JUMP STORY: AN EXAMINATION OF AN OCCUPATIONAL EXPERIENCE NARRATIVE

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The study of personal experience stories (memorates) in folklore has become the subject of an increasingly active debate due primarily to disputations over the various definitions of the term. Pentikainen states that "it would be hard to find any two researchers who have used the term legend or the term memorate in precisely the same way," and Nightcrawler refers to this variously defined narrative form as a "banished genre." At the same time, the field of occupational folk life (the lore, techniques, customs and patterned interactions of people in an occupational setting) has received little comprehensive attention with the exception of Korson's collections of miners' folklore, Horace Beck's volume and articles on the folklore of the sea, Wayland Hand's work in mining folklore, and most recently, Bruce Nightcrawler's "Is There a Folk in the Factory?"  All of which have ignored the classification and detailed discussion of specific narrative forms. In an attempt to clarify the use of the personal experience story in an occupational setting, the following discussion will concentrate on a personal experience story in the occupation of smokejumping. This approach will reveal not only the role of the personal experience story in the occupational setting (and thereby contribute to its understanding and possibly to a more generalized definition), but will also relate it to the overall concerns and processes of the occupation and to similar narratives in other occupations.

In his discussion of personal experience stories in an occupational setting (Arbeitserinnerungen), Siegfried Neumann states that the themes of an occupation (its daily concerns, crises and humorous events) are reflected in the narrative accounts told by its practitioners. This adds further qualification to this assertion when he points out that the day-to-day interactions in an occupation tend to form a background of common ("historical") expectations. These daily accounts form one end of a narrative continuum that includes the mundane or common narratives on the one hand, and the unusual or supernormal expressions on the other. Between these two extremes are the repeated, continuing narrative expressions which reflect the central concerns of the group. These central concerns are often related through personal experience narratives which comprise the "middle point" of the worker's occupational experience in that a tension between the day-to-day expectation of work tasks on the job and the actual recounting of exciting or unusual occurrences which are possible in that particular setting are created. It is not surprising, therefore, that the more dangerous occupations have the most detailed "middle point" work experience stories due to the frequency of their occurrence and the narrator's need to include engaging detail in order to make the narrative interesting to those who expect hazards, narrow escapes, and near injury or death as part of their daily round.

In the occupation of smokejumping, this middle point is the jump and the jump story itself. Although jumpers are ready to go as soon as the fire call comes in, their work day usually consists of sewing, rigging parachutes or mowing the lawn around the base. Throughout the entire season a single jumper may make only twenty to thirty actual jumps. The memorable part of the occupation therefore exists as a midpoint between the mundane occupational concerns (work around the base) and unusual occurrences, e.g., accidents, a particularly rough fire, and so on, that stand out in the oral repertory of the group. Rather than assigning an arbitrary label of memorate or fabulate to an occupational experience story in the hope of establishing general rules concerning its method of construction, transmission, and use, the folklorist should be attempting to locate this middle point and discover its specific relationship to the occupational and extra-occupational spheres of interaction.

In order to isolate this middle point, it is necessary to understand the relationship between
a specific occupation and the daily expectations which produce the normative view of its experiences, and to set these apart from the oral narratives which select from these daily events for inclusion in the oral repertoires of its participants. One of the key methods through which this critical separation can be made is the identification of internal or "meta-folkloric" forms within the occupational context. Ben-Amos defines meta-folklore as the "conception or culture has of its own folkloric communication as it is represented in the distinction of forms, the attribution of names to them, and the sense of the social appropriateness of their application in various cultural situations."6 This concept relates to the occupation of smokejumping in the following manner: the basic work experience of this occupation revolves around parachuting into the wilderness areas of the Pacific Northwest to suppress forest fires. The trainee or rookie smokejumper is trained in parachute handling, fire fighting skills, physical conditioning, and tree climbing. The members of this group (which included approximately 500 college-age men who work from three to six months a year during the fire season) refer to themselves as jumpers, the planes that fly them as jump planes, their areas of work as jump country, and their main form of oral narrative as jump stories.7 The latter is a loosely structured narrative usually told in the first person which recounts the experiences of a jumper before, during, and after a particular fire jump.

Most jump stories are short (one to five minutes) narratives which are told to other jumpers in a social context over dinner, during the nightly beer drinking sessions at the local tavern, or on the fire line late at night. There are, however, exemplary versions like Skinny's jump story which are told by the older, experienced jumpers to the rookies, and it is this narrative which will be discussed in detail on the levels listed above.

The form of the jump story (references here refer to Skinny's jump story which is given in its entirety in the appendix) follows closely the order and manner in which the narrator actually experienced the events he related. 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 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 outmolded and require historical qualifications on the part of the audience—for example, the Nordyne is no longer used as a jump plane,8 the climbing equipment is different than that used today, and parachutes have also changed in design and materials.9 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 stereotypical."10 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."11 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 that is also sensitive to the material he omits (the fire itself is left out as inconsequential),12 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),13 and colors with his own sense of irony or idiosyncrasy (the last cigarette incident.14 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).

Here specifically, the jump story form must correspond to the unstated template of the basic occupational narrative. This corresponds to Dég's concept of the "proto-memorate"15 in that jumpers who have experienced the same kind of situation recounted by Skinny, and have themselves related jump stories, maintain an inferred model of the proper form which the jump story must follow, in addition to proper sequencing and internalizing of action which reflect
the believable narration of the common occupational experience. Just as there is a proto-
mnemonic, there is also an experiential template ("proto-experience") to which this
narrative form must relate. The believability of any personal experience narrative, like
that told by Skinny, rests on the degree to which a correspondence between these two
templates can be manipulated 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 experi-
ential frames of reference (templates) 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, imposed temporal/natural order, historical/ahistorical
qualification, technical/non-technical jargon—in addition to consideration of tone, emotion,
and the pace of the narrative. The context of the narrative performance (a group of young,
college-age men who pride themselves on their bravery, strength, and ability, yet who 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) demands 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 jump story. 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, "Well, I didn't come to any conclusions on that,
'cause it don't make a lot of difference," so he then prepares to let himself go, takes a
deep breath, and is saved at the last minute. By admitting fear (in what is for most
jumpers a very real situation in which a collapsed canopy can send a man to a certain broken
back or worse as he falls through the tree tops), 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 timber—great big monstrous stuff"; individual/group point of view ("I always get
stuck with the guy that nobody else wanted" and "we was tryin' to impress them with the lack
of efficiency")); imposed temporal/natural order ("it was around nine o'clock we'd taken off" and
"it was gettin' toward evening"); and technical/non-technical jargon ("we worked the
fire, we got a line around it" and "there's lots of water 'cause it's early in the year") all display varying elements of contrast and opposition used by the narrator to make a point or clarify a situation by forcing the audience to change its referential frame as the narrator's ability to draw from both the subjective and objective realms of experience
simultaneously subverts and manipulates the information he presents. A totally subjective account
would appear, in its internalizing of experience, as a disregard for the competitive
emphasis of the occupation, while a totally objective performance, in its externalization of
experiential memory, 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
(which characterize the center of the middle point of the occupation), and to relate the
jump story in an oppositional frame in which the event and the narrator's impressions of the
transit 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.

Structurally, the jump story can be viewed on Abraham's following three levels: the structure
of the materials, dramatic structure, and the structure of the context.26 The materials of
the narrative ("the physical quality of the material and the organized relationship among
the particular components of each item")27 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 that stylistic considerations (discussed above) allow a distancing from
this chronology based upon the objective/subjective tension expressed and artistically
manipulated by the narrator. In Skinny's jump story, the (syntagmatic) structure conforms to the following sequence in which one symbolic expression relates to corresponding material elements and is dependent upon the presence of the first before it can be expressed: (introduction -- summary); 1) fire call; 2) jump country; 3) jump; 4) parachute; 5) tree; 6) hang-up in tree; 7) jump partner; 8) cargo; 9) tree climb to retrieve cargo; 10) accident with climbers; 11) fire suppression; 12) first night; 13) pack-out; 14) lookout (never found); 15) hunger -- lack of cigarettes (summary); 16) second night; 17) jump partner; 18) truck ride; 19) mean; 20) return to base (conclusion).

On this level, the materials of the narrative and the materials of the experience are in almost complete agreement because a deviation from the structural ordering of formally prescribed smokejumping techniques (which are imparted to the rookie through formalized training, initiation, and informal codes) could result in loss of life or the dysfunction of the occupation. Just as the use of climbers to retrieve the jump gear must follow the hang-up of a jumper in a tree, the structural materials of the narrative must also correspond to this order, and deviations from it in narrative form usually occur only when an unusual occurrence in the experiential order (for example, an accident like that experienced by Skinny's jump partner) necessitates a revision or explanation in the narrative structure.

The second structural level concerns the dramatic structure, which has been discussed previously as a stylistic distancing 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 more outsiders (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 recounting 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 to 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 the resulting inability to retrieve the cargo chute with the food in it affects the rest of the account.

The final consideration of structure concerns the highly subjective (on the investigator's part) question of the structure of the context, i.e., "the way on which the actors and audiences interrelate and how this situation... affects the relationship." As a member of this occupational group for four years, I can only suggest my hypotheses concerning this aspect of the jump story's structure. Skinny's jump story was usually told only once every fire season at the end of the season during the last big beer bust marking the transition from the smokejumper to the outside world. 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 repertoire 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 had experienced throughout the fire season, and 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 this occupation. As seen in the transcript, he is never interrupted, and the end of the narrative suggests that the basic structure of the account has not appreciably changed 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 itself and will appreciate the nuances and ironies of the story without elaboration of detail or explanation of jargon (except where old methods have been changed), and the latter because of their respect for one of the old timers, his judgment and experience and the continuity that his narrative gives to their individual position in the history of the occupation. At the same time, Skinny's longevity in the occupation (he was about forty when this was told and had been jumping since he was nineteen) is an incentive for many of the audience members to return the next summer. Contextually, then, the structure of this particular jump story rests on mutual respect between audience and narrator, establishment of historical depth, and reaffirmation of a belief in the worth of the occupation to both its participants and the society it serves.
The fourth level of investigation concerns the function of the jump story in the occupation of smokejumping. 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 as it is told to the new jumpers in an attempt to teach them the procedures and attitudes of the occupational members (both formal U.S. Forest Service procedures and informal tricks of the trade), but it is also evident in Skinny's jump story. One of the most obvious examples of this function is Skinny's narrative in the section about his near disastrous hang-up (which imparts the necessity of keeping a cool head in a tight spot and relaxing as much as possible in order to take the impact of the fall as you would a normal landing), which 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 unstated, informal rules which are communicated through the vehicle of the jump story. Due to the great costs of parachutes, jump suits, and tools, the Forest Service demands that the jumper bring back all of the equipment he is wearing or that which is dropped to him at the fire. This equipment, however, weighs approximately eighty-five to 115 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 situation and base his judgment not on abstract rules, but on the exigencies of the situation and the reactions of others who have been in similar predicaments.

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 coupled with a knowledge of the occupational techniques and concerns and the 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 an entertaining technique, the incident in the narrative in which he and his jump partner head to the lookout for food is one which would be immediately humorous to a smoke-jumper audience due to its adherence to a prevailing belief that any lookout will afford 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 because they are cheaper, although less efficient. 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 brief aside.

The third level of function in the jump story concerns the affirmation of belief in both self and occupational practices. Skinny relates many examples of this function in his belief in normal landing, which 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. At the same time, this narrative forces the audience to evaluate their own confidence in both the formal and informal dictates of the choices in the occupation by illustrating the positive results of relying on individual and group-held confidence and expectations. This reinforcement of belief is also reflected in the fourth functional consideration of historical depth in which the accumulated beliefs and consensually practiced 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 formalized rules), the occupation would be much more dangerous due to the lack of support and precedent-setting self-confidence which are necessary in a situation where the formal rules don't apply and the individual must depend upon his own instincts. Therefore, the experiences of jumpers on all jumps constantly revitalize and add to this pool of information by providing new solutions to the common problems faced in the occupation.

The next two considerations, diffusion and frequency of the jump story, are difficult to describe with any accuracy because of the lack of statistical information available. Randle Hurst has written a book about his experiences entitled The Smokejumpers, which consists of
one jump story after another that follow the same stylistic and structural features of Skinny's narrative. This coupled with my own collections 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 type of narrative and indicates the frequency of its appearance whenever a jumper returns from a fire and relates his experiences.

There is one case of an historically documented jump which has passed into oral tradition and is reflected in an oral narrative 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 555th Battalion of Negro paratroops in timber jumping and fire fighting to combat Japanese balloon fires. Ninety-seven Negro paratroops were jumped on the Bunker Hill fire and 28 on the Heather Cr. fire, both on the Chelan. Regular smokejumpers were used as overhead.

The jump story related by Tony Pervival (collected in 1969) is related in this manner:

TONY: . . . I sure get 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 has 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's 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.

This narrative reveals the personalization and detail that is common to Skinny's jump story and to others in my collection. Rather than become more and more vague and redacting in form, the jump story and related forms like this accounting of a jump which had occurred in 1945 (twenty-four years prior to my recording it), reveal the strength of the detail found in the jump account 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 structures, experience, and narration which shape the jump story would have made this a highly conservative form over space and 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 safer, 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 the 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.

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 narrative as it is related over a long period of time and the process through which this form is communicated. The actual
event described in Skinny's jump story took place in 1956, thirteen years before the night on which I recorded it; yet its length, detail and tone illustrate a sensitivity to specific material which few of us could match after a month's time. As Skinny states at the end of his jump story:

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 thing happen just the way--God, it'd make anyone give up jumping when I think ...

(interruption). But any way, we survived.35

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 importantly, the audience's need to refer to this oral material in order to relate this abstract form 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 and related by Skinny, the jump story will continue to be an integral part of the communication network which is the foundation of this occupation.

Having described the jump story on the various levels discussed above, a brief comparison to similar narrative forms in other occupations will complete this initial treatment of the occupational experience story as a folkloristic form. In his articles on mining folklore, Wayland D. Hand suggests that the cataclysmic and dangerous situations in mining (strikes, cave-ins, landslides, and bad working conditions) create unforgettable experiences which are expressed in oral form and gradually "with the passing of time and with frequent retellings . . . mold historical incidents into something approaching legend."36 By viewing some of these narratives and comparing them in structure, style, and (cautiously) in function to the jump story in an occupational setting can be made.

The following personal experience narrative is about an old timer's experience in the mines of Pennsylvania. It is taken from George Korson's *Black Rock Mining Folklore of the Pennsylvania Dutch*:

In them first years of my workin' in the breakers, why the chute bosses were kind of Hitlers, to my way of thinking. They had pretty good fists and pretty good back hands, and they'd give you a slam around the snout if they didn't like what you were doing—that is, if you took it. I was one of them guys that didn't take it. I was kind of a bullhead. I fought back. They would hit you if you talked to your neighbor, the lad beside you. You couldn't talk to him. You had to keep your mouth shut; get your slate out; do your work. Your fingers would be sore. They'd bleed from cuts caused by sharp pieces of coal and slate running down the chute. We called the sore fingers "red tops." After you got used to it and your fingers healed, why you didn't mind it so much.37

Although this is just a fragment of a longer narrative, the time depth, hard-fisted rule of the bosses, deplorable working conditions, and use of jargon to describe a personal experience in the mines compare favorably to the same devices used in the jump story. There is also the parallel distancing between the subjective and objective elements in both this and the jump story (the narrator tells it "like it is" but doesn't become too emotional over his experience), yet this narrative differs in the structural patterning of the internal elements. The basic
The intent of this personal experience story appears to be the painting of a work picture of bygone days in the history of mining which the narrator has experienced. This general intent allows him to place elements and details wherever he feels they will have the most impact, whereas if he had been describing a particular event closely, as Skinny does in the jump story, the structure would have followed the prescribed relationship between the sequence of actions leading up to the event unique in this man's mining experience, and therefore have been much more closely tied to the actual occupational process.

A second selection here for comparison to the jump story is taken from Horace Beck's "Folklore and the Sea." This fragment is a personal experience story collected by Beck from a ship's captain in which the latter describes a rescue in which he had participated four years earlier:

The sea was vurra bad and we couldn't pass the lines and the Alliance was not in a good condition. The sea had swept her clean and she had no boat. In fact, we had lost our boat and most our fushin' gear overboard.

So I worked up under his lee to pass the lines aboard and just then a big Russian kem by. She seen us and she made us a kind of lee like and we got the line aboard, but in doing so we come together and I carried away the bulwarks forward and some other things, but it was superficial damage.38

The use of dialect and jargon in this narrative unmistakeably links it to the foreign origin of its narrator and the highly esoteric nature of the terms used in his occupation. The distancing here, as compared to the jump story, is much more marked in that there is little or no expression of emotion over the events which transpire between the three ships at mid-sea during a storm, whereas Skinny's account gives some idea of the consideration that ran through his mind during the dangerous part of the jump. In contrast to the miner's historical description of a bygone practice, the personal experience of the sea captain during a rescue would serve the same pedagogical function and follow the same prescriptive tracking of occupational procedures (looking out for jump partner/one ship stopping to lend aid to another on the high seas) found in smokejumping. Both are almost pedantic in their use of descriptive terminology and jargon to impart this "lesson" to a highly receptive audience.

In an attempt to define the position of the personal experience story in an occupational setting, the above discussion has revealed that, among other considerations, there exists in each occupation a referential template against which work experiences and performances and the oral descriptions of these experiences and performances are evaluated. The best narrator is one who can strike a balance between the objective (reportorial) and the subjective (totally personal) points of view to relate a personal experience in a manner that conforms to the expectations of the group (or that contradicts and criticizes them through humor or irony), serves a pedagogical function, and draws on the background of historical material (in the distant or near past) to compose an entertaining narrative which makes use of the unique symbolic system operating in any one occupation. This system is directly linked and shaped by the occupational processes which contribute to its language, pace, and function, and can be expressed in oral or material modes. As more studies of occupational folklore are completed, I am confident that the parallels between occupational performance (satisfaction and pride in workmanship as a physical expression of human communication) and the oral expression of this satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) will yield a more complete view of the role played by folkloristic communication in the shaping of our rapidly changing, urban industrial lives.
APPENDIX

Jump Story - Skinny Lost In the Forest

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 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 Gifford Pinchot forest. And it was the very 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 in 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 Nordyne then, and we got in the Nordyne and it was takin' about two—over two hours to get to the fire. So we got over there and 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 goin' 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 one of us made the spot, which maybe was fortunate because of these 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 hold 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, you know; so then I'd go down a couple more limbs and try to get it to hook on me and it wouldn't do it; and anyway I just kept goin' 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 that limb wouldn't going to let loose, why I bounced. Everything was fine. So then I took my helmet off to start my letdown 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 goddamn helmet back on, so with one hand I was tryin' to grab limb and with the other hand, 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 doin' chin-up and my chute stopped me a while but it was still—it wasn't hung on anything. I mean it was kinda hangin' on the limbs up 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 growin' 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 wouldn'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 rollin' 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 any longer, in what it amounted to. And kinda like doin' a high-dive in water, you know, you take a couple deep breaths and get it over with. And I'd got myself all prepared, how I'd hit on this right leg and go into a—try to roll it 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 cam—'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, a foot, maybe two feet. Well, it turned out that this big tree I'd hit, had 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 over one of these 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 throw a rock; you couldn't throw—right on the 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 foot in diameter at the base, you know it went out about you know, thirty or forty foot. 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 and 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 worked with the fire, we got a line around it and I like I say it wasn't too much of a fire. So then we decided to take another look at this food. So back we went and we ended up—I—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 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, no, 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 rollin'
out. Well anyway, we clubbed him, is what it amounted to, that's first aid, we got a
handkerchief and started stuffin' 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 stopped
finally. 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 anyway, that took care of the food. 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, 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 this tree and be, he wasn't about to climb anythin', he said, so we felled the
tree.

Anyway, we retrieved our gear, and we decided—meanwhile, no ground crew yet. It turned out
it, they got there, and by the time they got there, they got there forty minutes after we
left. And we 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 type of deal. So we took off. Well, according to the map I can just see that way 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 ways to
go, so we left the tools and just carried our, started with our chutes and suit 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 a 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 somehow, 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 we weren't sure where we were at, since the trail
wasn't supposed to fork like this, I didn't want to cross country because, you know, I say
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 can't remember the 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 and 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 a ran right into the right trail and everything'd 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 where somebody had drawn this trail in they'd gone in—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's doin' 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 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 any more. 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 the trail, you know. Anyway, we finally come to this sign. "This trail is 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; now I know we figured; so it must have been about three hours. Well, it looked like we were near the top of this ridge. And the lookout certainly must be out on the point somewhere up there although we couldn't see it and this. 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 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 we 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 say they'd quit maintaining it, 'cause the snow field's kind of in snow humps and all that, the landmarks aren't too good. And we hunted and we hunted. And we were about ready just to cut 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. Well 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 was 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 man—and 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 starin' 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 get lost or stuck. And it works pretty well. Anyway, we sat down and we started looking a little more and we found it. Then we really moved out 'cause we had to get, wanted to get back 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 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 Doug fir forest, why
even with rain, don't have much brush 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 kind of 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 three days 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 those that, between each side-drainage, instead of
grading it, why, or goin' 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 can be. Lew was gettin' wobbly and shaky and--actually 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 road. Well, we get there and see this note they
had stuck on the tree, right on the trail there. Picked up the note and it 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,
'tcause 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 worrying, not only for him but also because
we didn't bring our gear out, you know. I was thinking how could I get back 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 come
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 screechin' halt; I'd like to say
inches, but actually 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 get 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 FSO of the district, administrative guy. There was 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, and 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. And, two days after the ground crew got there, we'd disappeared.
And anyway we told part of the story and, I mean, the part about no food. And they were
very proud; we got to the fighting. And--smokes, 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 on 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 or something without anything, 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 of it, because you're not particularly hungry and 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 slices of tomatoes and that's all I wanted. And then I 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 don'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 Nichol 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 then they took us from there to Trout Lake, is where the ranger station is. And then from there—it's settin' 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 just goes, he goes down the hill he goes, and he's a-layin' the brakes all the time for the curves. And that's fine except he got right near the bottom and he says, I think something's wrong with these brakes. They're almost to go 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 airport where the airport is, and Tommy Nichol came in and he said later, he said he never had such a ragged bunch of characters. I mean, we looked like it was real terrible, I guess. We got on the plane, '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 Luflkin 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, Lighthorse 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 Luflkin and he said he had an aunt that had died or was dying or something and he'd like to go back for a few days. And Luflkin. '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 thin .... (interruption) But anyway, we survived.

Notes


7. These terms are explained in the glossary of terms which appears in my collection of smokejumper folklore deposited in the Randall Mills Folklore Archive, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. The collection was made in June, 1969, and consists of five tapes and a sixty-eight page transcript. The glossary is found on pages 11-15.

8. See appendix, p. 9.

9. See appendix, p. 10.


11. *Ibid*.

12. See appendix, p. 10.


16. See appendix, p. 11.

17. See appendix, p. 10.


20. See appendix, p. 9.


22. See appendix, p. 10.

23. See appendix, p. 10.

24. See appendix, p. 10.

25. See appendix, p. 11.


27. *Ibid*.

29. Although this may appear to be a simplistic ordering of narrative materials, it does reveal the relationship between structural elements, a preliminary step in the treatment of personal experience stories which is outlined by William Labov and Joshua Waletzky, "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience," in *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*, Proceeding of the 1966 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society, ed. June Helm (Seattle and London, 1967), pp. 12-45. Viewing the clause as the basic unit of expression, Labov and Waletzky deal with the relationship between structure and function in a number of personal experience stories.


31. See appendix, p. 12.


