . . Some degree of generality in his knowledge is essential to allow for flexibility and transference of skill. He needs to know the reasons for his actions so as not to perform an action when it is inappropriate. The awareness of reasons like generality, endows a skill with flexibility.¹⁵

It is this ability to "know the reasons for his actions" and articulate them, to be critical of his work and that of his peers that is the key to this concept. The critique after the fire when fire fighters compare notes on who did or did not perform correctly, the bull session in the bar after a day in the plant, or the lunch time rap session where workers compare notes about a particularly difficult job are all reflections of a critical canon that both defines work and judges ability for those in any occupational culture. Although this canon has non-verbal expression in the physical tricks of the trade, it is often expressed through first and second person experience narratives which are a basic part of urban, occupational lore. By documenting these critical comments as they are expressed and responded to in a variety of

work contexts, folklorists may not only gain an insight into the insider's concept of key techniques, i.e., but also begin to piece together this critical canon, developing an esoteric view of how the performance of that technique is judged--how the canon is enforced. He is, in other words, approximating the inside view.

In an effort to illustrate this concept and its efficacy in approximating the inside view of technique, I provide the following example. This story was told around the dinner table one night as a young fire chief was discussing the changing role of his job with one older chief while a number of fire fighters and I looked on. In response to a question about the differences between older and younger chiefs, he stated that

A lot of the older chiefs tend to be inside more and a lot of your younger chiefs tend to be outside more, but that's just kind of a weak generalization. I think it's a question of efficiency, myself. I'm outside and if I can possibly be outside that's where I can tell what's happening far easier from the outside than I can from the inside. It is just more efficient because if you are on the inside there is a tendency for inside chiefs to become super captains. You're in the hallways and pushing people this way and that telling them what to do and get the door and pull the ceiling here. And there's a lot of people doing it. As a matter of fact, that's one of the things that makes me think maybe I'm the one who is doing things wrong because there are so many chiefs who do it. But basically I do think that it is better to be outside. You can't think overall when you go inside. I've done it myself, got sucked into a hallway. And the next thing you know they're trying to get the door and I'm telling them to take the hinges off and I'm thinking about the hinges. I'm not thinking about the big picture. I'm not thinking about the floor above. I'm thinking about the hinges. The second thing is

that outside you can see what is happening to the whole building. You can see where the fire is, if its being hit, if its moving from one floor to another, and generally considering things like special units like the mask unit or something, and if you're pushing around the halls you don't think about those things.¹⁵

In isolation this story doesn't reveal a tremendous amount about the esoteric perspective of an urban fire chief, but when viewed within the context of the general fire fighting culture, two opposing techniques for directing fire fighting attack come into sharp focus. In the old days, before radios, the fire chief had only two ways to get orders to his men on the fire ground. He either shouted over the roar of the fire with a megaphone or plunged into the building and directed the attack from the inside. The latter technique proved to be more efficient for most chiefs and (since the fire fighting culture is extremely technique conservative) this traditional method has been passed on to the current generation of older, more conservative chiefs. The younger men fulfilling that role (as seen in the story) use the radio and their aide to direct the fire from the outside. The statement that older chiefs are inside and younger chiefs are outside is "a kind of a weak generalization," because there is some cross-over on both sides of the age line regarding interior or exterior attack. This further suggests that this key fire fighting technique is in the slow process of transition in the culture and that as the younger men become

more numerous, the outside position will most likely predominate. For our purposes it illustrates the utility of understanding technique through a careful reading of the collective critical comments of experts in the field.

One difficulty in approaching occupational groups from this key technique perspective lies in the investigator's inability to distinguish discussions and observations of key techniques from the tremendous variety and volume of conversations, discussions and interactions that comprise the daily give and take in an occupational setting. Here Neumann's previously discussed concept of the middle-point in occupational culture is particularly useful.¹⁷ The following narrative exchange provides a focus for a discussion:

(Members of engine company and truck company in the same fire house have just returned from a tough fire on the fourth floor of an office building in the downtown area. The fire was located in a small closet in a corner office and it was difficult to both locate and extinguish due to a lack of ventilation, which also caused a great deal of poly-vinyl chloride fumes to fill the hall with that odorless but deadly gas. This critique takes place as the fire fighters are washing out their face pieces and refilling their air bottles at the large compressed air tanks at the rear of the fire house.)

Officer to rookie: Kid you worked your ass off tonight. Turn around here and let's see if it's still on.

1st. Fire Fighter: Who ran out of air?

2nd. FF: The guy who wouldn't leave when his bell rang. Had to hang in there and play big bimbo.

1st. FF: When my bell rings man, I get adios.

2nd. FF: Hell, I could ring your bell with your mask not even on.

3rd. FF: I want to tell you something, man (to rookie) we should a had it. buddy. We went right on by that damn thing. But that's what you got all them other guys for is to back you up when you can't find it. But we should a had it.

Rookie: I tell you I went into that room and looked around. I thought we were really gonna come into something there on the left.

3rd. FF: I hung around there as long as I could. But after the third 'Get yer ass out of here,' by the white hat over there I couldn't ignore him anymore.

1st. FF: Yeah when it's time to get out, you got to get out. Like those fires we caught the other tour when W. knocked him on his ass trying to get out.

2nd. FF: That was on third street, right? When I was on the pipe?

1st. FF: The one after that.

2nd. FF: No, I wasn't on that.

1st. FF: What fire was it that W. either run out of air or whatever, but he almost killed you when he came out of there?

Officer: Municipal Building.

2nd. FF: Oh Municipal . . . oh man. I hadn't run out of air, I was just scared.

Officer: Oh you were? Well then you were the only one. Just because there was live ammunition and tear gas exploding everywhere.

4th. FF: Yeah I wasn't scared at all. I just decided I'd stroll out to the street and lay there on my face for fifteen minutes trying to get my breath. I think I only sucked up about six or seven inches of concrete off of that sidewalk trying to get some air.¹⁸

The non-verbal activity (the actual fighting of the fire) has already taken place. As I describe it in my field notes:

November 9: Fourth run to M. St. office bldg. and the PVC really heavy as we finally get to the fourth floor. It takes a long time to get the door knocked down and then when it goes--takes a while before the smoke really starts banking down. Weird fire because no oxygen left to let it burn and things really didn't get going until the truck co. broke the window in front.¹⁹

In a big office building where it is difficult to locate and extinguish a fire, the key technique is to conserve as much of your air for as long as safely possible. This can be done by either taking off your mask in the stairwells where the air is probably good, or trying to breathe in shallow puffs rather than in big gulps. Since inexperienced rookies have a tendency to do the latter, the critique after the fire is a collective reinforcement for the rookie's proper performance. A reinforcement that is underscored by the reference to the "bimbo" who (when his bell rang) stayed in anyway which is bad fire fighting form, improper technique, and potentially lethal behavior.

The rhythm of a fire fighting attack--an engine company's speed, accuracy and judgment when they enter a building with a hose line--depends upon a number of factors. These range from speed and accuracy over the road, the length of line chosen, the ease or speed with which the truck company opens up (allowing them to reach the fire), the severity and ventilation of the fire, and the amount of oxygen/exertion it takes to both enter and exit the fire floor. In the critique cited above, this particular company in its zeal to "hit" or be the first to get to the fire, had pushed its air supply to the breaking point. All of their bells were ringing which means that they have five minutes of air left to get out. Yet as seen in the statement by the third fire fighter, "But after the third 'Get

yer ass out of here,' by the white hat (officer) over there I couldn't ignore him anymore," they had to be told by the officer to get out of the building. Usually a good company will time itself and each individual will coordinate his rhythm with that of the others so that often the officer is literally just along for the ride. But in this case the officer had to assert his authority because the company was fast approaching the critical time limit and they weren't moving fast enough. In this case the competitive eagerness to be the company to "get" the fire had caused a possible mis-judgment and the officer (who is the most experienced worker on the scene) had to invoke his authority.

Mace's levels or types of technique--the physical, social, and ideological are also well illustrated in this collective narrative in which a number of individuals provide a portion of the story. Physical techniques range from gauging air supply, to locating a fire in a smoke-filled hallway as well as locating fires in certain areas of the city. The social techniques aired in this critique are almost all directed toward the rookie in an attempt to make him feel as though he is an accepted equal for a job well done. The main ideological technique is illustrated in the observation of the third fire fighter when he recounts the officer's order and more experienced decision to leave the building.

This short critique also reveals a tremendous amount about the key techniques of air conservation and judgment in a high rise building as well as the critical center of this occupational group which is the need to be able to totally trust your fellow fire fighter in any situation because you may have to depend upon him to save your life. When a new man joins a company, this trust must be earned, and as seen in the preceding critique, this particular rookie is well on his way to acceptance.

As in any collective narrative, the main topic is discussed from a number of points of view. In this critique the air conservation technique is approached in a number of different ways from the example of the fire fighter who ran out of air, to the order by the officer, to the lengthy comparison to a fire in the Municipal Building, in which the police storage of ammunition and tear gas burned, sending over fifty fire fighters to the hospital. This reinforces the point in this critique which is the need to conserve air, leave when your bell rings and at the same time maintain contact and solidarity with your company.

Finally, the comments made to the rookie are perhaps the most illustrative of the central concerns of this group. First the officer (in front of the whole company) asks the rookie if he worked his ass off, the others talk obliquely about other people who ran out of air (not the rookie--praise by lack of criticism), and then another fire fighter consults him like an equal: "We should a had

it buddy. . . ." Only then does the rookie respond and it is in the most self-effacing tone he can muster because to have bragged about a good performance at that point would have blown his newly found status in the critical scrutiny of the group. And in a statement aimed obliquely but definitely in the rookie's direction, an admission of fear by one of the officers and one of the fire fighters in front of the entire company is an extremely rare explicit statement about this pervasive subject. If the social equilibrium of *communitas* is possible (and in the fire fighting culture it is almost obligatory), then the rookie's performance of fire fighting techniques has qualified him to share a feeling of equality as the group members critically judge and accept him through the verbal critique based on his fire fighting performance as it has been judged against the central concerns of the group.

Work technique, then, is at the center of occupational culture because all work involves the accomplishment of tasks, and techniques are the way workers in a particular culture teach each other how to accomplish those tasks. By isolating the key or central techniques of a given work process, i.e., placing the more significant tasks between the polarities of mundane and unusual techniques, we can discern a shaping principle for each occupational group. Whether these techniques are learned through example or through story, they remain the very foundation upon which occupational culture is built.

CHAPTER IV

CUSTOM IN THE WORK PLACE

As in any other aspect of occupational culture, the role of custom extends from the mundane to the unusual, from habitual activities such as a fire fighter checking his boots, hat and coat to make sure everything is in order, to the complex rites-of-passage associated with an initiation, promotion or retirement. Custom here is defined in its broadest sense to include as Ruth Benedict has said, "... the patterns and standards traditionally handed down in a community."¹ She goes on to expand this definition in the following manner:

By the time (an individual) can talk, he is the little creature of his culture, and by the time he is grown and able to take part in its activities, its habits are his habits, its beliefs his beliefs, its impossibilities his impossibilities. . . . There is no social problem it is more incumbent upon us to understand than this of the rôle of custom. Until we are intelligent to its laws and varieties, the main complicating facts of human life must remain unintelligible.²

As Benedict warned, however, it is almost impossible to understand elaborate customs such as ritual without first being aware of the daily habits and norms of interaction upon which these more dramatic forms are based. As Leach has suggested, ritual can be simply viewed as a communications system in which the

... more condensed message forms which are characteristic of ritual action are generally appropriate to all forms of communication in which speaker and listener are in face to face relations and share a common body of knowledge about the context of the situation.³

Customary behaviors and communications are merely a special type of interaction employed by such face to face groups when they must confront the many repetitive social crises which make up a large segment of their daily lives.

Ferdinand Tönnies' previously discussed division of customs or social codes into increasingly complex categories: habits, norms, and those customs that in some way dramatize the collective will of the group provide a useful initial division of the spectrum of custom in the work place.⁴ The first two levels are substantive in that they combine customary codes of behavior with the accomplishment of daily work routines, whereas the latter is a highly condensed dramatic performance that is ceremonial in that it is removed from the work flow and presented as a unique activity.⁵

Habits in the work place range from the wearing of certain types of clothing, to taking a break at a certain time with a particular type of food. Pipeline welders, for example, wear a baseball brimmed polka-dot hat as an indication of their journeyman status;⁶ Roy illustrates the importance of an informal break time called "banana time" which is begun regularly in a monotonous assembly line job when one of the men opens his lunchpail and takes out

a banana;⁷ and as Pilcher illustrates, longshoremen on the Portland waterfront are given work assignments out of the union hall depending upon what work is available, how much seniority a man has on the job and what time he reported for work.⁸ These habitual customs, however, also pervade the work techniques in occupational culture. By exploring the way in which they both shape and are shaped by the techniques of fire fighting, we see their importance in shaping informal work interaction.

In dealing with the actual physical environment of fire fighters (the technical dimension), there are a number of habitual customary activities that stand out. In an engine company, for example, the rookie is almost always put on the nozzle or "pipe" so that he can get a chance to actually work the fire and also be kept with the officer who maintains physical contact with the novice at all times.⁹ Other technical customs include the practiced anticipation of a wagon driver waiting until his company reaches the fire inside a building before he shoots water to them, timing his actions by counting a mnemonic cadence or waiting until the hose line stops moving in the doorway.¹⁰ Additional habitual customs include the carrying of special tools by truck men like wooden wedges to chock open doors or locksmith tools to pick locks;¹¹ and the location and use of turning or stopping guideposts like a tree, parking meter or sign used by a driver to indicate where to stop

or pull up to before backing into a station.¹² Many of these technical customs merely sanction or use certain aspects of the physical work environment in prescriptive ways that eliminate the need for each new generation of fire fighters to try to figure things out each time they confront a recurring technique or predicament.

On the social level of habitual customs in the work flow, we can include two of the main forms of collective participation--racking hose after a fire and cooking the meal. Once a fire has been put out, members of both the truck and engine companies first return ladders and appliances to the apparatus, and then drain the hose out a window or in the street. Finally everybody lends a hand by helping the engine company "rack" or accordion the hose back into the hose bed of the hose wagon. In addition to accomplishing the replacement of the hose (which is done with special folds and techniques such as shortening a section of hose by "taking a dutchman"--itself a customary designation), this custom also provides everyone with an opportunity to compare notes about their experiences on the fire. As cold, wet hands feed the stiff and almost frozen hose into the bed, jokes about missed shots at the fire, observations about other companies, or just some good natured goosing provide everyone with an opportunity to re-establish their participation in the collective experience of the group after having been isolated during the hectic minutes of the actual fire fighting attack.¹³

During meal preparation and clean-up, this collective participation is also customary and it too results in opportunities for expressive as well as instrumental behavior. Usually a member of the company emerges as the cook either due to ability, interest, or just plain sloth on the part of the others in the company. As cook this individual buys the meal and prepares it in any way he wants. Those "in on the meal," pay for their share and then they either clean up as a group or dice are rolled and the two lowest men do the dishes. Just as in the hose racking situation, participation in the meal and clean-up transcends all other status or formal ranks, and officers as well as rookies are expected to participate. In recent years it has become more and more common for individuals to be counted "out" on the meals due to dietary reasons, dissension about the choice of the food, its method of cooking, or the alienation of an individual due to race, sex or personal philosophy. As the fire service becomes more heterogeneous, these differences may well affect the customary organization of the meal, but instrumental customs like racking the hose will continue to require full participation. This illustrates the firm yet flexible hold which social custom maintains in the work place. It will be interesting to return to this work culture in five or ten years to discover which of these social codes have changed and in what way.¹⁴

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of customary ideology or philosophy about fire fighting centers around the approaches of officers toward their administrative and fire ground responsibilities, because it is here that an individual's personal point of view can emerge. Sergeants in the fire service are novice officers who rove from one fire house to the next. As newcomers they rely on the technicians in that house to know where they are going and what they will find when they get there. Sergeants are very literally at the mercy of the company. Although they can make administrative decisions once they are on the fire ground, the company can make or break them by their attack on the fire and the information they provide or withhold. Customarily, then, the sergeant often defers to the judgment of the senior technician in the company while at the same time the company aids him in his decisions about the fire ground attack because they do not want to make themselves look bad to other companies on the fire.¹⁵

Both lieutenants and captains are permanently assigned to one company or fire house and they can have a dramatic impact on the morale and effectiveness of a company. An incident that illustrates this occurred when a new lieutenant was assigned to a very lax company that had been run by an extremely lazy officer before him. Through repeated drilling, demands that things be done as a matter of course during the fire fighting attack, and a firm confidence in his own abilities as a fire fighter,

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this officer completely won over the confidence of the company and turned it into an exemplary fire fighting unit. Without the underlying support and confidence this officer had experienced in his early career as a member of a running company with competitive but positive customary zeal and aggressiveness on the fire ground, he would have had a much more difficult time turning that company around.¹⁶

Finally, as stated in the previous chapter, the approaches of battalion fire chiefs toward their positions inside or outside of the fire building are also dictated by custom.¹⁷ This not only illustrates the conservatism with which the techniques of one's role model are passed on within the group, it also suggests the strengths and diversity of informal work culture even within the highly structured, para-military organization of a large metropolitan fire department. Habitual work techniques, as illustrated in the preceding examples provide not only a charter for the accomplishment of work based on past experience, they also shape future concepts and approaches to work by creating a prescriptive framework around which work performance can be critically judged. If technique shapes the occupational experience by dictating work processes, then customary aspects of the work flow provide a historical framework through which these techniques can be organized and evaluated.

Returning to Tönnies' trichotomy of custom--habit, norm and collective will of the group--we have seen how

habits and customary work techniques provide the basic foundation of occupational custom by both reflecting and then regulating repeated individual and group activities. Moving to customary norms in the work place takes us into a more collective type of activity in which the repeated behavior of group members in concert is the most important consideration. Turning again to the urban fire fighting culture for examples, we find norms concerning lateness, physical appearance, sobriety on the job, joking relationships, and touching, all of which parallel the status hierarchy operating in any one fire house. If, for example, a rookie or low status fire fighter reports for work late, unshaven, or drunk--he will probably be allowed to get away with it once or maybe twice. But if any of these infractions is repeated then it is the officer's job to make it known that this individual is violating the norms of the fire house as well as inconveniencing and angering the other fire fighters in the company. If, however, the individual transgressing the rules is an inexperienced fire fighter with higher status, then it usually is one of the group members themselves who will take the man aside and attempt to make him aware of the fact that he is jeopardizing the rest of the group as well as his own safety and career. Customary norms are linked directly to personal status within the group and although the work collective is willing to allow for some flexibility,

repeated transgressions are acted upon by formal agents of authority or by group members themselves depending upon the status of the individual involved.

As an illustration of how these norms are enforced: one of the experienced fire fighters reported for work regularly in an intoxicated condition. The responses of the men in the company ranged from an initial amusement and joking about the man's condition, to an attempt to ignore his intoxication and just put him to bed, and finally to repeated individual entreaties to him to seek professional help before he injured himself, someone else, or lost his job. Although the man wanted to quit drinking, he couldn't, and it wasn't until a senior officer who knew him personally sent him to the clinic (under the guise of another ailment) that he sought and responded to treatment. In a male dominated culture like that in the fire service, the ability to drink and hold your liquor is desirable and even a customary activity. Yet when this sanctioned activity gets out of hand, the occupational culture itself has few ways of dealing with the sick individual and must seek outside aid in re-establishing the norm. As occupational cultures are forced to change more quickly to meet accelerated technical or social changes, they will require additional outside assistance to enable them to cope with aberrant behavior that will not respond to the normal customary sanctions.¹⁸

A parallel set of norms surrounds joking relationships and touching in the fire service. The examples cited here reflect similar relationships in the smokejumping fire fighting culture, described in some detail below. Joking relationships or "binging" as it has been described by occupational sociologists, is a form of verbal dueling in which two or sometimes more protagonists attempt to best each other with insults, humiliations, put-downs, or puns. The following passage from my field notes provides an example:

December 12, 1979: The scene is the sitting room in the fire house in late morning. Five fire fighters and I are seated around the table reading the paper and drinking coffee when one of the regular members of the company comes downstairs from the Deputy Chief's office where he has been doing the chief's typing.

Chief's helper: That's alright pussies, don't bother to get up.

1st. FF: Pussies my ass. Turn around and let's see if those knee pads caused any burn marks on those chubby little thighs.

Chief's helper: You're just jealous cause you can't type worth a damn.

1st. FF: It aint typing he's after--let's see those lips. Hmm, kinda chapped, aint they? Been working out up there I see.

2nd. FF: Boys, boys, boys, please, you're interrupting my train of thought.

1st. FF: The only fucking train of thought you've had all week is what's in those cock books and where your next drink's coming from.

(Just then somebody shouts "cop in the alley," and everybody runs outside to try to keep the meter maid from ticketing their cars--which she does anyway. This is a periodic event that angers the fire fighters because it so irregularly enforced.

Then to add insult to injury, another policeman (unaware of the meter maid's raid on the alley) stops in for a cup of coffee and some conversation with one of the fire fighters who he knows.)

1st. FF: (to policeman) Hey man, why don't you do something about their ticketing our goddam cars in the alley? You guys come in here drinking our coffee, why the hell.

2nd. FF: Shit man, he didn't know anything about that cunt--fuck off, man.

1st. FF: Oh yeah, jump right into the shit, you ugly mother fucker--you're not worried because you car-pooled today. Well I'm not paying no twenty goddammed bucks.

2nd. FF: I don't give a shit if you take the fucking ticket and shove it up you hinnie hole.

1st. FF: Well my hinnie hole is a helluva a lot better lookin than your fucking face.

2nd. FF: Well your hinnie hole.

(At this point a third fire fighter grabs the shoe shine box from beneath the table, slams it on the table between the two protagonists and says):

3rd. FF: There, you dumb shits. You might as well argue with that!

1st. FF: (warming to the task, addresses the shoe shine box) And I don't give a shit who you are, mothah fuckah, aint nobody gonna talk to me like that! (He slaps the shoe-shine box and stomps out of the room to mixed applause and hoots from everyone watching).¹⁹

In what may appear to be some pretty rough put-downs and allusions to homosexuality, we are actually experiencing a clearing of tensions that build up daily in the fire house. These insults and put-downs, however, are mock battles in which the solidarity of the group is reinforced by verbal parry and thrust. As long as you can take as well as throw a verbal "dart" and keep your cool, then everyone has at least some idea of how you feel or how you are going to react to pressure. Some individuals require or invite this kind of social temperature taking more than others because they have more changeable temperatures. The norm being enforced here is one of verbal probing in which a communal stasis is achieved in full view of the group.

If you can't take this kind of abuse and give it back in kind, then your opportunities for becoming an equal in the culture are severely limited.

Physical relationships between individuals in the fire house also reflect customary methods of testing temperament and showing friendship and status equality--you don't mess with those above or below you in the status hierarchy. Just as there are those who excel in verbal dueling or repartee, there are individuals who either precipitate or are the frequent recipients of various forms of physical contact. These range from being grabbed behind the neck, tipped over while sitting in a chair, or most commonly, goosed. In the particular fire house in which I spent a great deal of time, goosing was referred to as "smoothing" and there was one individual who did a classic Jackie Gleason "take" complete with flailing arms and a loud "yeeoow" every time he got it, which was often. Almost all of the smoothing that went on involved this individual who could be relied upon to respond appropriately no matter what the circumstances. Consequently when the chief would line up the company for an announcement, the "yeeoow" would send the fire fighters toppling like cordwood--much to their delight. Or when the company would be downtown racking hose after a run, the "yeeoow" would (hopefully) attract the attention of the women on the street downtown during their lunch hour. In most situations

smoothing would be used to foil some potentially serious or boring situation in such a way that the entire company was guiltless of the transgression. Smoothing, as it was practiced by this particular company, was an inside joke shared by the members of the company. Like other forms of physical contact, it reinforced a feeling of camaraderie that requires constant bolstering due to the many boring hours of inactivity that are part of this occupational experience.²⁰

The final area to be dealt with in this discussion of occupational custom involves the ritual passage of an outsider to insider status in a work group exemplifying Tönnies' dramatization of the collective will of the group. I have chosen to illustrate this, the most complex form of customary interaction through an examination of a rite-of-passage in smokejumping, a fire fighting occupation in which I was employed for four years.²¹ Smokejumpers parachute into the forests of the northwestern United States to suppress isolated forest fires caused by lightning.

Consisting of approximately thirty-five men of college age, this particular group was located at Redmond, Oregon.

Here they underwent a month of partial isolation from the outside world, rigorous physical conditioning and skill training, an initiation night prior to the first of seven qualifying jumps, and an entire fire season (approximately three months as rookies during which time they were taught

the very complex techniques of their occupation and both received and passed a tremendous amount of information in both ideational and material form.

The smokejumper rookie arrives on the base a novice parachutist, but an experienced fire fighter, for he must have had at least two years of fire fighting experience to qualify for training. He is required to live on the base throughout the fire season (June to September), and is on call twenty-four hours a day during that period. The first month the rookie spends in this environment is one of almost total submission to a strict regimen of physical conditioning, parachute handling, landing techniques, tower jumps, equipment construction and repair, tree climbing, mental conditioning, and physical harassment by experienced jumpers, squadleaders and pilots.

The final week of the training period is the culmination of the initial learning process. During this week the rookie must make seven practice jumps. The night before the first jump is initiation night, and the rookies (as a group) are subjected to a number of physical and verbal abuses. Because of the importance of this period to an understanding of smokejumper initiation, I quote the following from my field collection:

And when I first came to Redmond, there were four or five of these guys from Winthrop, Washington, the Winthrop smokejumper base up there. And the initiation consisted of--well, like the training to become a smokejumper takes a month, and at the end of that month you make seven practice jumps

seven days in a row, the last two being in timber and the first five being in an open field. So the night before the first jump, which is probably the night everyone is the most nervous, is the one picked by the older jumpers as initiation night. And initiation for me consisted of being pulled out of my bed at about ten o'clock in the evening and tied with plastic tape, which is impossible to break because it has a test of about 150 pounds, I think, and I had all my clothes taken off, and then they took me out on the front lawn and they poured soap and I don't know what else on me, and then hosed me down, and there were twenty-five of us that this happened to. And then we turned around and did the same thing to the guys who had done it to us. And that was more or less it, except that we were kept up all night by people pounding on the door and firecrackers, and being squirted, and had our rooms torn apart and everything. . . .²²

In Van Gennep's terms the rookie smokejumper has participated in a rite-of-passage. He has passed through the separation phase (living in barracks, daily training regimen, distinction between rookie and experienced jumpers), to the transitional phase (initiation night, the first jump, the completion of training), and purportedly will become a member of the smokejumping group during the incorporation phase when he goes on the jump list and attains the rights and privileges of more experienced jumpers.²³

Beyond this, Van Gennep's system is inadequate here because although it is characteristic of the rite in question, it provides no insight into the unique communications of this particular initiation; it is externally derived and offers little more than superficial classification of the mechanisms involved. By viewing the initiation as a

condensed series of symbolic and dramatic actions which reflect group-held expectations (as in the habits and norms illustrated in the urban fire fighting context above), we gain a more useful understanding of the initiation event and its relationship to other avenues of communication in the smokejumping context. Broken down into its basic parts, the total initiation process is as follows:

1. Introduction of rookies into smokejumper environment.
2. Infusion of rookies with symbols and techniques of smokejumping.
3. The initiation event.
4. Provisional smokejumper status.
5. Formal acceptance as smokejumper.
6. Termination of smokejumper status and assumption of other roles.

The basic goal of the initiation event is to dramatize the transition of an outsider to insider status as a smoke-jumper. As Young indicates, the dramatization of organizational purposes which comprises an initiation

... is the communication strategy typically employed by solidarity groups in order to maintain their highly organized yet all the more vulnerable, definition of the situation.²⁴

In dramaturgical terms, then, the smokejumper initiation is played against the "stage properties"²⁵ of oral lore from experienced jumpers, the materials and symbols of smoke-jumping (fire tools, parachutes, and jumping gear), and the actual fire fighting situation. The actors (rookies) are assigned a role which demands the contradictory elements of deference and submission as well as humiliation by experienced men. Yet at the same time, they are experiencing

the exhibition of pride and feelings of superiority over other fire fighters and members of society who are not smokejumpers.

The drama (a play within a play)²⁶ of the initiation serves to reveal to the rookies in microcosm the tension between submission and pride by forcing them to submit to being stripped, soaked, and taped. One of the primary functions of the play (daily smokejumping tasks performed by the rookie) and the play within the play (the initiation event itself) is to mold the rookie into the ideal actor who fulfills the expectations of other group members. As Young states in his description of male solidarity groups, the play within the play reveals

... in microcosm the dominant themes of male solidarity . . . in a setting that makes the initiates the central performers.²⁷

This dramaturgical approach provides an insight into the general structure of the initiation, but it fails to articulate the meaning of these actions as they are viewed by the jumpers themselves. Anthony F.C. Wallace in Culture and Personality provides a framework for investigating these factors through the application of an equivalency structure concept which explains that minimum social interaction requires

... a set of variable entities (persons, objects, customs, actions, or whatever) so related that first, some variation in any one is followed by a predictable (i.e., non-random) variation in at least one other; and second, that there is at

least one sequence of variation which involves all the entities.²⁸

Social interaction, then, is not based upon shared motivations or cognitions, but on

... the recognition that--as a result of learning--the behavior of other people under various circumstances is predictable, irrespective of knowledge of their motivations, and thus is capable of being predictably related to one's own actions.²⁹

Within this framework, ritual is designed to quickly accomplish the "social and psychological transformation of individuals."³⁰ Again in comparison with urban fire fighters' habits and norms, ritual in the smokejumping culture is transformative as well as celebratory whereas the former modes of customary interaction are designed to modify, control or otherwise affect an individual's behavior without appreciably changing him or his role in the group.

Within the context of smokejumping, this view forces the investigator to concentrate on the way in which the initiation event seeks to establish predictive behavior. In a section of his book on smokejumping, Randle Hurst cites an event which illustrates the efficacy of this approach. As a plane was flying over a jump spot, a jumper named Fred decided to try a new exit. When the spotter slapped him on the shoulder as an indication to jump, Fred did not perform the correct legs down, hands over the chest, ski-jumper type exit, but instead threw his feet up over his head and exited the plane upside down. This caused his chute to hit the edge of the door and his

canopy to open up inside the plane. The spotter quickly gathered up the canopy and threw it out the door almost following it out in his haste. Hurst ends the passage with the following:

I don't think anyone ever told Fred that his back pack came apart in the door and almost lassoed (the spotter), but Fred never tried that method of exiting again.³¹

The learned behavior of smokejumping results in a variety of complex techniques based primarily on safety considerations in a dangerous occupation. The play (daily smokejumper interaction) and the play within the play (the initiation event) provide a common background of expectations within the group. The highly structured, almost mechanical techniques of smokejumping maintain a flexibility that allows (although not repeatedly) an individual to transgress the prescribed methods of acting and not be forced from the group for endangering the lives of others. This contradiction may be due to what Wallace calls the prerequisites of "cognitive non-uniformity" in a group that frees group members from "the heavy burden of knowing each other's motivations."³² In the example cited above by Hurst, the unexpected exit by Fred caused the spotter to prevent disaster by quickly pushing the canopy out the door. Were the expectations of this group less structured (as they might be in a less dangerous occupation), then the anxiety created every time a jump was made would be unbearable (and the system therefore unworkable) because the

weight of having to react to the motivations of each individual, rather than relying on the shared expectations of the group, would demand a revision of the equivalency structure each time a plane left for a fire. The function of the initiation event and the other ideational and material communications in the group is to reinforce these shared expectations and therefore release the participants from the normal constraints of daily human interaction.

The "one sequence of variation which involves all the entities,"³³ the initiation event itself, reflects symbols and activities which comprise the equivalency base of day-to-day interaction in the smokejumping group by dramatizing information of a social, emotional, ecological and temporal nature. A brief discussion of how these informational genres are revealed in the initiation event and their relationship to each other will conclude this discussion.

The social context of the initiation ceremony must include not only the relationships between individual jumpers, but between jumpers as a group and the outside world. The presence of water, tape, soap, and nakedness in the actual initiation event are indicative of the expectations of the rookie as he passes from an outsider to an insider's position. The water poured over the rookie by the experienced jumpers might suggest not only baptism, but the preoccupation of smokejumping with the suppression of fires, cooling the hot subject, bringing him under control and changing him.

The tape used to bind the rookie is a nylon filament tape used in all phases of jumping, and is virtually indestructible. The binding of the rookie (itself a generic appellation which is indicative of a lack of individuality)³⁴ and his reliance upon others to extricate him reinforce the group expectation that an individual is helpless and must rely on the cooperation of others to help him. This symbolism is also reflected in the individual's nakedness (reflecting the imagery of both an infant and a corpse)³⁵ and the washing down with soap. As Turner states,

... the metaphor of dissolution is often attributed to neophytes; they are allowed to go filthy and are identified with the earth.³⁶

The rookie usually is dirtier than the experienced man in that he has been rolling around in sawdust pits, wearing a complete jumpsuit in the desert sun, and running for miles every day; while the experienced jumper spends most of the first month in the air conditioned paraloft unless an early fire season sends him out to jump.

The social context of the outside world in its relationship to the initiation and to the daily interactions of the smokejumping group throughout the fire season galvanizes the solidarity of the group and creates a strong tension between insiders and outsiders. Photographs for hometown newspapers, television coverage of practice and fire jumps, and the watchful eye of other forest personnel who consider the jumpers "hot dogs," in

addition to the media use of such descriptive titles as "the green berets of the Forest Service,"³⁷ precipitate exaggerated expectations on the part of peripheral groups and frustration for the jumpers in their attempts to live up to an image which, because of its external derivation, is not a part of the smokejumping equivalency structure.

The second area reflected in the initiation event and evident throughout the rookie season is that of the emotional context. The overcoming of fear through constant repetition and the establishment of reflexive rather than reflective action is of paramount concern during the training, initiation and post-initiation phases of the fire season. Repeated exits from the plane make up approximately thirty to forty per cent of a rookie's training. The "eyes on the horizon, both hands over the reserve, feet together, slight crouch, aim for the tail," admonition to the rookie every time he goes off the jump tower forces him to act first and think later. As Leach points out,

repetition of a message reduces ambiguity by expressing the message in numerous forms.³⁸

The concept being repeated is that if a frightening situation (jumping, landing, tree climbing, fire fighting) is to be handled efficiently, learned reflex actions should provide the individual with the proper method of coping with the situation. In the initiation event, the experienced jumpers pick the most anxious period to mark the

rookies' passage from novice to partially equal status-- the night before the first jump. The most important objective of this action is that it literally forces the rookies to rely on their learned abilities to react appropriately and, at the same time, disallows them from dwelling on the possibilities of failure, injury, or death. As I state in my collection,

in the morning, you're so tired it sort of dulls your senses, I think; and I can't even remember the first jump I made.³⁹

The third context, in which the symbols employed in the initiation event are later used to make up the equivalency base of the day-to-day interaction of smokejumpers, is ecological. I include in this term all considerations about clothing, equipment, weather, fire and the forest environment.

Clothing is particularly meaningful within the smokejumping group. Blue jeans or Can't Bust Em Frisco jeans and work shorts make up the base; but the uniqueness of smokejumper boots (the Danner and White boot companies make special smokejumper models), fire shirts, jumpsuits, parachutes, ditty bags, harnesses, packing equipment, cargo packs, and signal streamers, all comprise a distinctive set of accoutrements which have a special significance. Within the initiation event itself, during the morning of the first jump, a significant event occurs regarding clothing. The experienced men tackle the rookies and cut

the cuffs off their pants. The rookies are told that this prevents their cuffs from getting caught on objects in the woods, which is why most loggers wear their pants this way. This practice further distinguishes the jumpers from others at a fire (in addition to the wearing of a day-glo orange fire shirt with "Redmond Smokejumpers" stencilled on the back) and also provides for a role reversal in that any jumper (experienced or inexperienced) is subject to having his pants tagged if he wears conventional jeans without this modification. The proper manipulation of tools and jumping gear and the coded use of signal streamers for ground-to-air communication are further examples of communicative devices which are learned through face-to-face communication, passed on from year to year, and have little exoteric meaning.

The contextual positions of weather, fire, and the forest within the group are reflected in the initiation event and exist as multi-vocal symbols throughout daily interactions, primarily through oral channels of communication. From the first day he arrives on the base, the rookie is acutely aware of the weather, its changes, and its effect on the forest. Divination, in the form of looking for "scouts," (the building thunderhead clouds over the mountains which portend lightning storms, action, and money), is taught early to the rookie and dominates breakfast discussions throughout the summer. During the

initiation jump (when a rookie is said to "pop his cherry," thus supporting the notion of loss of innocence and change in status), weather--particularly the wind--must be read closely to determine drift, thermals, or ground winds.

Knowledge of fire behavior, use of natural and handbuilt fire breaks to stop the fire, backfiring, the ability to know when and when not to work, and the knowledge of the woods also reveal the close relationship of jumpers to natural cycles. The contextual contribution of the ecological sphere in all of its above forms establishes a causal relationship between smokejumpers and the natural cycle which is much stronger than that normally experienced by the average person. Jumpers learn the techniques of using natural forces to their advantage by operating close enough to the fire, storm, or rugged jump country to understand and respect it, at the same time maintaining a controlled objectivity about these forces which results in a confirmation of group expectations and actions.

The final contextual area to be discussed is temporal and is linked to the above discussion on the ecological context. Hughes discusses attempts by various groups to attack the calendar and the clock.⁴⁰ That is, by reinterpreting a group member's relationship to a culturally determined or a natural cycle, the group seeks to remove him from the influences of that cycle and place a parallel yet uniquely prescribed relationship upon the

individual. In smokejumping, the use of the military twenty-four hour clock and the splitting of the work cycle into three days plus all weekends accomplishes this separative function. Reflected in the all night nature of the initiation event, this around-the-clock orientation is indicative of the jumper's loss of culturally derived behaviors and expectations and his acquisition of a socially derived commitment to a new order, one which is only marginally concerned with calendrical cycles.

A dramaturgical approach to a contemporary, occupational initiation as a locus of communicative channels, then, can reveal information on a variety of levels. An equally pervasive communicative structure is the oral narrative which continually revives and maintains the equivalency structure of the smokejumper group by expressing the fears, joys, and concerns of the actual fire jump in an encapsulated form. Through a combination of objects and learned actions, the jumper begins to participate in the communicative process of his occupation expressed in various physical, kinetic and oral ways. Thus the initiation event is not a series of separations and aggregations, but a vital performance only suggested in abstract terms. The jump story acts as a continuous backdrop through which this performance is given credibility and without which the initiation event (or the accumulated experiences of all jumpers could not be imparted.)

In this chapter I have traced a hierarchy of customary interaction in the work place from the instrumental habits and norms of daily work and social problem solving, to the ceremonial transformation of an individual through the condensed drama of a rite-of-passage. Just as informal work techniques of varying import and complexity are passed from one worker to the next to provide him with the skills he needs to do a job, a variety of customary reactions to physical, social and ideological problems provide that same worker with historically proven mechanisms for coping with recurrent situations that require his attention as he proceeds in his career. And as I will illustrate in the chapter which follows on verbal expression, this same expressive hierarchy is reflected in other aspects of occupational folklife as well.

CHAPTER V

THE SPOKEN, SHOUTED AND REMEMBERED WORD

In most occupational settings, the primary form of communication is verbal. Whether this interaction takes the form of special terminology, general conversation or fully developed narrative exchanges, it is the basic medium through which occupational knowledge is shared on the job and between generations of workers in the same trade. This information exchange is accomplished through a linkage of work processes with the images and symbols verbalized by work group members. In the discussion which follows, I present examples of verbal interaction from various occupational groups, concentrating primarily on the fire fighting work cultures of smokejumpers in the Pacific Northwest, urban fire fighters in a major north-eastern city, and fire fighters in a smaller fire department in St. John's, the capital of the Canadian province of Newfoundland. Neumann's middle-point concept is again used to organize the narrative material into broad categories of interaction ranging from the mundane to the unusual. At the end of the chapter I will provide an in-depth analysis of narratives that reflect the attitudes and interests of occupational group members over long

periods of time.¹

In my effort to present examples that illustrate the role of particularly significant symbols, terms and narratives in the work place, I don't want to give the reader the mistaken impression that these examples represent a comprehensive ethnographic view of the occupations in which they were documented. As in any human group the impact of television, newspapers, radio and hundreds of other external concerns and topics become internalized subjects of comment and discussion, and fire fighting culture is no exception. In the interest of advancing my analyses of occupational verbal expression, however, I have chosen to disregard these externally derived forms in favor of more significant occupational material. When the opportunity presents itself, I hope to show in a full length ethnography how these externally derived expressive forms function in the fire fighting culture.

The Basic Metaphor: The Mundane Level

The first "mundane" level of verbal interaction in the work place is the esoteric naming of things and people according to the viewpoint of a particular occupation. The following random examples are taken from folk festival research: flint glass workers refer to blemishes or imperfections in glass as "hog eyes," while plasterers refer to similar irregularities in newly plastered walls as "cat's face";² pocketbook workers refer to a conniving

or scheming worker as a "whore," whereas urban fire fighters refer to them as "sharpshooters";³ and ballet company members refer to the lights on the edge of the stage floor as "shin breakers," whereas smokejumpers refer to a metal bar used to close parachute flaps as a "titty buster."⁴ In each example there is a direct relationship between an item or individual's function in the work flow and the name or term that is designated to describe them. This direct form of naming may have meaning of a more abstract nature in occupational culture.

For example, in the occupation of pipeline welding, when an individual is using electric arc rather than gas or oxy-acetylene techniques, he must carry or drag around with him "leads" or lines of cable that carry the power from the welder to the rod. At the same time, many pipeline welders carry large red or blue railroad handkerchiefs in their back pockets to wipe off sweat and moisture on the face, and hands and debris off of the stainless steel welds. As described by an experienced welder:

Well, the handkerchiefs are used to wipe off the pipe, constantly dipping it in acetone or some other chemical to keep the pipe very clean. Well when the welder gets disturbed, the handkerchief gets further and further down, you know, because he doesn't get it back in his pocket. He just sticks it down and when he has really had it, when he's really mad, it's hangin down about three-quarters away down his ankles. And by that time he's done drug up. Drug up, now that means just like it says--it comes off the pipeline where the welder had his own machine. And he might have as much as 200 feet of lead, welding lead stretched out.⁵

In a very unique way, the metaphorical term "drug-up" describes both a recurring occupational situation (tangled or hung-up welding leads/dragging handkerchief) in much the same way that the previous terms described a tool's function in the work flow. Yet at the same time, it also refers to a more pervasive feeling of anger or frustration. What is significant about this occupational metaphor is that it illustrates that even at this most basic level, the materials and processes of a trade are used by members of that trade to refer to not only a specific occupational occurrence, but to expand that concept to a basic human condition. In a parallel manner the term "laying out short" in urban fire fighting describes a situation where an engine company does not lay out enough hose line to reach a fire. This term also is used to describe any situation, on or off of the job, in which there is a lack of needed resources: not enough food to go around, too few sheets for everyone in the house, or even inadequate sexual performance. Through the application of these metaphorical linkages of work process with generally recurrent human situations, workers not only express the impact of occupational culture on their perception of the world but at the same time they are continually shaping and emphasizing that unique perception.⁶

In a similar manner, performance on the job may result in an individual being given a nickname, for

example, "Hollerin Harry," "Colonel Parker," or "The Little General." Often such names reflect peculiarities about the person like his physiognomy ("The Hawk," or "Shortwheels"); age ("Wrinkles," or "The Old Man"); name, alliteration or rhyme ("Killer King"); or off the job behavior or sexual prowess ("Puss") which suggest an appropriate title.⁷ One individual in the urban fire fighting culture, an older truck driver who did all of the cooking in the house and had been assigned to one company for years, was referred to quite simply and directly as "Mother Kelly." And as illustrated in the following narrative, the reasons for this designation reflect the important role that this individual played in food and food preparation in the traditional fire fighting culture:

Leo was the truck driver that broke me in. There was probably no better truck driver in this city that I've seen. He was a Boston Irishman and a helluva cook. He was the best cook, the son-of-a-bitch. I tell you, I almost got divorced. And my wife and the other guys' wives too, she said that if I loved his cooking so goddamned much, why don't I just go and marry him.⁸

In summary, then, even on this basic level of verbal expression in an occupation--the naming of processes, tools, and individuals--we can discern the impact of the cultural forces that both reflect and are shaped by unique, group generated expectations and views. In most cases the functional aspects of a process, tool or individual are singled out, perhaps because of their contrast with other elements in the work culture. Over time, however, these

unique characteristics and idiosyncracies may elevate a particular nickname or phrase to a level of meaning that reaches far beyond its original purpose, as in the drug-up, laying out short designations as well as the significant naming of a nurturing, food providing figure who also delivers the company to the fire. In the material which follows I will examine how these linkages of occupational process to verbal symbol are reflected in the more elaborate, performance oriented forms of verbal expression.

Conversation, Critique and Narrative:

The Central Level

The next level of verbal interaction in occupational culture is the conversational level. It is here that the basic building blocks of occupational narrative first appear as they emerge from normal verbal give and take and are picked up and elaborated. The following scene takes place on a warm April night around six o'clock as three fire fighters and myself sit around the watch desk gazing at the crowds of workers in downtown Washington trudging or driving home from work:

Lieutenant: But there's nothing like getting a couple of cold beers right after a fire. . . .
 1st. FF: We had a chief who used to do that--he'd stop and pick up six.
 Lt.: I know somebody on this one that got some fuzz.
 1st. FF: Chief H. took us over to the Gaslight Club to inspect it. Set us up. Two rounds apiece.
 2nd. FF: Did they have fire there that time?
 1st. FF: No. We went inspecting. This is daytime. He was a member..

2nd. FF: That's a nice club in there.

1st. FF: So he says, 'You serve these guys right now?' And he says, 'Yeah.' So he says, 'Set em up.' And he gets an old folded five dollar bill stuffed back in the corner of his wallet.

Lt.: Nineteen twenty-seven.

1st. FF: So I wolfed that mother fucker down and set it up there and said, 'Man, fill that mother fucker again.' Yeah, you should a met that old guy.

Lt.: Ol Chief H. . . .

1st. FF: . . . he was sixty-four when he went out.

Lt.: . . . they made him go. He had about forty, some years, forty two. . . . Remember I told you the thing when I used a one hour McCaa mask? Used the whole fucking thing one time?

2nd. FF: Yeah.

Lt.: Anyway, the reason why I got out of that fucking place was because Chief H. had pushed up behind me. He was the next man on the line behind me, and I heard this mother fucker behind me yelling orders and I'm saying who the hell is that? And then the smoke lifted and here he is. I said let's get the fuck out of here. Today's his last fucking day and I wasn't about to stay in any goddam building with that old guy like that. . . .

Lt.: We went into the goddam metro tunnels to inspect them before they opened and we went in at first and G and this old cock-sucker about walked our balls off just going through there.

1st. FF: . . . terrific shape he was. . . .

Lt.: . . . that s.o.b. was strokin em off like a fucking nineteen year old kid.

1st. FF: Never ate sugar. Used to go to Florida every year and come back with 120 pounds of honey . . . no shit.

Lt.: And he'd fuck anything that bled. . . .

1st. FF: Anything that'd look at him he'd fuck.

Lt.: I think he must have fucked everything at headquarters. He was embarrassing the fire chief. He was walking around pinching asses all day and still doing his fucking job. And the fire chief couldn't even get in on time.

1st. FF: I had to laugh at the old fucker. . . . He lined us up in blues one day. Sunday. . . .

Lt.: He must a been sixty when he was stroking our asses through those fucking tunnels. . . .

1st. FF: . . . he says, 'I want the men lined up for inspection.' I says, 'Chief, this is asinine.'

Says, 'Got to do it, got to do it. Check the uniforms.' I said alright and we're in the line and we get a fucking run over here on the side of the alley over by the Ambassador. Everybody got fucked up. Uniforms got all fucked up. And I said, 'See.' We never stood another inspection. He says, 'See what you mean.'⁹

We can compare this first conversation with another in which the tone and style of the interaction is less positive, i.e., the participants combat rather than accommodate each other verbally. The scene is the sitting room in the fire house early in the morning. Everyone is having their first cup of coffee. Usually in this context things are quiet until everybody wakes up. But this morning the tensions that have built up between four of the younger fire fighters in the company flare up. As it usually happens the initial issue is a minor one:

1st. FF: (Grabs the newspaper out from under a second fire fighter's nose.)

2nd. FF: Hey man! I'm reading that!

1st. FF: You weren't reading it. Your goddam eyes are still glued shut.

2nd. FF: Man you know you've had a fucking attitude for a goddammed week. Why don't you go get laid or something?

3rd. FF: He's got an attitude? Fucking O. is the one with a fucking attitude. You been in the kitchen after he's 'helped out with dinner?' Looks like a fucking garbage dump. He just don't give a shit--particularly since he knows he's gonna get made. And another fucking thing. Every time somebody gooses O. he fucks around and plays and like that, but when I do it he wants to smash my face in.

2nd. FF: Since we're on the subject of bitches. I think we better go back to rollin dice to see who does the goddam dishes because some people aren't pullin their weight. You always see the same goddam faces in there every time.¹⁰

In the first conversation we can see how the topics and observations flow into each other from a comment about an officer buying beer, to a collective verbal portrait of this one, legendary chief who bought the beer. In this typical conversational form the verbal contributions made by each individual build on rather than attempt to top or best the statements of others in the group as they do in joking behavior which was previously discussed in the custom chapter. The conversation about the chief provides a composite picture of the man as each descriptive passage builds on the one before it. This is in contrast to the second conversation in which the fire fighters voice their various complaints in an interchange which is more oppositional in that one complaint is opposed by another and another until the frustrations of everyone in the group have been vented.

The conversational structures reflect in a very direct way the work processes upon which they are based. In all of the examples given above and in the preceding verbal dueling illustration, each individual has an opportunity to contribute either an insult, descriptive observation about a subject, or a complaint. Yet no one individual carries the burden of the entire verbal flow. The conversations aren't dialogue so much as verbal montage-- a group generated statement about a subject or subjects made up of individually articulated segments. And just as

in the fire fighting situation itself, these individual segments comprise a collective product or background against which the performance of any one individual is judged. A participant in this type of interaction (either the physical activity or its verbal counterpart) must maintain a proper level of balance between idiosyncratic performance and participation in the group activity by maintaining the proper timing, style and critical stance which is basically the same for both the verbal and physical interaction. To break beyond these group-defined limits (to try to do your job in addition to someone else's on the fire ground or attempt to dominate the conversation totally) is to command individual attention and scrutiny for a singular performance in a physical and symbolic effort based almost exclusively on communal cooperation rather than individual performance. I am not suggesting that opportunities for individual performance do not exist on both the physical and verbal levels of interaction, merely that basic fire fighting behavior and conversational style dictate that a cooperative, communal posture be maintained and that individual performance is a more-unusual and therefore more critically judged type of behavior.

Putting this in a more formal perspective, Hymes has indicated that there are three levels of interaction in most cultures: behavior ("anything and everything that happens"), conduct ("behavior under the aegis of social

norms, cultural rules and shared principles of interpretability"), and performance ("when one or more persons assumes responsibility for presentation").¹¹ Typical conversations and routine fire fighting attacks take place on the level of conduct because they are collective and structured by social norms. Unusual, idiosyncratic behavior, due to its unique individual nature can be elaborated into performance. And extremely dramatic individual performance (a rescue or fully developed rescue narrative told by the rescuer--a rare occurrence) might be considered "performance full," that is an

... authentic or authoritative performance, when the standards intrinsic to the tradition in which the performance occurs are accepted and realized.¹²

As discussed in some detail later in this chapter, the rarity and complexity of these full performance expressive forms makes them extremely important yet difficult to analyze aspects of verbal behavior.

Penetrating more deeply into these conversational examples, we can determine the "principles of interpretability" (what I have referred to earlier in the discussion of technique as "critical canon") upon which these exchanges are based. This canon not only reveals what is behind the verbal exchange (what the statements are about) it also illustrates a few of the criteria upon which this and more elaborate verbal exchanges are judged. In the conversation about the legendary chief we see in the first exchanges

that he is tight with money but generous to his men, and that he was one of the old-timers who had a number of years on the job before he was forced out. This is followed by a quartet of personal anecdotes that may not be immediately appreciated by an outsider. These include the chief's last day on the job (in which it is believed that a lot of old timers either do themselves in or just are unlucky enough to get killed on that day), and his physical condition at an advanced age (augmented with observations about his health food diet and sexual prowess). The section ends with a final personal anecdote (about the uniforms) that illustrates at the same time his human fallibility. Behind this montage of Chief H., there lies a well defined portrait of an individual who embodies the virtues that lie at the very heart of traditional fire fighting culture as it is perceived by the majority of white, male fire fighters. Chief H. is a fire fighting Übermensch from the old school who is in the process of being deified due to his embodiment of all of the traditional ideals of the group from stern but good natured camaraderie, to aggressiveness on the fire ground, to sexual prowess, drinking ability and human fallibility. He is a cynosure of the culture, yet in this instance one whose virtues are embedded in the collective reminiscences of a number of individuals. We are still, however, on the level of conduct because no one individual assumes

responsibility for the portrait or develops his observation beyond a matching of verbal fragments and impressions to the flow of conversation.

In the second example this underlying critical canon or "shared principle of interpretability," lies closer to the surface since it is a lack of cooperation that has precipitated the exchange. The taking of the paper, accusation of "having an attitude," (which usually means that an individual is angry or frustrated about something), the transfer of this accusation to another and providing as an example his sloppiness in the kitchen since he found out he was going to be promoted, as well as the frustration at not being allowed to participate in joking behavior and the apparent need to re-introduce a more structured method to organize clean-up, illustrates that indeed there are a number of problems in the company. All of these complaints reflect what is perceived by these four fire fighters as a dangerous break-down of cooperation and cohesiveness within the fire house. By voicing these fears openly to the rest of the members of the company, they are (as a group) attempting to bring attention to this slippage of camaraderie and also suggest remedial action (the dice rolling for dishes) in the hope that mandatory yet informally generated structure will bring back some order to the problem. Just as the conversation about Chief H. attempts to re-examine and confirm the

old values of the fire fighting tradition by illustrating those values in an exemplary figure, the gripe session seeks to re-establish traditional (and necessary) cohesiveness in a contemporary situation by pointing out indications of its slippage resulting in examples of increased individuation and selfishness. In both examples, the participation in the verbal exchange itself and the underlying values upon which the exchange are based attempt to rhetorically "move" the group as a whole toward a more stable *communitas*.¹³ The force of this effort is augmented by the collective nature of the exchange and the appeal to a changing but still pervasive white male value system and tradition. An individual attempting such an appeal through an isolated verbal performance would have to command an extremely high status in the group or be a very adept raconteur.

Moving to the more explicitly central concerns of the occupation our review of verbal expression in the work place takes us farther away from the group defined "conduct" toward more individual "performance" forms of verbal expression. At the very center of metropolitan fire fighting expressive culture we find the fire critique and the narrative session. Both of these forms of verbal interaction parallel the conversations above in their serial presentation of verbal material, but they differ in that the individual narrator places his responses to

the comments and expressions of others in a more fully developed narrative framework as seen in the following example:

The scene is the mask table in the fire house where the chief's aide, truck and engine company men clean and fill their masks with air and discuss the fire they just fought in a large abandoned single family dwelling in the northeast section of the city.

Aide: When the truck started pulling the ceilings everywhere they pulled the ceiling fire was coming out. So I told him they probably would need another truck. He was outside and I was inside. And while we were discussing it, the second floor started to mushroom in and out and in and out, and then it blew while we were talking. And then he asked for a task force. And then when the deputy pulled up he asked for a task force, too.

Layout man: Yeah, because when we pulled up, we just pulled up and layed out and they were ordering everybody out of the building.

Aide: Yeah, it was really rocking and they were trying to get everybody out.

Layout man: Yeah, when we pulled up you could see that it had gotten to the second story ceiling and it was just getting ready to go.

Aide: Yeah it went down real quick because it was just an old frame building and it got in between the walls and attic everywhere. It was really well involved, it just wasn't showing. When we first got there it was just showing in that one room.

And 6 Engine hit and it went right down and we were all inside and we thought that was it. But when they started pulling the ceiling you could see that there was a lot more fire in it and they started opening it up good, and it really took off.

Bar man: That rear was really bad--nothing but cyclone fences and dogs to climb over to get back there and then there was hardly enough room to get the ladders up because of the damn brush.

Aide: Yeah and then, once you guys got up there it was damn slippery. I don't think anybody realized how cold it was, just cold enough to make it slick.

Layout man: I saw this one officer go over to the deputy to see what he wanted him to do. So he walked over to the deputy and fell right on his ass.

The only thing that would have made it better would have been if he'd reached out and grabbed that white coat on his way down.¹⁴

In the fire critique, the chief's aide, layout man and the bar man from the truck company compare their various perspectives about the fire while at the same time they present their accounts in complete narrative units, not in fragments or collective montage as seen in the previous examples of conversations. Because each individual on the fire has a specific job to do and a place to be on the fire ground, these responsibilities result in a variety of different experiences which are compared with the critique. The aide (who actually relays the chief's orders to the officers inside of the fire building) sees the whole picture from the inside, i.e., the truck pulls the ceiling and it rekindles after the engine company had hit the fire and they thought it was out. Meanwhile the layout man sees the fire strictly from the outside because being from a company arriving on the scene as back-up, they had just laid out hose lines when the fire re-kindled and everyone was ordered out. And finally the bar man (in the second due truck which is assigned to the rear) saw the fire from the rear of the fire building and therefore he concentrates his narrative on that approach.

A fire critique allows each individual to tell his story, rather than being a collective composite based on fragments of information and observation. Even though all

of the narrators participated in the same event, their frames of reference are so geared to specific tasks that each man is really only aware of his own actions during the incredibly fast moving attack. After the fire is over he must then present his individual perspective to the group, but in order to make sure that the information is clear, he must place his action in a narrative framework with an identifiable beginning, middle and end. The aide, for example, reverses the order of his narrative, talking first about the results of the fire when it rekindled or lit off, then later backing up to what it looked like when they first arrived on the scene. As illustrated in just this brief example, a fire critique recreates in verbal form an individual's performance and observations on a particular fire. This not only provides everyone with an opportunity to gain a more comprehensive view of the event, it also reinforces the values and critical stance of the group toward both physical and verbal exhibitions of competence by applying parallel sets of evaluation to both. A good job on the fire ground, for example, could be eclipsed by a too boastful or unbelievable account of that performance, just as a bad performance would be impossible to overcome by the most superbly narrated account. Both are judged in the same way. Until an individual pays his dues in actual fire ground performance of technique, he would be foolish to attempt to recount his experiences in

anything but the most self-effacing manner during the critique.

The narrative or story telling session, by comparison, differs from the critique in that the accounts may or may not be first person narratives and the emphasis is upon relating individually developed narratives to the stories that precede them or topics brought up in flow of conversation. Although many of these narrative sessions include stories about specific fire experiences, the tight evaluative criteria used to judge critiques is not as strictly enforced because in many cases the individual telling the story is the only one who had or heard about the experience. It is in the narrative session that a skillful raconteur can spin stories off of the topic at hand, as seen in the following example:

The scene is the watch desk late at night. Four fire fighters are sitting around the watch desk just passing the time by shooting the breeze.

1st. FF: Goddam.

2nd. FF: This motherfuckers so cold here (pointing to the hose wagon).

3rd. FF: That goddam squad wagon wouldn't ever start. I used to cuss that son-of-a-bitch. Some days that thing would run real good, and other days you'd take out of that house and that thing would go kebang, kepow and you'd pull that choke out and no matter what you did, it wouldn't run.

2nd. FF: Well this choke jumps up and I can just blow out of here. We had this run over to Seventh Street and I had to put that choke all the way out. But once that thing gets hot, boy, that son-of-a-bitch will jump like a frog.

4th. FF: That piece was the best piece the city ever bought--small wheel base.

3rd. FF: We went out of here on a fire one night, J. Fisher is in charge of 2 Engine, Fuzzy's drivin

the wagon. Turned left on Twelfth Street and run Twelfth Street the wrong way all the way back in the tunnel to the other side. (Laughter) Zooo-- all the fucking way back in that tunnel. Jim Fisher said, 'I kept tellin him don't run it the wrong way.' He said, 'I finally told him that. Kenny, if you ever run that the wrong way again, I'm gonna take that fucking axe and hit you in the head with it.' He said that's the only way he ever stopped him from doin it. I'm gonna take that fucking axe and hit you right in the head with it.

5th. FF: Yeah, we'd make that fucking alley by the dry cleaners across the street from you all, and man he used to dart through that mother fucker at about a hundred miles an hour.

3rd. FF: I was riding on the back of the pumper with E.L. and we got a run. When M Street--used to be one way east. I don't know where we were going but we went way out . . . anyway he took us' up M Street the wrong way the whole way. And the whole way he's sitting in the pumper yelling, 'Look at that crazy son-of-a-bitch, that's the craziest thing I've ever seen that mother fucker do.' And he was cussing like that all the way up M Street.

5th. FF: I'll tell ya what, W. takes a lot of abuse but that's a hard worker, boy. And don't piss him off.

3rd. FF: We were up on Montana Avenue, on a second alarm one night. The whole ass end of this place was off. It looked like the block was off. We were up on the second floor when it was all over. Red F., me and a couple of other guys, and we were pulling walls and ceilings. And the guys said hold up for a second and let's check something. And W. was working so furiously and was so excited that he just walked up and grabbed the door to this place and ripped it off the hinges. He was just so frustrated he had to do something.

5th. FF: I'll tell you what, that s.o.b. . . .

3rd. FF: He was going to pull that second floor down around me and I just knew that I was going to end up in the basement.

5th. FF: I'll tell ya, if it hadn't been for him that time I fell through truck four's aerial ladder up there at 14th and G, and he came up there and got me. I was . . . I coulda kissed that ugly mother fucker I was so happy. Heh, I ain't shittin, my ass had fell through that fucking rung, man, and I was bad cause I was just so fucking tired. I was still weak and hurtin at that time.

I said boy am I lucky. Fire leaping up out of that fourth floor window.
 (unintelligible story and laughter)
 3rd. FF: You heard about the boots up there, didn't you? F's boots? He came down from the bunkroom and he didn't know what the fuck was going on and they got a run and he jumps in his boots and there's two sticks of butter in there.¹⁵

Unlike the conversation in which everyone contributes a portion of the montage, or the critique which is based on strict techniques and perspectives on a given fire, the storytelling session is a looser verbal form as illustrated in the narrative ability of the third fire fighter in this passage. The raconteur spins his stories out of the various topics that come up in the conversation. In this example the topics range from pieces of apparatus that are difficult to start (the squad wagon), to a story about going the wrong way in the hose wagon, to another story about an excitable individual, to a final story about a prank. In each case this narrator not only supplies stories for each of the themes that arise, but he also reflects in tone and length the pace of the other observations and narratives. This ability to spin verbal accounts off of the flow of verbal interaction reaches its peak in the elaborated personal experience narrative which due to its somewhat unusual occurrence in the occupational setting is discussed in some detail later in this chapter.

Further illustrated in the narrative example above is the increased opportunity for the narrator to carry the momentum of the verbal exchange as long as he can continue

to generate stories that inform and entertain those involved in the session. In this case the third fire fighter wrests the narration from the other participants by turning a casual mention about the coldness of certain engines to an illustration of two different incidents in which a wagon driver ran his route to the fire the wrong way. He then (following the mention of a certain individual who was responsible for one of the wrong way incidents) embellishes this theme with a story that provides not only additional proof of this individual's over-zealousness, it also touches upon a subject (the fire fighter W.) that triggers a narrative by one of the other fire fighters about his debt to W. for saving him from a potentially fatal situation. Although the individual narrator in a storytelling situation has more latitude in choosing his topics and shaping his stories, he still must maintain a currency with the interests of the group in order to influence the direction of the narrative flow and also provide enough opportunities for the others in the session to take part so that they don't lose interest. Even the most skillful narrator cannot maintain a command of the storytelling situation without frequent verbal and non-verbal reinforcement for his narration.

Viewed in their entirety, the middle point or central concern narrative forms (conversation, critique and narrative session) reflect verbal responses and interchanges

about elements within the occupation of a recurrent concern. They provide group members with an opportunity to question, discuss, evaluate and entertain each other using language to define the perimeters of occupational experience.¹⁶ Within this framework an individual can negotiate, refine, and even advertise his occupational knowledge with a minimum of risk taking while he participates in the collective verbal exchange. Yet at the same time, however, certain individual raconteurs or unusual occurrences will draw attention to themselves and it is in these extremes that the emotions, feelings and ideologies are most clearly exhibited. While mundane levels of metaphor such as terminology and nicknames reflect basically physical and technical concerns; critiques, conversations and narrative sessions reflect primarily social and interpersonal concerns; and finally unusual personal experience and accident accounts reflect emotional and philosophical concerns.¹⁷ Although there is obviously a great deal of overlapping between these externally derived categories, particularly on the edges of these divisions where narrative sessions, for example, may well provide for the full performance by an individual of an elaborated personal experience narrative. It is generally true that as verbal expression moves from the technical to the ideological sphere, it also provides for greater individual participation and revelation within the context of what is being said. At the

same time, however, these individual expressions must conform even more strictly to the particular cultural value system from which they are derived and performed by a narrator before his extremely critical audience.

The Unusual Level: The Elaborated Personal
Experience Narrative

The final area of verbal interaction is that which deals with the unusual and the extreme in the occupational context. Included in this category are the accounts of bizarre incidents that are retained in the verbal repertory of the group sometimes over many years, accident accounts that provide specific references to repeated exposures and their toll on workers in the past, and finally, highly elaborated personal experience narratives that reflect the height of individual narrative ability within the occupational setting.

A particular historical event in any human group is retained in the collective memory of its members based largely on the unique or dramatic features of the occurrence that set that experience apart from others in the past. Such an event occurred in St. John's, Newfoundland in December 1942 when a saboteur set fire to a crowded Knights of Columbus hall being used at that time as an Allied barracks and canteen. Over one hundred people died in the disaster and among those most intimately involved in the entire affair were the fire fighters of St. John's

themselves. In an attempt to determine the nature of oral historical information within a fire fighting community, I interviewed three of the surviving fire fighters (all retired) about their experiences during the "K. of C. fire" and compared their responses to other narratives in their repertory to see how the unusual historical occurrence conformed or contrasted to their other verbal accounts.

In dealing with oral historical information generated in a dyadic interview situation, however, we have to approach this material in somewhat different manner. This requires some additional theoretical background prior to an analysis of the narratives themselves. As personal experience narratives are passed between members of a group they are consistently viewed against a common frame of reference that demands conformity to not only a prescriptive narrative model (comparable to Degh's proto-memorate concept),¹⁸ but also a prescriptive experiential model (proto-experience or what Honko refers to as a cultural experience model).¹⁹ In the case of the fire fighters' narratives about their work, the narrator must make his story conform to prescriptions of inferred or related physical activity as well as prescriptions or templates of narrative form and methods of presentation as previously discussed in the section on middle point narratives above. In the case of an unusual or extraordinary event, these templates are "stretched" and the

Individual narrator is allowed to range much more widely (although not freely) within the correspondences between what is expected physically in an unusual situation and what is acceptable and believable in an individual's account of that situation. The investigator seeking information about the particular event can learn a great deal about the context of its occurrence and its reliability by understanding the nature of this template stretch in a narrator's broader verbal repertory.

A brief example from the repertory of a fire fighter will illustrate this point. In his memoirs, Richard Hamilton, New York City's most decorated fire fighter, writes that:

This time was back in '61. I hadn't been at Rescue 2 very long. The verbal came in and we rolled about four blocks up the street to an old tenement building already fully involved with fire at the rear. I ran in the front door and down the hall to the last room at the back because I guessed that's where the fire had started. I kicked in the door and found the room fully ablaze and two little kids in their underwear crawling around on the floor among a bunch of over-turned paint cans. . . . I made a swooping grab . . . tucked each of them under an arm and got out of there quick.²⁰

The heat of the fire had blown out the upper glass in the window frame by now and the flames were roaring out over my head. I knew I'd never be able to pull this woman up and over the window sill because I'd have to stand up to do it. . . . If only another fireman would appear at the fire escape at that moment. . . . I finally got one shoulder under the heaviest part of Mrs. Graziano and heaved her up and out onto the steel grating of the fire escape.²¹

The first narrative reveals the normal flow of a typical rescue account in an urban fire fighting situation and it is the type of account that could be told in a critique, while the second depicts the extreme or unusual situation, one in which the narrator is accountable for the entry and result of his efforts but his focus upon internal elements (what went on in the unusual situation and what the narrator chooses to describe about what went on) is totally subjective--as it is in the narrative exchange. The unusual or extraordinary account can be manipulated to conform to whatever aspect of the unusual situation most concerns the narrator or the audience.²² There is within it an essential stretch or personal emphasis beyond that found in other experience accounts. By stretch I mean the significant emphasis on aspects of plot, internal dialogue, characterization, tone, action or evaluation that seem to be featured more in these stories than they do in others. By comparing the stretch between experiential and narrative frames found within the personal experience stories of individual repertoires as they relate to a specific event, I will be able to make some preliminary observations concerning the narrator's impressions of the event, compare his account with those given by other witnesses and draw some tentative conclusions about the context in which they occurred. My purpose here is not to construct a definitive historical account about this particular fire, but to illustrate how oral historical information can be better

understood when it is related to a broader personal repertory and viewed within the continuum of verbal expression in the work place that I have been developing to this point.²³

In the discussion which follows, I present the personal experience narratives of a fire fighter who worked on the Knights of Columbus fire in 1942 to illustrate this approach. I compare his account to selected additional narratives taken from his repertory in an attempt to determine consistencies in his individual stretch of the personal elements in the stories. In order to provide some structure for the comparison, the experience narratives of this fire fighter can be broken down into the following structural units:

- I. Description of the events preceding the fire
- II. Response to the fire
- III. Fighting the fire
- IV. Events following the fire
- V. Comment

On the evening of December 12, 1942 as many Newfoundlanders listened to a radio program originating from the Knights of Columbus hall in St. John's in which hundreds of allied servicemen were billeted, suddenly someone screamed "fire" and the program went off the air as the crowd tried to push its way out of the flaming auditorium. Although the main fire station was located almost adjacent to the hall, by the time the units had responded the heat

was so intense that all the fire fighters could do was try to save those lucky enough to find a window or a doorway. The eventual death toll went over one hundred people-- many of whom were never identified and were buried in a mass grave.

PF Wake's (a pseudonym) account of the fire concentrates on the second structural level of the fire experience story, i.e., the elements of responding to the call, going to the fire, first view of the fire, the disposition and laying out of the hose and then fighting the fire. There are some significant differences between the Butts recording, done in 1975 for a CBC radio broadcast, and the one I did in January of 1978, as seen in the following transcripts:

W: So then in nineteen and during the war years of course we had a very busy time here. A very busy time during the war years. Well a number of fires. We don't know if they were accidental or if they were arson or not. We had a number of barracks, soldier's barracks we had two burned down up on Signal Hill and we had two burn down up in the field there on Newtown Road there in the Christian Brother's field there, they're home defense barracks and we had a couple burn down there up in Lester's Field. We had about six barracks . . . soldier's barracks that was during the war years. Then, of course, we had the Knights of Columbus fire that started about 11:35/36 on ah December the twelfth, nineteen forty two.

M: Maybe you could go into some detail on that, if you would. What were you doing that night and how.

W: We were just going to bed as a matter of fact, round, just taking a, just put me rubbers. What we usually do is put our rubbers by the side of the bed and put your pants down in and turn your pants down in and turn your pants down and haul them back and when you come out you put your feet down

in your rubbers and put up your suspenders over your shoulders and you do it all, you know, in a few seconds. You're ready to go. We just had . . . put my pants into my bed, put my rubbers by the side of the bed, put my pants into it and about sitting on my bed ready to lift the covers ready to get in when, bang, the alarm went. This was the Knights of Columbus fire. So I was driving the truck that night. And we left the east end station, and when we left the east end station we could see the reflection of the fire then. Down there by the Newfoundland . . . in the night, you know, it was downright totally black, so we could see the reflection in the sky and ah when she came up ah Harvey Road there we could, we had a heck of a job to get by the heat from the fire, fire was coming out from the window from all parts in through the roof and everything all of it aglow. So we had to pass the fire because the trucks in the center they had taken the hydrants on the west side of the fire and lay our hose and we did that. We laid out a couple of lines and then of course when we got that done, we started fighting the fire. By that time the fire was coming through all parts of the building . . . the people were screaming and jumping through all different windows. I remember one man, he . . . on the west side, there on the ground floor, next to the CCC Armory there now, the man leaning through the window, the fire was coming out over his head and a man by the name of Crotty was on the branch pipe with me and ah, I told him to put the branch pipe on me, pour the water on me and I'll go in and try to hold him and I got ahold him, I got ahold of his shoulders, a heavy man, I couldn't get him up over the thing and the fire was so hot the helmet melted on my shoulder, my coat caught fire even though the hose was on me, so I dropped it. My mitts got fire everything, so, but the helmet, the long tail of the helmet, was shielding my face, I kept it down like this (dips chin to chest). So I came back and I took the branch pipe and he did the same thing and he got in dere and he had to give it up and when he dropped him he fell back into the things and that was it, we never, ah never got him out. We couldn't get him out--there wasn't enough help there, if there had a been two three probably we could have hauled him out, but there was only two of us there and one had to keep the branch pipe on the other we couldn't drop the branch pipe because neither of us would get near the window without the hose. Well then we

went around to the back then. The people were grabbing them and hauling them away. It was a night of horror, really.

M: And it lasted all night and went to morning?
 W: Oh yeah, right up on, right up on the next morning around six o'clock it was the light snow and it was . . . snow and ah it was a lot of the ruins was the only thing that there was there then and an awful lot of bodies there, an awful lot of bodies there, we got ninety-nine out of it, of the bodies, and there was five or six that died afterwards, you know. But the next morning we were picking out the bodies all day and putting them over in the CCC Armory which is just across the way in dere up there. . . . They were in there for identification. Yeah, heah, it was a lot of work attached to it, you know. We never had time to eat, actually we never . . . by the time we ate, ah we had something to eat that evening, before, around six o'clock. I never ate nothing until one o'clock the next day. Never got anything to eat, never had time--couldn't get anything to eat. . . . Yeah.

.....
 The following transcript was presented on a radio show on May 23, 1975. This Canadian Broadcasting Corporation broadcast was entitled "The St. John's Holocaust: The Story of the Tragic K. of C. Fire in 1942," produced by Grace Butt. The tape is run uncut except for material that may have been taken off of the end of the account. The narrator is obviously FF Wake, although he is not named:

I was on duty that night at the ah east end station and ah we were listening to the ah barn dance; I was sitting on the side of the bed just after taking off my boots and I had my rubbers by the side of the bed, and the fireman takes off his shoes or his boots or whatever he is wearing and he puts on his rubbers and he pulls his pants down over his rubbers and then pulls up his pants again with his suspenders on so that when the alarm rings he just turns out of bed, puts his feet into his rubbers, takes his suspenders and throws them up over his shoulders, and, of course, he's dressed. Only a matter of hooked a button in the top of his

pants, going down the pole and ah getting into his position on the apparatus, whatever he's driver, or if he's on the back of the truck or whatever position he's assigned to. That night in question I was the driver of the east end truck and as I said I was sitting on the edge of the bed listening to the barn dance. Ah just decided to take off my boots and turning my pants down over my rubbers ready to go if anything should happen, and lie back in bed and listen to the barn dance and all of a sudden we hear a scream of fire over the radio. There ah, was seven of us in the room, it was a dormitory, seven of us there. And the sergeant, he's dead now, God rest his soul, I looked at him and he looked at me, he was smokin' and he laid his pipe down on his chair next to his bed, he didn't say a word--he shocked us. And he put his feet into his rubbers, pulled up his pants and got ready and I did likewise, the other men did likewise and we were ready when the bell sounded on the apparatus floor. We heard the telephone we knew it was a message. We went to the apparatus floor and the guard said the Knights of Columbus building on Harvey Road. So everyone jumped into their place. I jumped into the seat. I was driving, and of course, the guard opened the doors and we were away. And it didn't take us too long because I really had my foot on the accelerator pressing it to the floor. I guarantee you that and too that night there wasn't much traffic. And whatever that old LaFrance truck could do she did it that night going up Military Road and Harvey Road that night to get to the fire. When we got up to Garrison Hill dere was no trouble to see the fire, the fire was out through the building. And we could see the flame in the sky and the reflection of it. And when we got to Harvey Road by the ah Holy Name Hall we could see the fire was out through the roof. The central trucks, they were already laying out lines of hose from the hydrants on Harvey Road and for us to get above the fire, to get to the west of the fire so that we could lay out our hose lines. We had to pass it, and the heat was so intense that the Captain had to hold up, he was on the, at that time we were driving left, and the Captain was on my right and he had to hold up his coat to shield his face from the fire until we got past and I had to haul the truck over to the Harvey Road side over to ah, as far as it could go. If I remember correctly, I must have had the wheels ah, the left wheels up on the sidewalk to try to

get past without knocking down Wright's gas tank was on the sidewalk. But we got past anyway and we had to lay our hose lines from the fire to the hydrant from ah from, at the foot of Pres. . . ah Parade Street at Harvey Road, at the juncture of LeMarchant Road and then, of course, we laid additional lines down to ah Young Street and down to Long's Hill. And ah then we started fighting the fire. Of course the west end station came at the same time they were called, so we had the central, the west and the east end stations dere. At that time the fire was out through the west side and it was feared that the ah CLB Armory would be ignited and that in turn would be going on fire as well as the Knights of Columbus. So we had to pay some attention to the CLB Armory and spray some water on dat. Alternate the hose lines and got them wetted down, and then turn back to the fire. During the time we were working on the west side a man who is now with the fire department, A.C. and myself, we saw a body in the window on the west side next, a man leaning through the window. And ah, he said we'll try and get it and there was two us on the hose line, so I turned my helmet around so that the long part that is used to shoot water over your back turned in front to shield the heat. And he put the hose on me and I went down as far as I could go wetted down as I was, laying the hose on me, and I couldn't reach'em, my helmet melted and dropped down in front of my face, and my coat caught fire and I had to come back. And when I came back, I put the hose on him. I wet him down with as much water as could go with the hose and he went in and the man was still in the window and ah, we wet, I wet him down as I said, and he went in and his helmet melted and his coat caught fire and he had to come back and by that time the body, he was dropping down into the window, the body was gone inside the window. So we worked on the fire, then, from then on until, wherever it was possible to use a hose line, but the water where we put it seemed to be so ineffective. It didn't seem to be taking any effect upon the flames and reducing the temperature and eventually smothering and giving steam it didn't seem to take any effect on it. For a long, long time, ah because the fire was out through the windows, out through the eaves, the whole building seemed to be on fire. And ah above the building seemed to be a beautiful flame at times of different colors of ah they seemed green at times, and yellow and orange and different colors. This, in our opinion, ah we figured it out later that it was a

tremendous accumulation of carbon monoxide gas that burns something like natural gas. And this continued because there wasn't any wind and the fire continued to burn above the building. Whether there was an awful accumulation in the body of the building that had built up in the early stages and was being released and as it was released as it got vented and got the oxygen with a mixture of oxygen--ah it started to burn--it was this tremendous light. Of course, it was said afterwards, I read it in the paper myself, I believe it was in a magazine somewhere saying the flame was seen out to sea for fifty miles.

The Butts tape reveals that FF Wake is directing this narrative at a wide audience--his lengthy explanations about boots and equipment, his literary imagery in the dramatic tableaux between he and Codner, the hose laying descriptions and the explanatory material concerning the carbon monoxide flames over the burning hostel reflect a concern that the popular radio audience not miss the meaning of what he is describing. The second tape, by comparison reveals almost a straight (middle point) professional fire fighter's experience story that has settled into a sedate recounting of the facts in its unelaborated flow from I-IV with minimal comment. The comment given in section IV concerning the amount of work involved in the fire and the fact that the men weren't fed during the entire series of events indicates the existence of vestigial personal details that might be elaborated in another performance context. The stated purpose of this interview was to gain information about the K. of C. fire and FF Wake gave me a popular version with a minimum of detail.

The contrast may be due to his recognition that a literary and educational version of the account for the radio program would be more appropriate with extended explanations of esoteric elements; whereas I had introduced myself as a fire fighter and he therefore felt these elements were unnecessary. This is reflected in the breakdown which follows:

Documented 'facts'

Butts version:

- I. Radio show, scream of fire, leave station
- II. Fire through window, heat of fire, hose lays
- III. Wet down other buildings, flame seen out to sea
- IV. Nothing

McCarl version:

- I. Time of alarm, alarm
- II. Reflection of fire, laying hose
- III. Fight fire, people screaming, jumping
- IV. Ruins and bodies, clean up work

Subjective elements

Butts version:

- I. On duty, bed, fireman's equipment, driver, exchange of looks, ready before bell, on apparatus floor, guard opens door
- II. Drove as fast as possible, first view of fire, Captain shields face from heat, hard to get truck through street
- III. Incident with Krotty attempted rescue, equipment melts, colored flame above building
- IV. Nothing
- V. Nothing

McCarl version:

- I. Going to bed, boots
- II. Wake drives
- III. Nothing
- IV. No time to eat
- V. 'A night of horror, really'

The facts (those documented pieces of evidence that appear through repetition to have some consistency and therefore some validity) as compared to the subjective elements provided indicates the apparent purpose of Wake's narrative stretch was along primarily educational lines aimed at this more popular audience. The addition of these subjective elements (the Codner episode and the colors over the fire) might otherwise not have been related by the narrator because they might be inappropriate to a more specific audience, e.g., other fire fighters.

A narrative event occurs just prior to FF Wake's account of the K. of C. fire that also reveals a characteristic of his personal experience narrative repertory. The transcript reads as follows:

M: Okay, well maybe you could tell me about the situation in forty-two. I know that at that time it was during the war so that the blackout was on, right?

W: I could tell you about the woman I saved in ah, this was in nineteen forty-five. I was still a sergeant but at that time I was temporarily in charge of the west end station. We got a fire on Springdale Street. It was in the afternoon, oh it was around five o'clock, I suppose in the fall of the year, November, and ah we went down and, of course, the fire was coming out through the window--on the top story--and there's a fellow on the ground and he said to me, 'there's a woman 'ndat house.' So ah I told the boys not to open the door because if they opened the door at the ground level with the fire coming through the top there'd be no chance of getting in. I told them to leave the door closed and hook up the ladder, and I got into the room. I said, I asked the fellow what room and he said, 'She was in that room,' (points). Course, we put the ladder up and I got in and the very

first thing I did was fall into the bathtub because that was the bathroom. Fell right down into the bathtub. So the door was closed, fortunately. And ah I searched around there and I knew she wasn't there, so I came out and I said, 'She's not there.' Well they said she could be in the next room. Anyhow, we hooked up the ladder to the next window. Broke the window in and I got in. It was full of smoke and I could see the fire out in the hallway. So I wanted to get over through the smoke. No breathing apparatus on and I wanted to get over and close that door so I could cut off the smoke coming in so I could search the room. So I got over and I got my foot with my rubber against the door and I jammed the door to, with a bang. And I was crawling back on my hands and knees and I put me hand on her foot! (Slaps the table) So the next thing, I hid me face off the side of the bed. I couldn't see her through the smoke so then I knew she was under the bed so I hauled her out and I hauled her out. Got 'er in my arms. Got her over, I couldn't, I tried to haul her over--got her over. I hauled her over by the floor, got her by the window then I got her up in my hands and then I saw that all her clothes had been on fire and were all burned. Her breasts were all burned and the woman was pregnant. So ah, I got her up in my arms and ah got her to the window and I shouted out I had the woman. So then Superintendent B. was here at that time, he was an Englishman. He was in charge of the fire department then, God now he's dead. And ah they put up two ladders quickly and B. came up and one ladder and P.P., another fireman, came up in the other and they took her away from me. One took her shoulders and the other took her legs and they brought her down and they took her to the hospital. She was all burnt here (runs hands over upper chest), poor woman. She was in the hospital a month and her baby was born. And ah she was there three months before they released her, she was so badly burned. Mrs. C., it was a Mrs. C. And it was about six months later that I received a letter one day at the west end fire station and this was from Mrs. C. and she asked me to come and see her. And I went down to see her and she wanted to thank me for saving her life. That was the story there. (Laughs)

M: There's nothing like a particular custom that you go through, or say initiation for a new fire fighter that's just joining the force? I know that

we had an initiation for us when I was a smoke-jumper. They tied us up and put us out on the lawn and kept us there all night and banged on the doors and things like that.

W: Well no, didn't do that. But ah we had a hydrant mounted on a platform, you know, and we used to call it the 'out of town hydrant.' So ye'd tell some new fella when they come in to a not to forget now, yer on the out of town hydrant today, you know, there are no hydrants in the out of town place. No water system, but when your going to make sure that you take that hydrant with ye. You know. This hydrant we had weighed about four hundred pounds, you know, and he'd go dere and he'd try to take and ye'd tell him to fill it up with water, you know, to keep it filled with water to make sure that it's filled with water when they take it. (Laughs)

As seen in this more typical fire experience narrative, Wake manipulates the narrative frame to concentrate on that aspect of the experiential order that most dramatically illustrates the combination of skill, luck and timing that go into a rescue in a burning dwelling. Similarities between this narrative and the K. of C. account told by him include the establishment of the exact temporal setting, the blow-up conditions and descriptions of the fires, and the polished, cohesive flow of this account that indicates it has been told previously and has become polished and fixed. The complexities of moving ladders, driving trucks, sliding poles and even the behavior of the fire itself in the rescue story have been passed over to concentrate on the rescue event itself. It is interesting to note that in most of the fire experience accounts I have collected (as well as the Hamilton account cited above), the action that occurs out-of-awareness

(inside the forest fire or the burning building) is often set off from the rest of the narrative and described with meticulous attention to detail, a pattern followed by Wake. This reveals the prescriptive qualities of both the experiential and narrative templates in forcing the narrator (the only one who knows what really happened) to match each narrative element to the correct experiential sequence, and logically follow the character of the fire environment to match the result when he emerges into view. In contrast to the K. of C. account, there is an explanatory section (what happens if you open a door in a burning building), no dramatic build-up going to the fire, and an unusual personalization of the victim. This narrative also reveals Wake taking charge of the dyadic situation in order to perform what is for him a much more meaningful story, one that truly depicts the work of fire fighting and in which he is the central character. I asked for information on the K. of C. fire but there is little gratification in relating that, it is primarily just a popular memory in the minds of most people in St. John's, and it has been recorded elsewhere; whereas the other account has personal involvement, drama and catharsis for the narrator.

Fire fighter Wake also recounts a version of another famous fire, the Imperial Oil fire, and then tells an anecdote about the "out of town hydrant," an initiation trick used to dupe new fire fighters by telling them that

there are some places where there is no plumbing out of town so the rookie has to figure out a way to haul the massive demonstration hydrant (weighing hundreds of pounds) to the fire and keep it filled with water. These last two accounts indicate the pervasive personal caution and objectivity maintained by Wake throughout the interview. The Imperial Oil fire is related in very objective terms with the almost general conversational emphasis (use of the third person throughout) diffusing the personal impact of the narrative to the point of making it a reportorial observation. In a similar manner, the anecdote is told in the third person and even though it is a response to a direct question about pranks and characters, FF Wake makes it clear in this situation that he will allow meaningful, personal feelings and perspectives to intrude into the interview only on his terms.

In summary, the repertory of FF Wake can be said to tentatively reveal an objectivity about his fire fighting experiences that is broken only twice in the interview: his observations about Superintendent Codner and his rescue story. The Knights of Columbus accounts (both the Butts and McCarl versions) reflect this caution and objectivity and indicate that although the K. of C. fire is recognized by him as an important historical event, it has little personal meaning to him and he may even resent (or just be tired of) the lack of attention given other fire fighting

incidents and individuals because of it.

The combination of oral historical material and written documentation is a risky business at best due to the limitations of documentary research, the subjectivity of the oral responses, and the lack of parallelism between the two kinds of information. It is difficult to combine these disparate types of information since the oral record appears too subjective while the written record often remains too objective and removed from the context of the event, i.e., there is no human context in which it can be viewed.

The basic "facts" employed in the narratives have become fixed through the combination of retelling and an ever expanding reliance upon well known and widely read printed and other popular sources. With regard to the K. of C. fire these include the following: fire spotted, alarm, hose lays, people screaming and piling up, bodies, buildings being wetted down, heat, the American presence, clean-up, the investigation and (most importantly) the conclusions about the incident that are accepted by the community. The personal elements have been linked to these facts and (depending upon the audience as seen in the FF Wake material) and the subjective impressions at the time of the event combined with material acquired at a later date but considered applicable to the account (e.g., FF Wake's carbon monoxide theories) become fused and comprise

the combined account, parts or all of which exist as a core in the repertory of the individual that draws heavily upon the accepted community version but seeks to qualify it individually. It is possible that as time goes on these clusters of objective fact and subjective account begin to decay in the direction of the most central or unique and personal feature, e.g., FF Wake's tableaux with Codner. These decayed elements then become fragments or redactions of full fledged narratives that remain part of the potential repertory until they are required at which time they are again expanded using these central clusters as an outline.

The experience and resulting documentation of a disaster may expand the range of these clusters by providing a greater variety of known facts to which subjective elements can be linked, but the experience itself will usually conform to the form of personal experience account in a given group and will reflect at the same time the consistency of narrative stretch found in other personal experience narratives in both the individual and group repertory. This disaster itself seems to force people into locating and holding on to these individual insights, particularly if they are unique or add a dimension to something that is considered important enough in the community to be periodically brought up and discussed. The K. of C. account has little real function in the fire

fighters' collective repertory in St. John's because they could do very little but keep other buildings from burning. Yet the accounts are retained primarily because individual firemen are asked about the event and must be able to provide individual insights. The individual must have his version of the story. If taken at face value and viewed outside of the repertory of that individual there would be no way to determine consistencies or inconsistencies in the information, in its method of presentation (the contextual strategy for its use) or its reliability.

An attempt to gain additional information about a disaster from personal experience narratives of professionals involved in that disaster can be said to have tentatively revealed that individual, personal accounts must be viewed in at least three contexts in order to be interpreted correctly. The first is the social/historical context of the event based primarily upon written historical information. The second is the context of the interview with particular emphasis upon the nature and esoteric knowledge of the audience. And the third is the context of the individual narrator's repertory and the relationship of a given narration to other personal experience narratives of an individual and those common to the group as a whole with respect to form, function, content and style. The latter concept is roughly the same as stretch with the following qualification: rhetorical stretch refers to

a narrator's manipulation of known referential and experiential models as they relate to his individual repertory and as they are consistently made to conform to a certain performance situation or context; whereas style usually refers to a more general manipulation of experiential and referential models and their consistency with a particular collective manner of presentation. To put it another way, stretch is discoverable primarily within an individual's verbal repertory, while style refers to a group method of performance and evaluation.

This view of the Knights of Columbus fire of 1942 indicates that the stretch of personal experience accounts of a disaster conforms to the general shift of emphasis found in other comparable narratives within the individual repertoires of the narrators who experienced the event. Rather than supplying the folklorist or oral historian with new types of data and "hard facts," this approach allows the investigator to better understand the context of the actual event and an individual's reaction to it on both a historical (diachronic) and ahistorical (synchronic) level by viewing shifts in emphasis against a comparative framework. The main value of folklore to oral history (from this perspective) is contextual, while the main value of oral history to folklore is textual.

In a more contemporary fire fighting setting, this communication of unusual historical information is linked

to specific precipitating factors like situations or locations that remind an individual of an earlier experience, topics that arise in narrative sessions that trigger specific memories, or even just the mention of an individual's name. As illustrated in the Knights of Columbus fire material, however, the historical "facts" of an event are stretched in the direction of individual or cultural view and therefore must be interpreted in terms of the occupational culture context. The following narrative session illustrates the importance of understanding this broader context before interpretations of verbal material can be made:

The scene is the sitting room late at night and the fire fighters are watching the news. A story about a hotel fire in New York City comes on and they show bodies of a number of elderly residents being taken out on sheet-draped stretchers. As the news continues, the four men in the room engage in the following exchange:

1st. FF: Shit man, those people look pretty crisp. You see that one was bent right up? Probably looked like a split hot dog.

2nd. FF: Sometimes you can't even tell they're people, let alone white or black. I went on one one night and we were overhaulin and I grabbed what I thought was one of those rubber baby dolls all burnt up and threw it out the window. But as I threw it out the arm socket popped off and it was a real kid--just burned to shit.

1st. FF: That's like the night down on Twelfth Street. I've never seen so many kids in one place. What was that about five or six kids in that place?

2nd. FF: Yeah, that was with Engine 2 that night.

1st. FF: We made that turn on Twelfth Street half asleep about three o'clock in the morning and that shit must have been blowing twenty-five feet out in the street.

3rd. FF: What floor was that?

1st. FF: Second or third floor. I mean talk about waking you up. But then they brought out one kid

and that wasn't unusual but then they just kept coming out:

2nd. FF: Lost almost all of them didn't we?

1st. FF: Well they would come out with one kid and you'd think well that was normal. But then they come out with another and another, and you didn't think it was going to stop, they came out with so many kids in this place.

4th. FF: I went out with 13 Engine one night and they had six people in the front room of a two story and they were incinerated right there. They threw a molotov cocktail in the front door around ten o'clock at night. I mean we're rolling down the street and there's snow on the ground and we're throwing ladders and this guy jumps out of the second floor window and he lands right on his head and he's already burnt to shit. But in the front room there is nothing but bodies stacked right on top of each other.

2nd. FF: You know the funny part of that is when you find these bodies, how many times do you find that sucker right at the window? It seems as though they get that far and they can't get any further.

3rd. FF: You see some weird stuff. Like that guy on that mattress. He must have been smoking and died before that fire ever got to him. Because he was nothing but bare bones on the springs by the time we got to him.

1st. FF: That reminds me of that guy from Truck 1 that night. We had this place that was completely off when we pulled up--shit blowing out into the street. We finally make it up the stairs to the door of this apartment and here's this guy layin across the threshold burnt to shit. So this fucker from Truck 1 bends down and looks at him from one side and then walks around and bends down and looks at him from the other. Then he throws up his hands over his head and says, 'Any part of the ball.' I'd thought I'd shit.²⁴

Taken out of context, this narrative round in which fire fighters talk about various fire victims they have seen (precipitated by their appearance on television) might be viewed as a ghoulish display of their insensitivity and callousness. By placing it within the actual

emotional context of the occupation, however, we can more easily understand that this objectification of the dead is not the result of a lack of concern, but more a matter of conditioning and exposure aimed at achieving emotional distance. Mutilated and horribly burned corpses are a part of their work experience and by bringing these experiences out in the open and even joking about them, fire fighters prepare themselves for future encounters with fire victims by collectively experiencing the past encounters of other group members. The stretch of these accounts toward levity and objectivity (matching in many ways the superficiality of the media presentation) establishes a culturally sanctioned release for this grisly possibility. The importance of this verbal process is underscored by the fact that fire fighters themselves are put in just such life threatening situations on a regular basis by facing the possibility of severe burns and death on a daily basis. This further underscores the complex cultural significance of a narrative exchange that to the outsider might appear to be cruel and morbid.

Closely linked to narratives about the unusual and significant in the past are accident accounts that retain within the collective memory of the group the variety of mistakes and mishaps encountered on the job. These range from minor temporary injuries like cuts and scrapes, through more serious and permanent mishaps such as sprained

backs and knees, to account of fatalities and crippling injury. Linked to other protective or covert media within occupational culture like unauthorized short cuts, personal or "government work" using company materials, sabotage, pilfering and stealing, accident accounts provide a measure of protection and control to workers by giving them an informally derived method of self-determination in a potentially hostile and exploitive work environment. Management is necessarily viewed as the enemy from this perspective since many of the most repetitious, exploitative, and dangerous techniques which workers are forced to perform are imposed by management which (from the workers' point of view) always sacrifices their health and well-being for financial gain. Since he too must live on the profits generated by the work he performs, however, the individual attempts to protect, express or revenge himself by maintaining this covert cultural network, I concentrate here on accident accounts because they are the most dramatic and overt verbal examples of this protective network, rather than revealing aspects of covert work culture which are extremely sensitive. Any exposure of the latter to outsiders is an exploitation of the culture no matter how well intentioned the investigator.

Accident narratives can be divided into the three broad accident categories mentioned above, beginning with observations about recurrent minor injuries on the job and

moving to the more central, detailed accounts concerning more serious injuries and detailed narratives about close calls. The following narratives provide examples of both:

The scene for this narrative exchange is the sitting room where four fire fighters and myself are drinking coffee late at night after just coming back from a false alarm:

1st. FF: Whatever happened to that guy who got hurt up here on the roof when it was so snowy that time?

2nd. FF: You know that guy who tried to grab the downspout?

3rd. FF: No what happened was that he was trying to pull a Tarzan and he jumped across and grabbed the downspout and he fell in the backyard. We had a closet and a cockloft off and . . .

2nd. FF: He tried to go down the downspout or something like that. . .

3rd. FF: But anyway he ended up in the backyard.

1st. FF: As old as these buildings are, I'd never hang on to a damn downspout.

3rd. FF: Shit, I've seen them fall just by hitting them with a line.

4th. FF: Color me trapped. I'm gone. I don't even like these damn fire escapes. Half the time they're only held up with coat hangers or something--the damn bolts or mortar rotted out long ago. . .

I know this one guy who really got screwed up. He got his leg cut off down to the bare bone. A triangular piece of glass out of one of these old-styled sky-lights. I think that he just went to one, he had been on one and just gone to two, I guess that was it. But anyway this glass cut everything in his leg--all of the tendons and when they sewed him up they didn't take care of the tendons and so when they took off the cast his foot slapped up against his leg. So they cut him open again and spliced all of the tendons and when they took the cast off that time his foot dropped. So they did it a third time and spliced all the tendons into his big toe and so it now has this big thing to it, and he puts all of his weight on his heel. But he has spent three and a half years on sick leave. P.O.D. And then they retired him on disability.25

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The scene for this narrative is a one-on-one interview situation in which I was asking a fire fighter

about his personal background and this story came out in the course of the conversation.

PF: I was still in the squad when this happened, but we got a run for a fraternity house at G.W., and man I came close to buying the farm on this one. We pulled up and the nails were burning in this place--I mean it was well off. We went in the front door and the officer told the chief we were going to need help because we thought there were a lot of people in there. We went up the second and then the third floor and the guy I was with wanted to check the fire escape and I went up the stairwell. Well I got in this room and got turned around and I couldn't find my way out and man it was getting some kinda hot in there. So I thought, well this is it. I thought of my family and my kids and I wondered what the hell I was doing there. But I figured I had to try at least once more so I took five good sucks of pure oxygen out of the McCaa and somehow made it to the top of the stairs where the other animals from the squad were coming up to get me.²⁶

Although both of these stories might appear to be overly dramatic or graphic to the outsider, they represent extremely common forms of accident accounts in many occupations, not just fire fighting. The first account details not only the cause of the injury (shattered glass falling from a broken sky-light) but the shoddy surgery that turned a serious but not grave injury into a life-time disability. Beyond just acting as a verbal warning concerning specific dangers on the job, this story also expresses the frustrations of a group of workers who are at the mercy of the physicians and surgeons who are hired by management to man their clinics. Fire fighters, like millions of other workers, are forced to develop their own forms of protection and treatment (in essence an informal network of

practitioners of folk medicine) in an attempt to protect themselves not only from the dangers of the work place, but also from the poor medical treatment which they receive from company physicians. Stories such as this one reinforce that informal, protective network.

The second narrative is a more detailed, near-miss account that reflects the results of getting trapped and lost in a burning building--a fairly common experience amongst fire fighters. The need to give it one more try before giving up, implicit faith in the efforts of others to attempt a rescue and the internal dialogue in this story makes it an extremely revealing account. Accident narratives, particularly the near-miss accounts, illustrate in some detail the specifics of a fire fighter's hazards on a fire. This personalizing of the emotions felt during the experience of the close call, not only heightens the interest of the audience and the utility of the information being passed along, it also reinforces the expression of a very human need to articulate fear in all of its various manifestations in the occupational culture. If other narratives, like those about characters, officers and individual fire houses, define the exterior cultural boundaries of fire fighting culture by distinguishing areas of concern and comment from those that are irrelevant to the culture, then accident accounts aid each individual fire fighter by openly presenting the personal emotions

and psychological internal boundaries of fear, by defining the limits of human endurance in the most fundamentally frightening situation of being inside a burning building.

The most serious accident accounts deal with permanent serious injury and death. It is important to understand how members of an occupational group verbally characterize these events in order to gain a comprehensive view of all aspects of verbal expression in occupational culture.

This story was told in a group session with three other fire fighters and myself present. The narrator told the story at my request so that I could tape it.

FF: I had a friend of mine some years back who was injured quite badly. We were fighting a fire over here in N.E. and he was laying out. And it was an early, pre-dawn fire and there was so much smoke, they didn't know which house was burning. And after he hooked up the pumper he came in and the fire was in the basement. And as the story goes, or at least he told me, he asked where is it, and they told him it was downstairs. He assumed position on the line in front of the line man. He was going to advance it down the steps. Well in the heat and smoke and the confusion, the officer didn't know that there were two men in front of him--he thought there was one. So when they said abandon the building, everybody out, he had fallen down the steps when the fire flashed. So he had fallen in the fire. He had third degree burns that went right up his night pants. And at the time we had different running coats. And he had lost an ear, and the only place he wasn't burned was where his face piece was. And he went from about two-hundred pounds down to about one-hundred forty-seven pounds. He's back up to where he was now. They retired him and he and maybe one other fire fighter I can remember were the only two firemen to get one-hundred percent disability. And he had to wear special underwear because of so many skin grafts and the gloves just melted on his hands. He said, you guys be

careful, he was telling me the story. He said I started up the steps trying to get out and I just fell down the steps in a corner. The whole time fire rolling right over him--he was in it. And he said he just knew he was going to die. They finally came in and got him and pulled him out. What had happened is the officer took a count when they got outside and discovered that there was a man missing, actually two men missing, from different companies and they went in and got him out. And we're talking about something that happened in twenty or thirty seconds. Now it might have seemed like an eternity to him--But he wasn't in there that long. And the other man--they proved that he never put his face piece on because the inside of it was covered with soot. . . . Right after he was burned we had a terrible fire up on Georgia Avenue and Rittenhouse. It was the day after Christmas and the fire broke out around noon and there were still people in the store. And as we were going in we could hear debris and aerosol cans popping and the lights were flickering off. Funny thing was I thought about this guy who had been burned--you could feel the heat right through your boots. You'd be thinking all kinds of things--your mind is your worse enemy, you know. The further you get in there, the hotter it gets and everything in your body is telling you to get up and run out of there. Each man going in there--you're human and it's not a normal condition. But I was thinking about this guy the whole time and what happened was the store went to a third alarm. And it broke out about 12:15 in the afternoon and I was relieved on the fire ground around six and went home and watched myself on the news.²⁷

This narrative not only illustrates the internal thoughts of a fire fighter as he battles within himself the normal human fear of fire, it also (in its depiction of the injured fire fighter's over-eagerness and the officer's oversight) extends a word of caution to other fire fighters who find themselves in what is for most workers in this trade one of the most dangerous situations possible--a basement fire. Each inch crawled down a superheated hallway

pushes a fire fighter farther and farther away from reality as we know it toward a situation where instinct must give way to conditioning. The only thing that allows a person to do that more than once is knowing that others who you trust will share your fear and still do what has to be done. And a large part of that expectation is based on the sharing of information about others who have taken that internal exploration to an extreme and passed on their experiences in narrative form.

Accident narratives are in a sense the informal research arm of the fire fighting culture just as they are in other dangerous occupations. In the absence of widespread industry and government experiments to test equipment and techniques from protective clothing to the use of air support systems, the current generation of fire fighters has only to look and listen to their predecessors for warnings about the dangers they face and ways to protect themselves from those dangers. Stories such as the one above and widespread lung and cardiovascular ailments among retired fire fighters attest to the inhuman but effective manner in which knowledge about these dangers is won and passed on to the next generation of workers.

As we have traced the development of verbal interaction in the work place from technical terms and nicknames, through conversations, critiques and storytelling sessions, and finally to oral historical and accident accounts, we

have been edging ever closer to narratives that provide greater opportunities for individual control and performance in the verbal exchange. This individual control reaches its most elaborate form in the extended personal experience narrative. Often told as a reminiscence at a retirement dinner, card game or other social occasion where old-timers congregate, these lengthy personal accounts are important not only for their entertainment value, but also due to the symbolism, emotion and historical detail which they contain. The following account, taken from my smokejumper collection, is an extremely elaborate example, but it is useful because it invites analysis on a variety of levels.

Skinny's jump story was told every season that I worked as a smokejumper from 1965 to 1969. It would usually be dragged out of him late at night during the last big beer bust that marked the end of the season. At these occasions about twenty-five to thirty of us would be sitting around the large tables in the back room of the Pastime Tavern in Redmond, Oregon. We would be surrounded by empty pitchers of beer and have been regaling ourselves with stories and lies about the past season's adventures. Eventually one of the more experienced jumpers would say something like, "Hey, let's get Skinny to tell about his GP jump." All would join in and coax him until he would start the story. When I first heard it, Skinny would

have been about thirty-five and had been in the occupation since he was nineteen.

The context of the recording situation was a reunion between myself, Skinny, Tony Percival (my squad-leader and trainer at Redmond) and Pat McCauley, a fellow jumper. I had returned to this part of the state to discuss jumping and had explained to all of them that I was attempting to record as much oral material as possible in the interest of compiling a collection as part of a course I was then taking at the University of Oregon in folklore. They were eager to participate and as the night wore on and we drank a few more beers, this jump story session began to take on the active give-and-take of a normal bull session like the many in which we had participated over the four year period in which I worked as a jumper out of Redmond. The story is told in the following manner:

Skinny: Well, anyway, this happened in the first part of July, 1956, and it's one of the times that's once in a lifetime type of deals where everything goes wrong. I mean it was fantastic. In this case there was only one thing that didn't go wrong and that was the fire itself. The fire wasn't too much. It was fairly easy to control; it was all on the ground. It wasn't too large. But otherwise, for three days why nothin' else went right. We--I--had a jump partner who was--we called him Light Horse Harry because he was so awkward and he was kinda stumblin' over himself all the time and he wasn't too well liked; it was one of those deals--that I talked about before--I always got stuck with the guy that nobody else wanted, but anyway, he was a rookie and it was his first fire jump and we got this call about nine in the morning, it was a fire in the Gifford Pinchot forest. And it was the first time that the Gifford Pinchot had ever asked for

jumpers or had gotten them as far as that goes, so it was gonna be the first fire jump made on that forest and it was over the Lewis River part. They have a wild area there where it's still virgin, west side timber--great big monstrous stuff. Well anyway, we had the Noorduyn and then we got in the Noorduyn and it was takin' about two--over two hours to get to the fire. So we get over the an Emory Newfells was the spotter and there was just the two of us in the plane and anyway where the fire was, there was a--looked like a brush patch, which it was, wasn't too large, may have been a couple of acres and it turned out there was cliffs, or breakovers, in the rocks. And as you're going out of the rocks, course you had it all covered up, but fairly steep in there but it was the only place to jump. The rest was stuff that--real big stuff. So anyway, we went out and I--neither of us made the spot, which maybe was fortunate because of those rocks and almost cliffs, it was just rocks, brush goin' over the cliff. But anyway, I hit this god-awful tree and caught the side of it and then started to fall through it. I hung for a little bit, and I was up probably further than what my jump rope would have reached at the time because we only had a-hundred foot jump ropes. But anyway, I didn't hang there very long, I started sliding through the tree and I slid for quite a ways and then I came to a stop and then it broke loose again. And finally I was grabbin' for limbs and then got ahold of a limb and the limbs was close enough together that I'd look up and my chute was, course, balled up and it was slitherin' down through the limbs and then stop so then I'd go down for a couple more limbs and try to get it to hook on one and it wouldn't do it. And anyway, I just kept going down like that. It took quite a period of time, messin' around that tree and finally it did, when I was about probably sixty or seventy feet up yet and what had hung on me and I let go of everything, and then to make sure that the limb wasn't going to let loose, why I bounced. Everything was fine. So then I took my helmet off to start my let-down; I'd no more than gotten my helmet off and CRACK. Whatever limb it was on parted and down I started. Well I can remember one thing--I gotta get this goddam helmet back on, so with one hand I was tryin' to grab limbs and with the other hand, with just one hand I rammed the helmet back down on my head, and course, wearing glasses, why it drove my glasses clear down to my nose. But anyway I got the thing on and finally got myself stopped

and it was kind of all over again until finally I came to the last limb and it--I guess that's what I caught ahold of, anyway I was hangin' on the last limb. Like I'm doing chin-ups and my chute stopped me a while but it was still--it wasn't hung on anything, I mean it was kind layin' on the limbs above. This tree leaned out over a, over the brush--actually I hadn't missed the spot very far. And it leaned out so that I was hanging out over the brush and even if I could have crawled down the tree I couldn't have gotten onto the ground because of the way it was growing out. Like--anyway, I was way out. It turned out from the length of the line of the chute I was still about forty--thirty-five or forty feet up. Anyway, I hung there, looked down, and course there was this brush and rocks underneath me and I was hopin the brush would break my fall but . . . anyway, I hung there for quite a while and course, I--like I say, this always sounds so stupid, but I was tryin' to decide, that when I dropped, I'd take all the pressure and all the impact on one leg. You know, so I couldn't break both of them hittin' at the same time, because, like I say, thirty-five, forty feet's quite a ways to drop, free-fall. So I was tryin' to decide which leg'd be best to break; if I had to break one. Well, I didn't come to any conclusions on that, 'cause it doesn't make a lot of difference, plus I was used to rolling to the right. I always did if poss--well, for all practical purposes I'd always roll to the right; I mean, in other words, I'd take--it'd be my right leg. So I hung there until I couldn't hang there any longer, is what it amounted to. And kinda like doin' a high-dive in water, you know, you take a couple of deep breaths and get it over with. And I'd get myself all prepared, how I'd hit on this right leg and go into a --try to roll into it slowly so that I'd take most of the impact on my right leg; and I'd had it all planned out. I let go and I came--course, started down and just as I got to the top of the brush, why I felt this little tug in my feet. Just--JUST touched the ground and then I came back up in the air about, oh, about a foot, maybe two feet. Well, it turned out that this big tree I'd hit, and another tree which was fairly good-size as far as that goes, going out from the base of it. In other words kind of in a wedge shape. And the chute had gone down and got in between them, it was, the chute was right actually on the rock on the ground where they were growing out. It had come down and wedged there and,

course, broke my fall. Okay, fine, that's--and my partner, he hung, he'd gotten, was further away from the spot. He hung in just a medium-size tree. And meanwhile he was gettin' down. It's kinda hard to walk along there because of this brush, plus the fact that it was--if you didn't watch where you were goin' you'd drop right out from under one of those breakovers. So you had to kind of pick your way around. And they'd dropped the cargo in, right in the stuff. So we had to pick our way in, get the cargo out. Or some of it. Well anyway, they dropped two fire-packs and, like Tony mentioned before, at that time there was water and food, and the fire packs were separate. So anyway we got our fire-packs, and meanwhile they'd hung the water in a big tree. It's quite an understatement - - anyway it was one of these--I couldn't--you know things look huge and I'd like to say it was thirteen feet in diameter but I doubt if it was that big. But it was a ten--or eleven footer. It was one of those, oh, I'd say, virgin Doug-fir. A monster. And it hung about, oh, fifty or sixty feet in the air on the last limb, right out on the end of it. You couldn't quite--I was tryin' to throw a rock. You couldn't throw any size rock and reach it. I mean, so, however high that is. You could throw little pebbles and make it, but it was hung right out on the end of it and I'll bet this limb was probably three feet in diameter at the base, you know, it went out about, you know, thirty or forty feet. Well, so much--anyway it was--did I say it was water that hung up? I didn't mean to if I did, it was food. Anyway the rest of the stuff came down so we finally decided that we were gonna get to the fire. So we got our fire-packs and it must have taken us thirty minutes to get to the fire, climbin' over those rocks. But we got this stuff and went over to the fire--it was still fairly damp in that country, and because it's heavy cover, there's hardly any brush except in the open spots and under the trees it was easy to walk under, you know, on the west side because the trees just cut out the sun. And you could hardly see the sky, you could just see little tiny bits and pieces of it. And so it's fairly damp and the fire wasn't doin' too much. Plus there was no fire in the, in any of those trees, it was all on the ground. So we decided to take another look at this food. So back we went and we ended up in--well we didn't have the climbers that you have here and at Cave Junction, all we used was part of our jump-ropes and the

rope and the spurs and the belt on the backboard. We used these belts, which isn't exactly made for climbing any size tree, anyway. So I looked at the tree and knew better than, I wasn't a very good climber anyway, and this tree was way beyond me, even if I got up to the limb you'd have to crawl clear out that, way out on that limb to get to it anyway. But anyway, my partner, he's the heroic type, I guess, but anyway he decided that he was gettin' hungry cause it was gettin' toward evening. Meanwhile we'd eaten, then course breakfast, and, like I say, it was about nine o'clock we'd taken off, so, and this was getting toward afternoon, or middle of the afternoon. So he decided he was going to climb it. So he puts on the spurs and he gets this steel, and he gets up about eight or ten feet and blooey. His spurs came out and down he comes to the ground and this happens--every once in a while it's happened to guys that are climbin' telephone poles or trees on a telephone line; it's the same thing. He put one spur into his leg just above his ankle, just buried that stinker in at an angle. So and he's bleedin', course he's bleeding like a stuck pig, god, the stuff was rolling out. Well anyway, we clubbed him, is what it amounted to, that's first aid. We got a handkerchief and started stuffing the hole, more or less, until it quit. Well, we wrapped it in a, just put a wad there and wrapped it around so it put pressure on it, and it finally stopped. Actually I don't think he lost very much blood, but it looked like it, cause it was really, it was comin' out, it was spurting out so that he must have hit a small artery. Well far as I know, to this day it's still there. Well, the wind's probably blown it off by now. So he, he's hobblin' a little bit, but anyway we hobbled back to the fire, and meanwhile there was supposed to be a ground crew in there that afternoon or that evening that they were gonna send in. So they didn't show up later on that evening, so we worked on the fire a little, and moppin' it up, and spent the night there. And the next morning, why, we got up and we had a few little smokes but we put it, time we got most of the hot spots, we left a few in there. But I decided that since--it was quite a hole he had in his leg you know, and we decided we'd better get out of there before his leg stiffens up or it has time to get fully infected and all this sort of thing, because, we had supposedly, boy I can't even remember now what it was supposed to be. Something like nine or eleven miles or somethin' to get out of there.

And so we went up and retrieved our gear and I wasn't going to climb anythin', he said, so we felled the tree, so we put one small patch in it and about four or five dawns and the tree came right down on top of us, we had to chop the tree out to get the chute out. Those twenty-eight-footers were heavier material and didn't poke holes in quite too easy. And of course mine was wedged there on the rocks, which I had an awful time gettin' up there cause it was just like climbing a cliff, trying to get-- I had to walk way out around, come up from above and crawl down to this tree, and take it out. Anyway, we retrieved our gear, and we decided--meanwhile, no ground crew yet. It turned out; they got there, by the time they got there, they got there forty minutes after we left. And we'd waited that long and most of our troubles--the rest of our troubles probably wouldn't have happened, but since they were supposed to have been there the night before, we just gave up. Well anyway we went back to the fire and checked it, and there were a couple of hot spots in there but I decided it didn't look very dangerous and I--we just better get out of there. The fire, you know, we didn't have any six-hour deal or I didn't want to wait six more hours, last smoke kind of type. So we took off. Well, according to the map--I can just see that map now, and 'cause it was straight south, which is downhill, it showed it going down about three-quarters of a mile and should hit a trail. And from there, then, you went out on, I think it's Quartz Creek, and then into the Lewis River drainage and down the Lewis River to the end of the road. And so anyway we took off and we loaded--we left all the tools there, we decided we'd go light, we had a long way to go, so we left the tools and just carried our, started with our chutes and suits and well we left our fire-tools, and we, well, that's about all we had. Flashlights and stuff we left. We took off and sure enough about three-quarters of a mile or thereabouts we met up with this trail. And meanwhile, I have to say one thing for old Harry, he was tough old boy, this was over a day old; meanwhile we hadn't had any--of course, anything to eat. So it's been over twenty-four hours, about twenty-eight hours without any food. And there's lots of water 'cause it's early in the year. There's water runnin' everywhere I mean, as far as little sprays and all that. So we didn't have any water problem. But anyway, we took off and hit this trail and we must have walked about a mile, mile and a half or

so, we hit a fork in the trail and it had, which wasn't supposed to be there and one said, Quartz Creek, which was what we--somewhere under two miles or something like that; pointed off down there, but unfortunately the trail hadn't been maintained since before the war, in the thirties some time, and it said this trail was no longer maintained and the blaze marks were next to impossible to find. Well, being in strange country, which we didn't know at all, especially since the trail wasn't supposed to fork like this, I didn't want to cross country because, you know, like I say you couldn't see out just to get any bearings, I mean it was just all forest. But the other one said it was eight miles to so-and-so lookout. I'd have to look on a map to remember it. So meanwhile, we were getting pretty hungry and all that so we decided well, we'll just head for the lookout and there'll surely be some food even if there's not a lookout up there. They must have some food in there, of course. . . . So at this fork--well, I'll go back a ways. It turned out, the map actually the trail had been drawn in wrong. If we'd gone uphill from the forest fire, why we'd ran into the right trail and everything would have been fine. This the ground crew could have told us. But they had the fire in exactly the right spot on the map but somebody had drawn this trail in they'd gone it . . . it was an old map. It was about a 1940--something map at that time. Anyway, so, it wasn't our fault--that part of it. But anyway, we hit this, so we dump our load at this forks, at this forks, and start uphill, of course, toward the lookout, and like I say, Harry is doing fine. He's limpin' a little bit, but he was a strong guy. You know, in real good shape and I wasn't in very good shape anyway. So we were about equal, then. . . . We are getting a little weak from hunger. By that time, the hunger itself had pretty well left us. It does after a day, day and a half. As far as hunger pangs, I mean, we weren't hungry anymore. But you do get weak. But anyway, we took off and we must have walked a, by the number of hours and all that we must have walked about five or six miles when--and we were getting up into the snow. The snow was solid, it was easy. You could walk right across it; didn't sink in it at all. But it was big hunks of snow and it was kind of a rough time hangin' on to the trail, you know, anyway, we finally came to this sign: 'This trail no longer maintained.' Well we knew we were within two miles of the lookout. Just again by walkin' and givin'

ourselves . . . I think we only counted a mile and a half. I mean two miles; know I know we figured, so it must have been about three hours. Well, it looked like we were near the top of the ridge. And the lookout certainly must be out on the point somewhere up there although we couldn't see it. The trees were smaller up there, we were getting into the alpine type deal. So we decided we would try to find the lookout, anyway. Meanwhile, I had one cigarette left, and he's a smoker and had forgotten to bring any. But anyway we'd take off to try to find the lookout. So we wandered over these snow fields and got up a little higher yet, and more snow. And we got up on the ridge and we looked and we looked. And do you think, I don't know how far we walked 'cause we were walkin', we'd zig-zag back and forth. Finally, we separated, and almost lost each other, to try to find this lookout, just zig-zagging up. The hell of it is I still don't know where that lookout is. And it turned out if we found it, it wouldn't have done any good; there was no food in it and it wasn't manned. The main trail of the lookout came up from the other side. So, if we'd have found it, it wouldn't have done us any good. But we didn't find it. So then we got together finally by yelling, we decided we had no choice but to go back. And it's getting late in the day and everything and we wanted to get back before it got dark because we didn't have flashlights or nothing with us. And we couldn't find the end of the trail where they quit maintaining it, 'cause the snow fields kinda of in snow humps and all that, and the landmarks aren't good. And we hunted and we hunted. And we were about ready just to cut out over the hill and hope we'd cut that old trail that we'd originally got on. But like I say, it was getting late. This was before daylight time. It must have been about, you know, seven o'clock or something like that, or six. We knew we could make it in less than three hours 'cause it was a downhill run if we could once find it. We anyway, we finally . . . oh, I can see how a person lost in the woods can kinda hit the panic button, you know. God, we were in a new forest, this was the first fire jump, we were tryin' to impress them with our efficiency and all that so they'd call for us more. Here we were out in the middle of their forest, and misplaced and wounded mag--up in the snowfields, and we weren't sure if we could get back to where our stuff was. No flashlights and no food. Again, this'd be startin' into the second day. Well we, anyway,

found it finally. We sat down and I had my last cigarette. I remember that, you and I, we'd sit down and have a cigarette or something if you got lost or stuck. And it works pretty well. Anyway, we sat down and we started lookin' a little more and we found it. Then we really moved out 'cause we had to get; wanted to get down before dark and back down to our stuff. And by that time it was just about dark. And so, we had nothing else to do, course, 'cause we'd left our sleeping bags and everything on the fire, too, so we rolled up in our chutes and slept her out that night. And then the next morning at daylight, why, we got up and we had no choice but to try this cross-country, and hope that that was Quartz Creek we saw down there, and if it wasn't that she'd cut the main trail. And like I say it was easy, fairly easy cross-country 'cause the big trees keep the brush from growing because it cuts the sunlight out. Something that up till that time I didn't realize, that brush is after you get clear and get sunlight in. Or otherwise, the original heavy Dougfir forest even with rain won't have much underbrush because it can't, it doesn't get enough sunlight to grow. But once you've cleared it, it just grows like mad. So next morning, why, we, course, by this time we were both too weak to carry anything. I mean, we were getting wobbly and I don't know, it's kinda hard to describe. You're just weak, like I say, the hunger had gone and as far as being hungry, but you just don't have any energy. So, we piled all our stuff up there and took off. And anyway we got down there and it was Quartz Creek. Of course, like I say, we weren't sure where we were at on the map. After all this foul-up. But we guessed. But anyway, we crossed the creek and we ran into this trail and from then on it was six miles out from there. We figured, I figured we went at least twenty-five miles in this or two and a half days, with no food. Anyway, we cut the trail and we started down. And it was an old trail. The damn thing was one of these that, between each side-drainage, instead of grading it, why, or going much of a grade, why it went up like this and back down to the creek, and up and down. And in a little while we cut the Lewis River, which was a fairly good-sized deal. And walking pretty good. He was getting a pretty heavy limp by this time, and I couldn't make it up. I'd have to rest. I'd go a hundred steps and then rest for about thirty seconds and then another hundred steps. Downhill, hell, I could go like mad, just as fast as could be. Lee was gettin' wobbly and shakey and actually I think he was a little

better shape than I was, even with his injury, although like I say he was limping. Anyway, up and down. And we finally made it and we got to the-- course, this doesn't end the story--but we got to the end of the road and it was a bridge over this Lewis River and then the road ends. All it was, it was a regular car bridge. It isn't like pack or stock or anything, it's a regular bridge, goin' right across there. It was a turn-around and that was the end of the trail. Well, we got there and see this note they had stuck on the tree, right on the trail there. Picked up the note and says where the crew carrier was parked and the keys-- it had a little map drawn that showed us how to get to the Mosquito Lake Guard Station. So, and it was a very well-drawn map, by the way, 'cause there were a lot of roads after you get down there and one way mountain roads. But anyway, we get in this rig and of course I'm worryin' not only for him but also because we didn't bring our gear out, you know. I was thinking how could I get back in tomorrow, and get that stuff out, or part of it out. Hell, I couldn't have got anything out, the shape I was in. But I was scared to death to go out without the equipment. Well anyway, we get in this pickup, or this crew carrier, and down the road we go. The dust must have been a foot deep, and it was rollin out--this was down pretty well in the low country, and we came around this corner, and here's another rig coming. And of course it's a one way deal, you know. And we both hit the panic button and come to a screeching halt. I'd like to say inches, but actually probably six or eight feet apart when we came to a stop. It wasn't very far. Both of us locked wheels, you know. That dust just rolled in front of us. . . . Anyway, we got out, and so here's a bunch of forest service guys, and the forest supervisor and fire staff, and the district ranger, and the fire controller. We used to call them district assistants, which is the FCO of the district. Administrative guys. There were five of them, might have been six, but anyway, those five. They were big shots of the forest and the district, then they come out and they, you know, how are we, you know, we're all right kind of deal? And they said, well, we were beginning to wonder. The ground crew had got there at a certain time the day before and we were kind of wondering when you guys were getting out. We were just, JUST starting to wonder if something had happened, you know. God, two days

after the ground crew got there, we'd disappeared. And anyway we told part of the story then and, I mean, the part about no food. And they were very proud; we got to the fighting. And--smoke, I don't know why 'cause we left some hot spots. I mean, you know, places you couldn't get your hand in. But we didn't leave any smokes that we saw. And like I say, this was the first fire we'd done on the forest. And the guy said, well you got the fire all right, the ground crew didn't have anything to do, and so forth, and complimented us. So anyway, we took off to this Mosquito Lake Guard Station. And they had a mess hall there then, and we got in there, oh, twelve-thirty or one. They'd finished eating but they hadn't left yet, I mean, got the crew out of there, so actually we went what--two days and five hours or something without any food, and walked about twenty-five miles and, well, anyway we sat down to eat, you know, and it was really funny, 'cause I'd heard you shouldn't stuff yourself when you haven't eaten for a long time. But I don't think there's really much danger in it, because you're not particularly hungry as soon as you get something in your stomach, it stretches it so you feel full right off the bat. I remember I started out with some soup. I had a bowl of soup and then, god, I was already feeling stuffed. And even from then I had a couple of slices of tomatoes and that's all I wanted. And it took about three days before I was eatin' full yet, because your stomach shrinks so small that, you know, you feel full, it stretches, you know, it'd just stretch and then you just work it back out to normal, but meanwhile, why you don't eat much, so you actually keep losing a little more weight even a little longer, because you just can't eat. Well anyway, then, we took--oh, then I mentioned that we'd better get him to the--Harry to the doctor and that I would wait until tomorrow and I'd show. And they said, well, they have a packer, and I said, well I'll go back in and get my stuff out because I didn't want to go back without it. They said, oh, it was too late, they'd already had a plane to be coming down for us, Tommy Nickel with the 180. And then the packer was there and he said, I know where this place is, where the forks is, and we'll go up and get it and send it to you, you know. Well there wasn't much I could do then, you know. I could see myself catching it when I got back. Well, anyway, they then took us from there to Trout Lake, there where the ranger station

is. And then from there its setting up on top of almost like a plateau and then it goes down there into the Columbia River. It must be a two-thousand foot drop. The highway winds and all that. And this stupid idiot. They had quite a few fires in there; they'd brought him out of the RO, he was some clerk or something, good guy. . . . And he was the driver. So this guy takes off and down the hill he goes, and he's a layin' the brakes on all the time for the curves. And that's fine except he got right near the bottom and he says, 'I think there's something wrong with these brakes, they're almost to the floor.' Well, like I say, he was a stupid idiot, 'course they were fadin on him. Well, I started to say something, and, well, we were almost down to where it flattened out. And I thought, well, the brakes will last long enough to get on down without sayin' anything. So we made it to the, uh, Dalles--where the airport is, and Tommy Nickel came in and he said later, he never saw such a be-raggled bunch of characters. I mean, we looked like it was, real terrible, I guess. We got on the plane, of course, and it flew back, it got back and they took old Harry to the doctor and put, I don't know, just three or four stitches in it. And Lufkin was there and I told him we didn't bring our stuff out, and I said I got quite a story to tell you, which I did. But again later on after he said . . . well, he took one look at us and he wasn't about to chew anybody out for anything. I guess we must have really looked terrible, you know. And, so anyway, that isn't quite the end of the story yet. Well Harry, he, Light Horse Harry, he sticks around for several days, and finally, he, well, I can't remember whether it was an aunt or something; he's from Indiana or Illinois. I think Illinois--someplace. Anyway, in the middle west. And he came up to Lufkin and he said he had an aunt that had died or was dyin' or something and he'd like to go back for a few days. And Lufkin, course, fine, there wasn't much you could do about that. So he took off and that was the last we ever saw of him. He wrote and gave his address to send his check. And we never saw him again. And that was his first and last fire jump. And I guess he just had too much. He decided to give the whole thing up. I might have left some stuff out, 'cause everything, there're some little things that happened that I don't always remember. But I'm not, I mean, the story isn't elaborated at all, really, if anything, it gets more sedate as

time goes on. But those things happen just the way--god, it'd make anyone give up jumping, when I think . . . (interruption). But anyway, we survived.

As seen in Skinny's narrative, the form of the jump story follows closely the order and manner in which the narrator actually experienced the events he relates. The temporal ordering of events in the narrative follows a pattern of a short introduction, the fire call to jump, the jump itself, the fire, retrieval of jump gear, and the packout and other experiences on the way back to the base. All of the above are presented in a first-person account which draws upon the normative experiential background of the audience (fellow jumpers) to follow not only the plot, but the choice of terms. A few of the terms used by Skinny are outmoded and require historical qualification for the audience. The Noorduyn, for example, is no longer used as a jump plane, the climbing equipment is different than that used today, and the parachute has also changed in design and materials. On the broadest level, this form approximates that suggested by Pentikäinen in his addition to Granberg's schema of the memorate, i.e., "individual in content, but formally and structurally stereotyped."²⁸ This is qualified by Pentikäinen when he states that this type of memorate is characterized by a

. . . preference for a certain expositional model so that conforming explanations and the acceptance of idiosyncratic tradition are the result.²⁹

As it relates to the form of the jump story, this definition underscores the relationship between Skinny as an individual jumper relating his personal experience to an audience that understands not only what he says about what happened to him on this jump, but is also sensitive to the material he omits (the fire itself is left out as inconsequential), feels compelled to qualify or explain (his reasons for not climbing the tree and leaving his gear, both of which are considered transgressions of jumper informal codes), and colors with his own sense of irony (the last cigarette incident). Although all of the experiences related and terms used actually were present when Skinny made this particular jump ("individual in content"), his jump story follows a prescriptive form which is itself an outgrowth of the occupational milieu (formal and structural stereotypification).

More specifically, the jump story form must correspond to the unstated template or model of the basic occupational narrative. This corresponds to Degh's previously discussed concept of the proto-memorate in that jumpers who have experienced the same kind of situation as that recounted by Skinny, and have themselves related jump stories, maintain an inferred model of the proper form which the story must follow, in addition to inclusion of internal material that makes the story credible. Just as there is a proto-story there

is also a proto-experience (the ideal jump) to which the verbal form must relate.³⁰ As illustrated in the Knights of Columbus fire material above, the believability of any personal experience narrative rests on the degree to which a correspondence between these two templates can be stretched and still allow the form to retain its credibility. If, for example, Skinny had extended the description of his jump partner's blood loss without qualifying it as he does ("actually, I don't think he lost very much blood"), the lack of correspondence between a more serious wound and the long trek which the wounded man eventually completed would have increased the discrepancy between the narrative and experiential frames of reference and compromised the believability of the narrative.

The style of the jump story rests almost solely on the narrator's ability to maintain a balance between conflicting narrative devices, e.g., objective/subjective description, individual/group point of view, as well as other oppositions like historical/ahistorical qualification, technical/non-technical terminology, in addition to considerations of tone, emotion and the pace of the narrative. The context of the narrative performance is a group of young, college age men who pride themselves on their bravery, strength and ability, yet are aware of the fear present in much of what their job requires and look to older men like Skinny for guidance and occupational

tricks of the trade. This context also dictates that the narrator of the jump story relate the experience in a style that is not embarrassingly subjective (too emotional or displaying too much fear), yet at the same time is not cold and objectively unemotional. This is accomplished by Skinny in his use of humor and internal dialogue in one of the most tense passages in the narrative. When he is trying to decide which leg he will break when he falls, Skinny debates with himself the merits of breaking the right rather than the left and decides that he couldn't make a decision because "... it doesn't make a lot of difference." By admitting fear (in what is for most jumpers a very real situation that can result in serious injury if a jumper falls through the tree canopy), yet at the same time subverting it with a humorous soliloquy, the stylistic tension of the jump story is exemplified in its use of opposing narrative devices.

Similarly, the historical/ahistorical opposition ("This happened in 1956," and "virgin west side timer-- great big monstrous stuff"); individual/group point of view ("I always got stuck with the guy that nobody else wanted, but anyway, he was a rookie and it was his first fire jump"); and technical/non-technical terminology ("we worked on the fire a little, and moppin' it up . . . we had a few little smokes," and "there's lots of water cause its early in the year"); all display varying elements

of contrast and opposition by the narrator to make a point or clarify a situation by forcing the audience to change its referential frame as the narrator changes and manipulates the information he presents. A totally subjective account would appear, in its internalizing of experience, as a disregard for the cooperative emphasis of the occupation, while a totally objective performance, in its externalization of experience would appear to be a journalistic recounting of events without the necessary personal elements which reveal to the audience the reliability of the information. The narrator's ability to draw from both the subjective and objective realms of experience and relate the jump story in an oppositional frame in which the event and the narrator's impressions of the event are balanced to comprise an interesting and logically flowing narrative are the primary stylistic qualities upon which a good jump story is based and evaluated.

Moving from style to structure, the jump story can be viewed on Abrahams' following three levels: the structure of the materials, dramatic structure, and the structure of the context.³¹ The materials of the narrative ("the physical quality . . . and the organized relationship among the particular components of each item")³² are structured to correspond most closely to the chronological ordering of events as they transpire

in the suppression of a forest fire with the qualification for rhetorical stretch based on the objective-subjective tension in the account. In Skinny's story, the syntagmatic structure³³ conforms to the following sequence: introduction--summary--fire call--jump country--jump--parachute--tree--hang up in tree--jump partner--cargo--tree climb to retrieve cargo--accident with climbers--fire suppression--first night--pack out--lookout (never found)--hunger--lack of cigarettes--(summary)--second night--crew carrier--truck ride--meal--return to base (conclusion).³⁴ On this level the materials of the narrative and the materials of the experience are in almost total agreement and much of what occurs on both the physical and verbal ordering of techniques is sanctioned by informal codes and imparted to the rookie through initiation and informal training. This reliance on informal rather than formal procedures is underscored in the paradigmatic structure of an account that reveals how common sense (letting go of the tree to get to the ground, leaving the packs on the trail, conserving what energy they had) must always temper formal strictures. According to the "book," Skinny did everything wrong, but he did make it through in one piece and the fire was put out so he successfully performed his function.

The second structural level concerns the dramatic structure which has been discussed previously as a

stylistic stretch between the experiential and referential frames of the jump story. There is an implicit drama in the occupational experience itself, however, which becomes more explicit as the audience to whom the narrative is addressed is comprised of exoteric members (i.e., non-jumpers or those who are not familiar with the occupation). Were Skinny to tell this story to such an audience, which he probably would not, the dramatic impact of the jump itself would be greater. To the jumper, the dramatic impact rests almost exclusively upon the narrator's ability to strike a balance between opposing narrative elements and at the same time reveal how the movement through the formalized procedures of the occupation proceeds from one point to the other, i.e., how the accident with the climbers and resulting inability to retrieve the cargo chute with the food in it affects the rest of the story.

The final consideration of structure concerns the highly subjective question of the structure of the context, i.e., "the way in which the actors and audiences interrelate. . . ." ³⁵ As a member of this occupation for four years, I can only suggest my hypothesis concerning this aspect of the jump story's structure. As stated earlier, Skinny's jump story was usually told only once every fire season at the end of the jumping period. All of the members of the audience were experienced jumpers and this story was known as one of the longest and best

in the collective repertory of the group. The narrator, Skinny, however, saw this experience as his chance to add historical depth and a prescriptive continuity to much of what we experienced throughout the fire season. The relationship between his experiences and ours was one of mutual satisfaction about accomplishing our jobs with humor and confidence in our ability to overcome the many dangers inherent in the occupation. As seen in the transcript, he is never interrupted, and the end of the narrative suggests that the basic structure of the account hasn't changed appreciably since it occurred. This indicates that the context of this particular jump story is one of mutual respect upon the part of both the narrator and the audience, the former because his audience has proven themselves and will appreciate the subtleties of his tale, and the latter because of their respect for the narrator and their opportunity to participate in the ongoing history of the occupation. Skinny's jump story is performance full in that central concerns of the smoke-jumper cultural view are realized in his account. From the elicitation on the part of the audience, to the historical detail and qualification of the terms used and the near-ritualistic recounting of this story at a crucial time of the fire season just before everyone goes their own way, Skinny's jump story is firmly lodged in the basic values of members of this work collective.

The fourth level of investigation concerns the function of the jump story. This level can be usefully broken down into the following: pedagogy, entertainment, affirmation of belief, and historical depth. The level of pedagogy relates primarily to the jump story in general as it is told to the new jumpers in an attempt to teach them the procedures and attitudes of work (both formal U.S. Forest Service procedures and the more important informal techniques). One of the most obvious examples of this function in Skinny's account is the section about his near-disastrous hang-up, which imparts the necessity for keeping a cool head in a tight spot as well as relax as much as possible when you fall to take the impact like you would in a normal landing. Pedagogy is also seen in the section in which Skinny and his partner leave their heavy packs by the trail so that the hike out won't totally exhaust them. This latter example reveals the conflict between formal USFS rules and the unstated, informal rules which are communicated through the jump story and other means. The Forest Service demands that due to the great cost of parachutes, jump suits and tools (together worth well over \$3,000), the jumper must bring back all of the equipment he is wearing or has been dropped to him on a fire. This equipment, however, weighs approximately eighty-five to one-hundred and fifteen pounds and in some cases it is just not possible to safely

carry that much weight over long distances in rugged terrain. The jump story provides a critical referent to which the new jumper can relate his own actions so as to base his future judgments not on formal rules, but on the exigencies of the situation and the reactions of others who have been in similar predicaments and have passed their experiences on to him.

The second functional level of the jump story centers on its entertaining quality. As in any social group, there are individuals who are more adept at telling a narrative well. In the occupational context this ability is often coupled with a knowledge of the techniques and concerns of the occupation coupled with an ability to articulate these preoccupations in a manner that is both engaging and either humorous or instructive. As an illustration of Skinny's ability to master entertaining technique, the incident in the narrative when he and his jump partner head to the lookout for food is one which would be immediately humorous to a smokejumper audience due to its adherence to a prevailing belief that any lookout will provide the jumper refuge, food and female companionship when he finds himself in trouble. This, of course, is not true because the Forest Service has closed most of the lookouts and gone to air patrols. Skinny's "of course" at the end of the statement "they must have some food in there," is an in-joke in the group and reveals

his skill in recognizing the audience's ability to pick up this subtle joke.³⁶

The third level of function in the jump story concerns the affirmation of belief in both personal and general occupational practices. Skinny relates many examples of this function in his belief in his ability to survive the fall, strength and reliability of his jump partner, and confidence in his own judgment with regard to leaving his gear on the trail. At the same time, this narrative forces the audience to evaluate their own confidence in both the formal and informal dictates of their choices in the performance of occupational technique by illustrating the positive results of relying on individual and group-held confidence and expectation. This reinforcement of belief is also reflected in the fourth functional consideration of historical depth in which the accumulated beliefs and concomitant practices of preceding jumpers comprise an informative pool of alternatives which are carried from jump to jump through the medium of the jump story. Without this reservoir of accumulated information (e.g., if each year new jumpers had to learn their trade strictly by the book or through formalized rules), the occupation would be much more dangerous due to the lack of support and precedent-giving self-confidence in a situation where the formal rules don't apply and the jumper must rely on informally learned techniques.

Therefore the experienced jumpers on all jumps constantly revitalize and add to this pool of information by providing new solutions to recurrent problems.

The next two considerations, diffusion and frequency of the jump story are difficult to document due to the lack of any statistical information. Randle Hurst's book, The Smokejumpers, however, consists of one jump story after another that follow the same stylistic and structural features of Skinny's narrative.³⁷ This coupled with my own collection of smokejumper folklore which consists of over twenty-five jump stories collected during just one session with three experienced jumpers, attests to the pervasiveness of this narrative form and indicates the importance placed upon this expressive form by members of the group.

There is one case of a historically documented jump which has passed into oral tradition and is reflected in my collection. In a Forest Service publication entitled "Fire Control Notes" which was printed in 1950, an incident involving the use of black paratroopers as smokejumpers is related in the following manner:

Training of the 555th Battalion of Negro paratroopers in timber jumping and fire fighting to combat Japanese balloon fires. Ninety-seven Negro paratroopers were jumped on the Bunker Hill fire and 28 on the Heather Cr. fire, both on the Chelan. Regular smokejumpers were used as overhead.³⁸

The jump story related by Tony P. (collected in 1969) is told in the following manner:

I sure got a kick out of Lufkin telling about those guys. It was something else. They brought them up there when they jumped on that Bunker Hill fire. He was dropping them. The unfortunate thing is they were a bunch of Southern pilots. Anyway, when they went into the Bunker Hill fire, they dropped the battalion of Negro jumpers. And they had a minimum of equipment. They didn't have, you know, real good jump gear. They had the hard hat and helmet and all that garbage. Francis tells that they dropped them at 135 miles an hour. This was without D-bags. No D-bags. . . . But anyway, getting back to what Francis was telling about, this 135 mile an hour jazz. He was left in the plane and asked the pilot, he says, 'For Christ sake! Can't you slow this thing down?' You know, and the pilot says, 'Yes, how fast do you want to go?' And he says, 'Oh, about a hundred.' And he says, 'Will ninety miles an hour do?' So for the jumpers they slowed it down to ninety miles an hour.³⁹

Although this narrative takes the form of a third person fabulate,⁴⁰ it reveals the personalization and detail that is common to Skinny's jump story and the others in my collection. Rather than becoming more and more vague and redactive in form, the jump story and related forms like this recounting of a jump which occurred twenty-four years prior to my recording it, reveal the strength of detail found in the jump story without the specific structural evolution found in the more personalized form. As this type of narrative is diffused, it seems to lose its structural continuity (assuming that in its early stages of narration it followed the more familiar jump story pattern), but not its detail or pedagogical function. Had this been

a personal experience story, the templates of structured experience and narration which shape the jump story, would have made this a highly conservative form over time. Since it is told about the experiences of others, however, the detail has been retained and the point of discrepancy between the dangerous plane speed used for black jumpers as opposed to the safe, more comfortable speed used for white jumpers has been kept active in the oral tradition of the group. As such narratives are diffused over a long period of time, it appears as though the functional stylistic changes occur much more slowly than do changes in structure. This supports the hypothesis that as long as there is a functional need for a narrative in the group (in this case an anecdote told at the expense of black jumpers) it will maintain its basic content (with some detail) even though its structure may be altered or decay as the syntagm of the story fades while the point or basic purpose stays intact.

The three final considerations of age, origin, and process of transmission regarding Skinny's jump story relate primarily to the changes that take place in a fully developed personal experience narrative as it is related over a long period of time. The actual event described in Skinny's story took place in 1956, thirteen years prior to the night on which I recorded it. Yet its length, detail and tone illustrate a sensitivity to detail which few of

us could match after a month's time. As Skinny states at the end of his account,

I might have left some stuff out, 'cause everything, there're some little things that happened that I don't always remember. But I'm not, I mean, the story isn't elaborated at all, really. If anything, it gets more sedate as time goes on. But those things happen just the way--God, it'd make anyone give up jumping when I think. (Interruption) But anyway, we survived.⁴¹

By sedate I think that Skinny means more polished and conservative (fewer details) as time goes on, but the fact that this one example is almost fifteen pages long with a tremendous amount of detail tends to undermine his assertion. The age of the narrative and its place and manner of origin appear to be less important than the conservatism of the occupational practices and beliefs upon which it is based. And perhaps more important is the audience's need to refer to this oral material in order to relate it to the daily concerns and requirements of the job. As long as the participant in this occupation faces choices and situations parallel to those faced by Skinny, the jump story will continue to be an integral part of the smokejumping culture.

In the preceding chapter I have traced the various levels of occupational verbal expression from jargon and metaphor to conversation, critique and narrative exchange, and finally to oral historical accounts, accident stories and highly elaborated personal experience narratives. Yet what is perhaps most important to our understanding

of how these spoken aspects of occupational folklife fit into their respective cultures is by understanding what I have left out of these nicely tailored, almost pristine examples. All occupational cultures, and fire fighting cultures perhaps more than others, are bombarded by noise and distractions of tremendous variety and intensity. Against the backdrop of city sounds, shouts, calls coming in over the vocal, radios playing, television blaring, alarms going off, etc., the spoken work somehow manages to communicate a message of impression. As a student of occupational culture my job is to try to document these expressions and understand their meaning. But as an ethnographer I am aware of their place within the cacophony of sound that surrounds us all and in my attempt to analyze these various forms, I have possibly given the mistaken impression that they actually occur in the neatly tailored examples I have provided. Nothing could be further from the truth. Most of the transcribed material presented here was wrested from the foreground noise of a gunned engine, an argument about an umpire's bad call or from in between the shouts and pongs of a championship ping-pong match going on right next to my microphone. We may someday develop a way to accurately transcribe these verbal expressions in situ, giving an accurate picture of how they fit into the actual aural background, but at this point I am content to provide a general context in order

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⁸ Pilcher, Portland Longshoremen, pp. 62-65, 98-100.

⁹ DCFPP Tape March 21, 1979, p. 2B.

¹⁰ DCFPP Tape March 25, 1979, pp. 6-7B.

¹¹ DCFPP Tape February 24, 1979, pp. 3-4.

¹² DCFPP Tape Tape March 25, 1979, p. 1B.

¹³ DCFPP Tape October 31, 1978, p. 1.

¹⁴ Robert McCarl, Good Fire/Bad Night: A Cultural Sketch of the District of Columbia Fire Fighters As Seen Through Their Occupational Folklife (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Fire Fighters' Association, Local 36, 1980), pp. 16-19.

¹⁵ McCarl, Good Fire, pp. 65-67.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 67-70.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 70-72.

¹⁸ DCFPP field notebook entry March 14, 1979, Notebook II.

¹⁹ DCFPP field notebook entry December 12, 1978, Notebook I.

²⁰ DCFPP Tape November 9, 1978, p. 2B.

²¹ Robert McCarl, "Smokejumper Initiation: Ritualized Communication in a Modern Occupation," Journal of American Folklore 89 (1976), pp. 49-67.

²² Robert McCarl, "Smokejumper Folklore," five tapes and sixty-eight pages of transcript in the Randall V. Mills Memorial Archives of Northwest Folklore, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon (1969), pp. 7-8.

²³Arnold Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, trans., M. B. Vizedom and G.C. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 189.

²⁴Frank W. Young, Initiation Ceremonies: A Cross-Cultural Study of Status Dramatization (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), p. 3.

²⁵Elliot Chapple and Carleton Coon, Principles of Anthropology (New York: Macmillan, 1942), p. 466.

²⁶Young, p. 26.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Anthony F.C. Wallace, Culture and Personality (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 31-32.

²⁹Wallace, p. 40.

³⁰Ibid., p. 113.

³¹Randle M. Hurst, The Smokejumpers (Caldwell, Idaho: Claxton Press, 1966), p. 140.

³²Wallace, p. 40.

³³Ibid., pp. 31-32.

³⁴Turner, "Betwixt and Between," p. 340.

³⁵Ibid., p. 341.

³⁶Ibid., p. 340.

³⁷McCarl, "Smokejumper Folklore," p. 2.

³⁸Leach, "Ritualization," p. 334.

³⁹McCarl, "Smokejumper Folklore," p. 2.

⁴⁰Hughes, Men and Their Work, p. 18.

CHAPTER V: THE SPOKEN, SHOUTED AND REMEMBERED WORD

The Basic Metaphor: The Mundane Level

¹Neumann, pp. 274-275.

²Tape number SI-FP-WA-77-502.02 (220), Robert Newell, glass worker; Tape number SI-FP-WA-77-504.25 (340), Harry Furr, plasterer.

- ³ Tape number SI-FP-WA-77-503.33 (146), Dominic Dipaolo; DCFPP Tape number 18, 1978, p. 1B.
- ⁴ Tape number SI-FP-WA-77-508.16 (550), Joffrey Ballet II Company, group session; Robert McCarl, "Smoke-jumper Folklore," p. 11.
- ⁵ Tape number SI-FP-WA-77-503.17, transcript p. 3.
- ⁶ DCFPP field notebook entry December 7, 1979, Notebook I.
- ⁷ DCFPP field notebook entry December 14, 1979, Notebook I.
- ⁸ DCFPP Tape January 28, 1979, Tape A, Side B, p. 4B.

The Basic Conversation: Central Level

- ⁹ DCFPP Tape April 2-3, 1979, Tape A, Side B, p. 4B.
- ¹⁰ DCFPP field notebook entry March 4, 1979, Notebook II.
- ¹¹ Hymes, "Breakthrough," p. 18.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ James W. Fernandez, "Persuasions and Performances: Of the Beast in Everybody. . . . And the Metaphors of Everyman," in Myth, Symbol and Culture, ed., Clifford Geertz (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), p. 47.
- ¹⁴ DCFPP Tape February 508, 1979, Tape B, Side B, pp. 3-4.
- ¹⁵ DCFPP Tape November 8, 1978, p. 1-2B.
- ¹⁶ This concept of narrative defining the perimeter of occupational knowledge was suggested to me by Peter Seitel in personal conversation.
- ¹⁷ Mace, p. 126.

Unusual Level: The Elaborated Personal

Experience Narrative

¹⁸Linda Degh, "The Memorates and the Proto-Memorates," Journal of American Folklore 87 (1974), p. 226.

¹⁹Lauri Honko, "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs," Journal of the Folklore Institute 1 (1964), p. 11.

²⁰Richard Hamilton with C.N. Barnard, 20,000 Alarms: The Memoirs of New York City's Most Decorated Fireman (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1975), p. 75.

²¹Hamilton and Barnard, pp. 91-92.

²²Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites De Passage," in Lessa and Vogt, p. 345.

²³The most well documented account of the Knights of Columbus fire is the official record, Justice Brian Dunfield, Destruction by Fire of the Knights of Columbus Hostel, St. John's, December 12, 1942 with a loss of 99 Lives (St. John's, Newfoundland: Court Proceedings, 1943).

²⁴DCFFP Tape March 5, 1979, Tape A, Side 1, pp. 1-1B.

²⁵DCFFP Tape March 5, 1979, Tape A, Side 2, pp. 8-8B.

²⁶DCFFP Tape April 24, 1979, Tape A, Side 1, p. 1B.

²⁷DCFFP Tape June 11, 1979, Tape A, Side 1, p. 1B.

²⁸Juha Penttinen, "Belief, Memorates and Legend," Folklore Forum 6 (1973), p. 232.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Degh, pp. 232, 237.

³¹Roger Abrahams, "The Complex Relations of Simple Forms," Genre 2 (1969), p. 109.

³²Ibid.

³³Edmund Leach, Levi-Strauss (London: Fontana, 1970), p. 46.

³⁴Labov and Wallezky, pp. 12-45.

35 Abrahams, "Complex Relations," pp. 109-110.

36 McCarl, "Smokejumper Folklore," p. 9.

37 Hurst, The Smokejumpers.

38 U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture,
"Fire Control Notes: A Periodical Devoted to the Technique
of Forest Fire Control," 11: (1950), p. 9. (Pamphlet).

39 McCarl, "Smokejumper Folklore," pp. 35-36.

40 Degh, p. 228.

41 McCarl, "Smokejumper Folklore," p. 16.

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APPENDIX A
APPROACHES TO WORK AND OCCUPATIONS

APPROACHES TO WORK AND OCCUPATIONS

The purpose of this essay is to place the substance of the dissertation in a broader perspective. This review narrows to a specific focus on the development of ideas concerning work and workers within the discipline of folklore itself.

Prior to describing this general historical background, however, it will be helpful to define the distinction between work and occupation so that a later definition of "occupational folklife" will be more clear. Work has been defined very broadly as "that which a person does in order to survive," or "the way in which a person earns a living."¹ Made up of skills or techniques practiced to achieve specific goals, work is also a social activity "directed toward the lessening of status disparity and contemplated future activity and group orientation."² It can therefore be defined as the interaction between an individual and his social or technical environment which results in the production of goods or services through the expenditure of effort while it also establishes an individual's position within a social order.

Occupation, by contrast, defines the broader social role without specifying the purposive activity of the work. Everett C. Hughes, the father of contemporary occupational

sociology, provides a useful distinction in the following passage:

[There are] two concepts of great importance for the study of the universal work drama. One is the concept of role; the other that of social system. A person asked what his work is, can answer in two ways. He can say what he does: I make beds, I plumb teeth. Or he can say who he is: I am the person who does so and so. In the latter case he is naming his role.³

Taking an example from the occupation of urban fire fighting, we can see how this distinction is made. A technician in a fire company is responsible for driving the fire trucks or "apparatus." He has to study and take a competitive examination to qualify for his job. When asked by an insider what he does, he might respond with, "I'm a wagon driver over at 16 Engine." He replies with a specific description of his work status or position within the work group. Yet if an outsider asked the same question, he might respond by simply stating his role: "I'm a fire fighter in the District." Viewed from this perspective, work is an internally derived perception of an individual's status within the processes and relationships on the job, whereas occupation is an externally derived characterization of a collective role. In the discussion which follows, the emphasis will be upon tracing social scientific approaches to occupational groups in an attempt to determine ways in which an investigator can document the insider's definition and characterization of his work.

Folklorists took an early interest in the work place as a rich resource for the creation of indigenous folk song, particularly in the resource dominant occupations of seafaring and work in the woods. One of the earliest collectors of occupational folklore was a young New Yorker who went west and spent most of his life riding the dusty Southwestern range as a cowboy. N. Howard "Jack" Thorp was a gentleman-cowboy who both lived and perceived of life on the open range as a male-dominated environment in which the basically solitary cattle driver lived by an unwritten code of romantic camaraderie.⁴ As the Fifes point out, Thorp saw this code exemplified in the songs (or song fragments) he collected as well as those he wrote himself. He epitomized the heroic, brawling popular myth of the frontier, but at the same time revealed the economic vulnerability and boredom that really characterized the occupation. Like many of the later participant observer occupational folklorists (Dobie and Horace Beck, for example), Thorp had little use for the armchair academic and blatantly re-wrote or re-formulated his material to conform to his idea of what a cowboy song should be like, i.e., to bring it into line with his conception of the values of those who sang them.⁵

Almost as if to justify Thorp's suspicion and mistrust of intellectual claim jumping and academic dissembling, John Lomax began to collect cowboy songs in the southwest region during this period.⁶ Drawing on any

source he could find to reinforce his conception of the cowboy as the embodiment of a national ethnic character pushed to its most attractively romantic ideal, Lomax represented the first of the modern occupational folklorists in his application of a specific methodology to the subject. His populism, however, forced him to present this marginal academic material in popular publications that appealed to a wider and therefore less "acceptable" audience. This need to present material to a non-academic audience in occupational folklore studies continues to move its practitioners to the edges of academic acceptability.⁷

Lomax approached the occupation through its songs in an attempt to collect representative expressions of group composition for the compilation of a folksong canon in conformance to the communalist Harvard training he had received from Kittredge.⁸ This background also caused him to prejudge the functionality of these songs (e.g., his hypothesis that the songs were used to quiet the herds, an assertion that Thorp flatly denies), while at the same time suggesting to Lomax communal origins and group generated composition which are also refuted by Thorp's experiences.⁹ Although we can agree with the Fifes that Lomax's work is flawed by his pretentiousness, subjectivity, ethnocentrism and failure to give credit to Thorp where it is due, his is the first publication of a work devoted exclusively to occupational expression from a folkloristic perspective and as such it is important from both a historical and

theoretical point of view.¹⁰ The concept of folksong and other genres of occupational expression (costume, custom, narrative, technique, etc.) operating as both a reflection of the work environment and a shaping factor within it is one that continues to influence research in the field.

Phillips Barry, a contemporary of Lomax and a regional collector in New England, stressed the importance of collecting the tunes as well as the text in order to be able to trace the origin of the folksong (occupational or otherwise) as an organic whole.¹¹ This is a more holistic historical approach to folksong that is particularly important in the study of occupational song where parody and adaptation of both tune and text play such a prominent part in the passage of songs within and between occupational communities.¹² The insights of Barry and his contemporaries in Maine, particularly Eckstorm and Smyth, into the role of folksong and other expressive behaviors in the occupational context anticipated many of the theoretical approaches being tested today.¹³ Barry, for example, suggested that it was the incidents and accidents of work, not the work processes themselves that generated occupational comment through song, an insight echoed by Eckstorm and Smyth in their discussion of the occupational folksong as a medium for the dissemination of news concerning unusual events.¹⁴ In parallel arguments Franz Rickaby and Earl C. Beck (the former acknowledging his debt to Gray and Barry) stressed

the need to include tunes and lyrics in any study of occupational song. They suggested that the division of labor that forced the same group of men into seasonal interactions with the sea and the woods resulted in the sharing of such occupational songs as "The Flying Cloud," "Canada I-O," and "The Cowboy's Lament."¹⁵ This cross-over of song and occupation, reflecting a borrowing and diffusion of material as it adapts itself to a particular region, has also been commented on by Cazden. It is one of the earliest articulations of the adaptability of both terms and songs as members of an occupational group migrated west or periodically worked in the woods or on the sea yet maintained similar postures toward work in both venues.¹⁶

The interpenetration of both region and occupation can also be seen in the work published by J. Frank Dobie and Mody C. Boatright in Texas.¹⁷ Dobie was a reformulator who took it upon himself to write the southwestern border experience in a popular narrative form concentrating on the legends and superstitions of the multi-ethnic border region with a special focus on the southwestern cowboy. Boatright, following Dobie's lead as an academic writing for a popular audience, concentrated on the oil industry in Texas. He produced a model occupational folklife treatment of that trade in The Folklore of the Oil Industry which appeared in 1963.

Boatright's work is significant due to his sensitivity to work skills and techniques as well as the more recognizable expressive forms such as narrative and legend. In the preface to this seminal work, he states that he has set out to

... illustrate some of the basic patterns under which the folk have structured the experience relating to the location and the production of petroleum.¹⁸

Rather than concentrating on externally derived concepts of expressive genres, Boatright stresses the processes of oil discovery and exploration. The doodlebuggers divining techniques and the changes that occurred when the rotary drilling rigs were replaced by the cable tooled rigs resulted in the distinctions and contentions between drillers who practiced the earlier or later method.¹⁹ The resulting historical ethnography is a unique description of work in the oil field and even though Boatright places a terminal date of 1940 on his study he makes the following statement that reflects a sensitivity to work culture almost unique in the literature:

The driller, in short, went through a stage similar to the one that the trapper, the miner and the cowboy went through, one in which a chief satisfaction was a pride in his manliness. He was changed by changes in his trade. . . . For example in rotary drilling the full weight of the drill pipe must not rest on the bottom of the well. If it does it is likely to break and in any event the well will be crooked. The old driller estimated the weight by sound, by the speed of the rotary, and by the behavior of the pipe. The present day driller reads the weight on a dial. Drillers and roughnecks are now skilled technicians. They take

pride in their work, probably as much as their predecessors did, but they are much less bumptious in their manifestation of it. Yet the old folk image persists and the new driller is hardly known outside of his industry.²⁰

Equally true for the sailor, logger and fire fighter, this developmental view of occupational change is significant because it points out a key aspect of occupational folklore that has been recognized by others but never articulated so well, i.e., that occupational practices and expressions are highly adaptive. Historical change may alter work processes, but this does not destroy expressions which change to fit the new circumstances.²¹ Korson struggled with this question in his attempt to discover the impact of modernization and mechanization on traditional expression (mainly song). In his later work he recognized the strength of occupationally shaped and stylized communication which persisted no matter what the physical conditions might be in the mines.

Korson began his "salvage projects" in the mid-twenties after being encouraged by a local librarian to collect the songs and stories of the anthracite mining region before they disappeared in the face of increased urbanization and mechanization.²² He continued to collect miner's songs and folklore from this region until his death, producing four major regional studies, all of them of interest to occupational folklorists.²³

In his first book, Minstrels of the Mine Patch, Korson views the mining town and work site as a folk community due to the

isolation of the mine patch, a semi-primitive plane of living, harsh working conditions, illiteracy, and the need for amusement and folk imagination.²⁴

Implicit in this definition is Redfield's "folk-urban continuum," a developmental view of culture which arranges cultural groups on a continuum from the simplest, isolated homogeneous folk society to the most complex, heterogeneous urban society.²⁵ Concentrating on the strolling bards who composed and sang songs throughout the mining region, Korson's study based on this model would have been simply a compilation of texts and minstrel biographies had he not spent so much time in the field, become familiar with the miners themselves, and most importantly, understood and was able to put into historical perspective the actual working conditions and techniques of the trade. Although hardly an objective reporter, Korson managed to articulate his views about the dangers and inequities of mining life by illustrating them through the songs and other field data he had collected and recorded.

A brief comparison of Minstrels (1938) to Coal Dust on the Fiddle (1943) reveals an evolution in Korson's approach to the subject which occurred in the five years that separated their publication.²⁶ In Coal Dust, which deals with the bituminous industry, Korson provides much

greater detail about techniques and work processes than he does in his earlier work.²⁷ This not only provides a more thorough contextual background to the material, it also breaks down the generic boundaries found in the earlier work, revealing the actual position of the songs and narratives in the miners' lives. Coal Dust seeks to deal with all aspects of expressive behavior in almost ethnographic terms. Consequently the songs about company goons and union martyrdoms are supplemented with additional songs about concerns for industrial accidents and their causes. Similarly, general descriptions of mining techniques in Minstrels are expanded in Coal Dust to include specific accounts of work processes like testing the mine roof to see if it is safe to work the face.²⁸

Korson's recognition of the central importance of unusual or supernormal occurrences as sources of occupational folklore, his increasing sensitivity to an inclusive approach toward occupational culture and his ability to present data in a format equally acceptable to academic and union member, reveals a grasp of the materials and media of presentation that has yet to be repeated either in the field or the literature. Like Thorp, Lomax, Barry, Eckstorm, Smyth and Gray, Korson was not an academic and this need to appeal to the layman resulted in a type of presentation that was more "popular" than academic treatments of similar material. It is for this reason that

Archie Green refers to Korson as a "poplorist," yet one who consistently grounded his presentations in an overwhelming amount of data.²⁹

In 1941, Wayland D. Hand published an article on the folklore in the mining camps in Utah in which he acknowledges his debt to Korson and his admiration for Korson's approach to the subject.³⁰ Hand's article reflects a much more academic approach to the same subject in its comparative notes, survey of occupational expressive behaviors according to established folklore genres, and explicitly antiquarian viewpoint. In his introduction, Hand states that

The survival of a few waifs of folklore among the hardrock miners of Utah has an antiquarian interest not only for the collector of American popular traditions but also for the compiler of local social or economic history.³¹

In addition to its expressed historical and regional impulse, Hand's article also reflects his preliminary view of mining that

... specialization has robbed the miner, who in older days worked by hand and not infrequently alone, of a resourcefulness of hand and mind.³²

He lists types of narratives that fall into categories or topics apparently suggested by the material itself, e.g., "Locations of Mines," "Dream Mines," "Lost Mines," and "Strange Sights," and ends the article with the assertion that he could find no folksongs although Korson's work in Pennsylvania led him to believe that further fieldwork in

the west might locate more songs.³³

In a later article ("Songs of the Butte Miners," which appeared in 1950), Hand et al. point out that many of the songs found in the mining region of Butte are parodies of either American folk songs or popular songs. As other investigators have confirmed, these parodies were often written and sung by itinerant satirists and music hall musicians who toured the mining camps adapting the lyrics to local conditions and situations.³⁴ This would seem then to suggest that the relationship between mining and occupational or occupationally related song had evolved from the English music hall tradition to the wandering minstrel bards of the Pennsylvania anthracite region, to the political organizing songs of the bituminous regions and finally to the parodic songs of the western mines which were composed and sung by professional musicians and much more concerned with the fast life of the silver and gold mines than the drudgery and exploitation of the eastern coal miner's experience.³⁵ Both Hand and Emrich document the role of parodic song in the western mining camps and a contemporary scholar, Peter Narvaez, has done extensive work with Newfoundland miners which further elucidates the importance of this form in an occupational setting. Narvaez points out that in the contemporary occupational setting the recomposition of songs and texts provides a medium through which a raconteur can shape an original

artistic expression to fit a new use. In addition to suggesting the continued importance of occupational folk songs or parodies in some contemporary occupational groups, his findings also indicate the continued need for approaching expressive behavior without generic preconceptions.³⁶

In his summary article ("American Occupational and Industrial Folklore: The Miner," which appeared in 1969), Hand characterizes many of the trends suggested above and laments the fact that the cross-occupational search for cognate expressive forms has been limited to the work of Barry, Doerflinger and Hand himself in his research on the taboo against whistling in the work place.³⁷ He also gives credit to the pioneering works of Heilfurth and Korson, stating that his attempt to place the Butte material in a wider social context was based on the work of these two researchers. In his conclusion, Hand repeats his assertion that

... any item of folklore born on the job--be it a story or anecdote, a song or verse, a colorful bit of speech, an odd belief or custom--must be considered real miner's folklore.³⁸

He stops short, however, of accepting the importance of expressive forms which may find their way into an occupational culture from mass media, printed or recorded sources, and therefore retains the requirement that in order to be considered folklore an item must be passed in a direct, face-to-face manner among members of a homogeneous group.³⁹

Archie Green's Only a Miner speaks directly to this issue and his work brings folklorist's concentration on occupational folklore to its present position. Green maintains that folksongs are received aurally by listeners, and singers, accepted by them and altered in the process of movement over time to fit a context and a set of expectations generated by the experiences of an individual or group. It follows then that those who live and work in the isolated mining regions of Appalachia and identify most strongly with their occupation will direct their interests to songs (whatever their source) which speak to these concerns. The adaptation, localization and re-recording of these songs, therefore not only reflects occupational and regional concerns but invests these expressions in artifacts (records) that can be archaeologically typed (placed in historical discographies) and traced to determine origins, social context and cultural background. Green cautiously but convincingly proves the occupational and regional importance of disaster ballads, laments and blues pieces ~~as~~ they are represented by variant popular recordings. At the same time, however, he maintains a concern for traditionality (movement of an item over time with concomitant, traceable variation) a folk or enclaved ("folk-like") community, and a historian's concern for diachronic analysis.⁴⁰

It wasn't until the nineteen seventies that any new ground was broken in the study of occupational folklore. Much of the interest in and theorizing about this aspect of folklore between the rich period of the thirties, forties, and fifties and the current decade was due to the consistent work of Wayland Hand and Archie Green. Hand has maintained his interest in occupational folklore as a complement to his scholarly research and fieldwork in the area of folk belief and custom.⁴¹ In classic scholastic style he has continued to maintain the standards and interests of the collectors of the past while at the same time he has maintained a sensitivity and a currency with new scholarship and innovations primarily through his publications about occupational verbal expression, custom and belief. In his treatment of the folklore of miners above and below ground, Hand deals with a wide range of topics of current concern including the role of occupational accident accounts and their relationship to superstition and belief, customs, naming and use of tools, clothing, pranks, initiation, jokes, and the impact of the occupational culture upon the wider community. In his discussion of this last point, Hand states that

... the inventive energy of the men has not been stifled, it has found outlets in new directions. In keeping with the commonly accepted theories that folklore is born from the vicissitudes and unhappy moments of life quite as much as from life's lighter moods, one is not surprised to find that much of the folklore created in the mines of Butte today deals with the ordeals of mining, mining diseases, and the economic and social framework of mining life.⁴²

Just as George Korson argued for the strength and vitality of folklore in the changing culture of the mines in the eastern United States, Wayland Hand has continued to explore parallel changes in the west up to the present day and is therefore a key transitional figure in folklore studies of occupational groups, particularly in his stress on belief and custom as central to the functioning of networks of interaction in a work situation.

Archie Green carries us from an appreciation and acceptance of Korson's view of enclaved occupational communities through Hand's anthropologically based functionalism and encyclopedic methodology to the present concern for expressive behavior in urban industrialized settings. In a summary of the development of occupational/industrial folklore as a sub-field in the discipline, Green makes the following statement in Only a Miner:

There is an observable blurring and overlap in the terms industrial, occupational, labor, or worker when combined with folklore. Examples of industrial lore are found at one end of the spectrum in manual crafts, usually studied by folklife specialists. At the other end, examples are found in trade unionism and organized political movements which range from social democracy to nihilism. Hence, industrial lore may be an umbrella term broad enough to cover all job processes as well as urban living, unionism, radicalism, social reform, civil disobedience, and political action. However, I have found it useful to restrict the term to modern industry.⁴³

This statement suggests all of the elements that have contributed to the study of occupational folklore from the political impulses of the folksong revival to the European

influence of folklife scholars seeking to document work techniques in broad cultural contexts. In the interest of organizing and discussing these approaches, they can be broken down into the following: 1) investigations of political forces or movements that affect or reflect occupational culture; 2) urban studies that include occupational culture in their investigations; 3) studies of a cultural/historic nature that focus on work within a specific cultural complex (folklife); 4) investigations of specific expressive genres (jokes, narratives, customs and belief systems, oral history, personal experience narratives) within occupational settings; and 5) those approaches to occupational culture that attempt to apply their findings to specific problems or conflicts within the community. There is a great deal of overlapping between these approaches (e.g., many of the more radical folksong revivalists and raconteurs like the Almanac Singers and Woody Guthrie certainly intended their material to be applied to the social/political problems of the day),⁴⁴ yet these divisions will provide a structure through which a broad survey of the relevant research can be viewed.

The political dimension of occupational folklore has been most dramatically exemplified in the protest songs and laments generated in the early days of American industrial labor organization. In both Minstrels and Coal Dust on the Fiddle, Korson documented the importance of disaster

ballads and protest songs sung by men like Con Carbon and Ed Foley about the Avondale mine disaster in Winstrels, and in the later book depicting the Coal Creek rebellion and the Ludlow massacre in Colorado, as well as the accounts of martyrdoms and accidental injury and death that gradually won increased safety in the mines.⁴⁵ John Greenway provides the first broad survey of protest songs in American Folksongs of Protest. Greenway refuted the scholarly requirement that all folksongs must be traditional (i.e., passed on over at least two generations) and must have lost their identity as a consciously composed piece.⁴⁶ Using the folk composer Aunt Molly Jackson as an example, he suggested that protest folksongs arose from the interests, struggles and battles of people who were trying to organize unions or overcome diversity. He also pointed out that most songs are authored by any one individual but then become the property of all and that often they are parodic in either tune or text, or both.⁴⁷ As Green points out in Only a Miner, Greenway's reception at the hands of the academic folklore establishment was not warm.⁴⁸ Yet this breaking of new ground in occupational folksong study was significant due to its reliance upon field data rather than generic preconception as well as Greenway's (and later Green's) conviction that in spite of their wide ranging popular appeal, most of these protest songs grew out of local responses to specific problems or incidents

which were commented upon by an individual composer.⁴⁹

Although many of these songs are about working conditions and labor struggles, they represent a unique form of occupational folklore that may have ended around the time of the AFL-CIO merger in 1957 when the more ethnically homogeneous American Federation of Labor merged with the more heterogeneous Congress of Industrial Organizations unions.

During the fifties and sixties labor and protest songs moved even farther away from the local occupational community, yet their mass audience impact through radio, television, and records was felt perhaps more strongly during the era of the civil rights struggles and the anti-war movement. Fully documented by R. Serge Denisoff and Richard Reuss, this era of protest music and folksong revival in an urban industrial setting (termed the proletarian renaissance by Denisoff), revealed not only the adaptability of both labor protest tunes and texts to fit the struggles and frustrations of a new generation. It also, as Denisoff points out, indicated that

... the proletarian renaissance has externally affected societal response to the cosmopolitan employment of folk material. ... Yet ... it may be of greater use to examine the social roles and milieus in which songs of persuasion are performed rather than their origins and styles. ... 51

This qualification of use rather than concentration on origin is particularly important in the study of contemporary occupational groups in which individuals share not

only the concerns and processes of work, but often a preference for certain forms of popular entertainment. As long as these popular expressive forms address themselves to the beliefs and cultural expectations of the individuals in the work group they must be considered an important aspect of the occupational culture. Therefore a particular song or style of music, for example a country and western song about an alienated drifter or angry workers who quit their jobs as a matter of principle for the shabby treatment they have received, can be used as a rhetorical device within the group to make a statement about similar sentiments or feeling of those employed there.

Martin Laba and Philip Nusbaum in their investigations of urban folklore and part-time, transient occupations have found similar adaptations of externally generated expressive forms in the repertoires of waitresses, cab drivers, strippers and itinerant actors.⁵² Laba attacks the pathological view of the city suggested in Redfield's folk-urban continuum as unnecessarily limiting folklore studies to rural, face-to-face groups. He suggests that a more comprehensive definition of urban folklore should include

... a view of folklore that is consonant with the urban context and with human experience in that context. If the folklorist subscribes to sociolinguistic tenet of the interaction of language and social life, then his premise for investigation will reflect a concern for human behavior. . . . The personal experience narrative . . . [is] the most prevalent folkloristic form to be found amongst

urban dwellers, [it] serves as a verbal enactment and recapitulation of events and is clearly a behavior which is crucial to the personal evaluation; and consequently, the handling of experience.⁵³

In an earlier article, Laba illustrates how this "verbal enactment and recapitulation of events" provides an opportunity for two elderly women who run a newsstand to internalize the events of the daily soap opera into their own lives and those of their customers in a St. John's, Newfoundland neighborhood. As Laba states:

Customers coming into the store after its re-opening at 5:30 inevitably hear repetitive reviews of the developments in that day's episode in the often impassioned exchanges between the two ladies and their friends who drop by specifically for this discussion.⁵⁴

What is significant (as both Laba and Denisoff point out) is not the origin of the information (whether it is a protest song addressing a grievance or a discussion of the sex lives of fictional television characters), but its use in a specific context by members of a face-to-face group who have developed networks of interaction and communication into which these externally derived elements are repeatedly placed and manipulated.⁵⁵

In addition to the literature on labor protest songs and current approaches to urban folklore that relate directly to any consideration of occupational folklife, there is a considerable body of data concerning historical and contemporary work processes and techniques that has been generated by folklife scholars both in the United States and Europe. The concept of folklife (Volkskunde or

- folkliiv) is more inclusive than folklore. Don Yoder, one of the most prolific folklife scholars in the United States provides the following definition:

Folklife studies . . . analyzes traditional cultural elements in a complex society--whether these elements are defined as folk, ethnic, regional, rural, urban, or sectarian--viewing them in the context of that larger unifying society and culture of which all subgroups and traditions are functioning parts. It can focus upon the individual, the group, single cultural traits or complexes, or the culture as a whole.⁵⁶

Although a growing number of American scholars are beginning to adopt this broader approach to folk culture, outside of the regional material culture studies done by Henry Glassie, the essays in Yoder's anthology and his own work with the Pennsylvania Dutch, and Michael Owen Jones' book on chair-making in Appalachia, there are few full length folklife studies in this country.⁵⁷ British scholars including Estyn Evans, Geraint Jenkins and George Ewart Evans have produced model historical folklife studies, while their German and Scandinavian counterparts have developed a more comprehensive regional and ethnological model of folklife scholarship.⁵⁸

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the folklife approach in its impact on occupational studies is the importance that is placed on the technical as well as the oral aspects of cultural expression.⁵⁹ In their typically eclectic manner, folklorists approaching work culture from a folklife perspective have borrowed heavily from the

approaches of historical archaeologists, regional ethnographers and cultural geographers; all of whom share an interest in the relationship between culture and material artifact production.⁶⁰ In a dramatically provocative challenge to both archaeologists and folklife scholars, Henry Glassie provides a useful summary of the approach as it is perceived today:

To make sense of our site we needed only artifacts and one additional fact: these things were made by people. We needed no speculative insights or ethnological analogies; all we did was describe things as the result of an interplay between closed formal structures and open affecting structures. Setting these structures of mind against human universals--matters like life and death, stranger and friend . . . we can arrive at a meaningful structure of a past culture.

We can stop there, but we do not have to. Our conclusions--the data compressed into powerful statements--are available for a great variety of comparative studies. There are other sites which can be built into comparative models. There are documents and ethnological findings with which comparison can be made in order to improve our understanding of a particular people or to aid in the development of generalizing statements. Our theory, that is, nicely articulated our ultimate historical goals with our original study objects.⁶¹

A fourth area of occupational folklore studies includes those collections or studies of occupational culture that are based on a variety of theoretical premises and methodologies. These range from the generic collections of occupational humor and song exemplified in Coffin and Cohen's Folklore from the Working Folk of America, which contains a wide variety of expression, to the oral historical studies done by Edward Ives on Northeastern song makers

and raconteurs which are also heavily grounded in occupational material about the farm and the lumber woods.⁶² Ives and his students compiled a model occupational study using this oral historical approach to reconstruct the operations of the Penobscott boom, a log boom system used to drive logs from the Maine woods to the mills.⁶³ What is particularly significant in this work ("Argyle Boom") is the care with which the work processes themselves are described so that all of the narratives, jokes, and other verbal expressions of the men who worked the boom and provide the material for the account are placed in a logical, more understandable context.

The current approach to occupational folklore was ushered in by Bruce R. Nickerson in his essay entitled "Is There a Folk in the Factory?" which was published in nineteen seventy-four based on his dissertation material.⁶⁴ Nickerson approaches the work culture of machinists from a theoretical position between a view of workers as a folk ("enclaved, Redfieldian") community, and an awareness of the varieties of symbolic interaction (both verbal and non-verbal) available to workers in their daily interactions. Although somewhat tentative, this article at least provides a link between the early folklorists who looked to occupational groups for folklore due to their isolation and "folk" nature, and the more current group of folklorists who are more concerned with the expressive forms of interaction in

the work place and the various ways in these forms are made manifest or "enacted." This term reflects the influence of the "ethnography of speaking approach" to expressive interaction that originated with the work of Dell Hymes and has had a profound influence on folklore theory, particularly in the work of Roger Abrahams, Richard Bauman and Dan Ben-Amos.⁶⁵

As it relates to the occupational field, the ethnography of speaking approach places more importance on the appropriateness of certain forms of interaction or expression in the work place, as these are performed in the presence of other workers. Hymes characterizes the approach as the "study of the rules governing the interactions between participants in speech events."⁶⁶ If work culture is the traditional store of knowledge and beliefs passed from one worker to the next through story and example, then the ethnography of speaking within that culture focuses on the forms and varieties of expression through which that knowledge is acted out in everyday life,

One of the first folklorists to produce a book length study based on contemporary anthropological and folkloristic theory is Patrick Mullen in his collection of folk beliefs and superstitions among fishermen in the Texas Gulf Coast region.⁶⁷ Mullen adeptly combines the scholarly rigor of earlier occupational folklorists like Wayland Hand in his collection and annotation of texts as well as evidencing a more anthropologically motivated concern for

the broader culture context in which the beliefs, customs and legends of Gulf Coast fishermen arise. Mullen's sensitivity to work context leads him to an exploration of the ritual/anxiety relationship between danger and types of magical actions and superstitious beliefs amongst the bay fishermen and the men who work the more dangerous waters of the Gulf. He concludes that

folklore is chiefly an occupational expression for Gulf fishermen and a regional expression for bay fishermen. Among sea fishermen, magic folk beliefs and associated legends are the folklore genres most closely tied to an occupational identity. The bay fishermen have a weak tradition of magic folklore, but they have a stronger narrative tradition than Gulf fishermen.⁶⁸

Mullen's work takes us beyond traditional generic compilation of texts and simplistic examples of a risk/ritual hypothesis to a more closely examined (although not ethnographic) relationship between work environment and expressive culture. His confirmation of Malinowski's assertion that magic is more predominant "where the element of danger is conspicuous," is also reflected in the material previously cited concerning the rite-of-passage in smoke-jumping and the accident narratives related to rookie fire fighters as informally prescribed, customary warnings concerning potentially fatal fire situations.⁶⁹ Mullen's research suggests that in addition to re-thinking the relationship between belief, custom and ritual in the modern workplace, future investigators must also view the less dramatic narrative forms such as accident stories and

personal experience narratives as expressive aspects of culture that are equally shaped by occupational custom and belief.

This increased sensitivity toward the relationship between a specific work context and the unique forms of folk expression generated and exchanged within it, is also reflected in the work of other young folklorists who have written their dissertations on occupational folklore. Beverly Stoeltje's treatment of rodeo as a series of interlocking symbolic events;⁷⁰ Camilla Collins' research with mill workers attempting to document the cultural views of both labor and management;⁷¹ Jack Santino's investigation of culture heroes and character stories in work groups;⁷² and Michael J. Bell's model for the interpretation of work process as expressive performance in a black Philadelphia bar, are all recent investigations which reflect the more ethnographic trend of occupational folklore studies.⁷³ As stated by Roger Abrahams in his essay on a sociological theory of folklore in service occupations, folklore is

the expressive means by which a sense of participation in a life larger than self is achieved through shared activities and the common values and experiences that underlie them.⁷⁴

In order to understand those values and document the expressions which reflect them, however, folklorists working in the occupational field will be required to conduct ethnographic research on a much more thorough scale than previously expected.

The final area of occupational studies that related directly to the preceding material is the concept of applied folklore, i.e., the use of folklore research to "improve the human condition."⁷⁵ Although a continually debated issue in the discipline, projects ranging from instructing midwives and doctors in folk medical practices to presenting ethnic culture at a folk festival have been termed "applied." Yet regardless of how one defines the term, the investigator employing this approach must make certain value judgments about his methods and data that might (as David Hufford has suggested) "expose the inutility of the 'objective' approach."⁷⁶ Throughout the entire research process from hypothesis to fieldwork and the reporting of data, the researcher shapes his perceptions about what is occurring and how it will be reported. Traditionally this "objective" information was then written up by the researcher to be studied by other academics. Using the applied approach, this data would also be presented back to the group being studied in a format that is intelligible and useful to them. Rather than imposing a perspective or cure for a social problem or anticipated change on a group, an applied folklorist attempts to collect data, makes his biases explicit and then work with the group to aid them in their informed judgments about their collective experiences.

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The basic philosophy informing both my model of occupational folklife and my approach to applied ethnography is the linkage of all modes of expression in the work place from the most simple verbal symbol to the most complex technique performance. Between these two extremes there lies a middle or central point against which all behavior is judged and it is our ability to recognize and document these most recurrent scenes, and unravel their central concerns that will determine the sophistication of our analyses of occupational culture. As an ethnographer I am drawn to the watch desk narrative sessions, hose racking joking relationships and post-fire critiques because of their reflection of central cultural concerns. Yet as an applied ethnographer working in full view of my research population, rather than simply documenting these scenes and interpreting them from an emic point of view, I have to also find some way to present them in an understandable framework to those who may unconsciously participate in these cultural events on a daily basis.

The applied ethnographer is the creator of a bridge language that reflects the inside view while it also reflects the critical center upon which actual performance within the work collective is evaluated. Acting in this capacity, his job is to be provocative enough to present all cultural points of view and conflicts within the group without making gross value judgments about how those

conflicts should be resolved. Change is inevitable and it is our job to document and present our conception of a particular cultural reality based on our research so that those experiencing the change can make some informed decisions concerning its direction and impact on their lives.

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