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My paper is focused on superstitions, good and bad luck. I began by exploring my own memory for superstitions I could remember and I seemed to be able to come up with quite a few. From here I went to my family: my husband, mother, father, and brother. Then I visited my husband's parents. From here I went to my grandmother and my great aunt. Also, I wrote my brother and his wife who are in the Peace Corp in Ecuador. Finally I gathered a few things from friends in the girls dorm.

I found at first it was difficult to get people to remember superstitions or old remedies or stories and many of my informants needed time to think. I found that once I started suggesting things or mentioning superstitions my informants opened up. I also found that women were more helpful than men and this obstical I did not know how to over come.

I also felt that many of the people I talked with had a college education. This seemed to be a draw back for I feel that the people I talked with regarded many things as being foolish and therefore disregarded many of their ideas.

I found many superstitions universal to all the people I talked with except the wording was different. Some of these were: It's bad luck to have a black cat cross your path or a four leaf clover is good luck. This area of folklore is definately not exhausted for I believe there are endless sources to get information from. I asked only a limited number of people basically from my family and the same area.

Janet Sheridan

Most of my information was gathered from Huntington Station. This is a good sized town on Long Island about 45 miles from New York City. In the past 15 years this town has grown very rapidly for people have been moving away from the city. The other area I collected much of my material from was the girls dorm at Ricker College in Houlton, Maine. The college is small with about 600 enrolled and less than 100 girls in the dorm.

Houlton
Long Island, N.Y.
New York City

Janet Sheridan

BIOGRAPHIES

I was born November 6, 1949 on Long Island. I lived here until I was 18 when I left home to attend college in New London, Connecticut. From there I transferred to Ricker College in Houlton, Maine where I have been for the past year and a half. I was married August 21, 1971.

Harriet Haumann born July 31, 1921 in Springfield, Massachusetts. She lived here until she went to college in Providence, Rhode Island. In May 1945 she was married and moved to Brooklyn, New York and later to Long Island. She now lives in Huntington Station, Long Island, New York where she has resided for the past 11 years.

Dorothy Sturtevant was born and lived in Springfield, Massachusetts most of her life. In 1959 she moved to Wilbraham, Massachusetts which is a small town outside Springfield. She was born November 27, 1884.

Elizabeth Vander Maas was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey on November 24, 1910. She spent most of her childhood in Huntington, Long Island, New York. After high school she attended nursing in California and spent 25 years there. In about 1956 she moved back to Huntington and in 1970 she moved to Cooperstown, New York where she has lived for the past 2 years.

California
Elizabeth, New Jersey
Long Island, N.Y.
New London, Conn.
Houlton
Springfield, Mass.
Providence, R.I.
Cooperstown

Janet Sheridan

Linda Pittella was born in Midford, Massachusetts on December 19, 1951. She lived most of her life in Pittsfield Massachusetts. Now she is attending Ricker College in Houlton, Maine where she has been for the past 10 months. When she is on vacation she lives with her parents in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

David Haumann age 18 was born and raised on Long Island, New York. He is living in Huntington Station, New York where has lived for the past 11 years. He is now attending Walt Whitman High School where he is very active in school plays.

Michael Sheridan was born in Long Beach, California March 19, 1949. When he was 7 years old he moved to Huntington where he lived most of his life. He is now attending Ricker College in Houlton, Maine where he has been for the past 4 years.

Sue Leffler was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on November 13, 1952. She lived there until she was three years old when her family moved to Middletown, New Jersey. Now she is attending Ricker College where she has been for the past 10 months.

Barbara Fitch Haumann was born in Brattleboro, Vermont on May 22, 1948. She lived on a farm there all her life. In 1970 she graduated from the University of Bridgeport with a degree in journalism. Now she is in Ecuador, South America doing Peace Corp work where she has been for the past 10 months.

Middletown, N.J.
Pittsfield
Midford, Mass.
Houlton
Plymouth, Mass.
Long Island, N.Y.
Long Beach, Cal.
Brattleboro, Vt.

Janet Sheridan

Charles Vander Maas born April 5, 1916 in Huntington, New York. He spent most of his life there. In 1970 he moved to Cooperstown, New York where he is now residing. He is of German background, infact, his mother has recently returned there to live.

New York
Cooperstown, N.Y.

Janet Sheridan

Good Luck Superstition

Finding a penny right side up is good luck.

A four leaf clover is good luck.

A five leaf clover is good luck if you give it away.

When a person has a birthday, he must cut and eat the first piece from his birthday cake for good luck.

A bride on her wedding day should wear something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue for good luck and happiness.

If you are keeping score for a bowler and he gets more than one strike in a row don't mark the score down until he stops getting strikes. If you don't mark down the score it is good luck.

Collected: Janet Sheridan Houlton,
Maine April 1, 1972

If you find a wishing rock throw it over your right shoulder and you will have good luck.

Collected: Ricker College Houlton,
Maine, April 4, 1972

Informant: Linda Pittella, 20

Class: C

Note: I did not know what a wishing rock was so I had to ask. A wishing rock is a rock with a white band going completely around it.

Houlton

Janet Sheridan

If you find a penny or any other change in your pocket and it's your last piece of change throw it over your shoulder. It will bring you good luck.

Collected: Ricker College, Houlton,
Maine, April 4, 1972

Informant: Linda Pittella, 20

Class: B

If you cut and give everyone a peice of your birthday cake and do not eat any yourself, it will be good luck for everyone who eats the cake.

Collected: Huntington Station,
New York, March 28, 1972

Informant: Harriet Haumann, 51

Class: C

If you spill salt throw it (the spilled salt) over your left shoulder with your right hand to prevent bad luck (or bring good luck).

Collected: Huntington Station,
New York, March 28, 1972

Informant: Harriet Haumann, 51

Class: C

Hang a horseshod upwards so the luck will stay in (be with you).
If you hang it downward the luck will fall out.

Collected: Houlton, Maine, May 2, 1972

Informant: Michael Sheridan, 23

*Houlton
New York*

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Janet Sheridan

If you drink beer from a can with a pop top you should put the pop top in the can right after you open it (the pop top is in the can while you are drinking it). This brings good luck.

Collected: Houlton, Maine, May 2, 1972

Informant: Michael Sheridan, 23

Class: C

Note: The informant is my husband and when he told me this superstition I wasn't sure if he was pulling my leg or not. Later, however he did seem quite serious and does believe it to be true.

Houlton

Janet Sheridan

BAD LUCK SUPERSTITIONS

Keeping a 5 leaf clover is bad luck.

A black cat crossing your path is bad luck.

Walking under a ladder is bad luck.

Breaking a mirror brings 7 years bad luck.

Step on a crack you'll break your fathers back.

Step on the line you'll break your mother spine.

Informant: Janet Sheridan, 22

If an actor writes on the walls behind stage before the last show it's bad luck.

If you look at the audience before the curtain opens when on stage you'll have bad luck.

Collected: Huntington Station,
New York, March 25, 1972

Informant: David Haumann, 18

Class: C

It's bad luck to put your hat on the bed.

It's bad luck to open an umbrella in the house.

Collected: Cooperstown, New York,
March 30, 1972

Informant: Elizabeth Vander Maas, 62

Class: C

New York
Cooperstown, NY

OTHER SUPERSTITIONS

Make a wish before you blow out the candles on your birthday cake and if you blow out all the candles in one breath your wish will come true.

If your noses itches kiss a fool or you'll get into a fight with someone.

Informant: Janet Sheridan, 22

If you drop silver ware your going to have company,

If you are a witch and you eat 3 pumpkin and 3 sunflower seeds everyday for 2 weeks you'll get pregnant.

If your pregnant and you look at a person with a deformity your baby will have that deformity.

If your pregnant and carry your baby high it will be a boy if you carry low it will be a girl.

Collected: Cooperstown, New York
March 27, 1972

Informant: Elizabeth Vander Maas, 62

Class: C

Note: Mrs. Vander Maas was a public health nurse and taught courses to pregnant women health during pregnancy and child care after birth. Many of her students believed these tales. Of course, Mrs. Vander Maas does not and had to discourage these women's beliefs.

Cooperstown, N.Y. 4/6/72

Janet Sheridan

If you visit someone you must leave by the same door you entered by or you won't visit that home again.

Collected: Huntington Station,
New York, March 28, 1972

Informant: Harriet Haumann, 51

Class: C

If you find an eye lash on your cheek pick it up with your thumb and your forefinger and hold it there while you make a wish. (then separate your forefinger and thumb) If it (the eye lash) sticks to your thumb it won't come true if it sticks to your forefinger your wish will come true.

Collected: Ricker College Houlton,
Maine, April 4, 1972

Informant: Linda Pittella, 20

Class: C

When you go over the railroad tracks in a car you (a girl) should lift up your feet or else you will loose your boy friend.

Collected Ricker College, Houlton
Maine, April 4, 1972

Informant: Sue Leffler, 20

Class: B

If you see a kid playing with a yo-yo outside late in the winter it's a sign spring is coming.

Collected: Houlton, Maine April 10,
1972

Informant: Mike Sheridan 23

Class: C

New York
Houlton

Janet Sheridan

If you drop a fork company is coming and it will be a female.

If you drop a knife your company will be male.

Collected: Wilbraham, Massachusetts
April 8, 1972

Informant: Dorothy Sturtevant, 77

Class: C

It's bad luck to go under a raised ladder.

Collected: Wilbraham, Massachusetts
April 8, 1972

Informant: Dorothy Sturtevant, 77

Class: C

Everytime a girl whistles it makes the blessed virgin cry.

Collected: Ricker College, Houlton,
Maine, May 2, 1972

Informant: Linda Pittella, 20

Class: B

Note: Linda's grandmother use to say this every time she heard
Linda whistle. Linda's grandmother believed it was not proper
for a girl to whistle.

If a girl is over 21 and not married she will be an old maid.

Collected: Ricker College, Houlton,
Maine, May 2, 1972

Informant: Pam Gonsalses, 21

Class: C

Note: Pam's grandmother believes this is true but of course Pam
doesn't believe it.

*Wilbraham, Mass.
Houlton*

Janet Sheridan

The first granddaughter should be married first.

Collected: Ricker College, Houlton,
Maine, May 2, 1972

Informant: Pam Gonsalses, 21

Class: C

Note: Pam's grandmother also believes this as it stems from the above belief. Pam's younger cousin is married and her grandmother thinks this is awfull. Of course, Pam thinks they are ridiculous.

Wishing on a star. (why?)

Collected: Letter, March 5, 1972

Informant: Barbara Fitch Haumann, 24

Class: D

Closing your eyes and blowing away a evelash that's fallen out for good luck.

Collected: Letter, March 5, 1972

Informant: Barbara Fitch Haumann, 24

Class D

Snezzing saying "God bless you" . . . because it's to keep evil spirts from entering your mouth or maybe is it to disperse the evil spirit jumping out of you ???!

Collected: Letter, March 5, 1972

Informant: Barbara Fitch Haumann, 24

Class: D

Houlton

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Janet Sheridan

If you eat salt in someone's house you cannot be their enemy or ever kill them. For, its a sign of accepting their friendship.

"Whispering's lying, lying's sin, when you get to heaven, they won't let you in."

Carrying the bride over the threshold this was pertinate as the bride in the days of the Romans were brought into the house of the groom's parents. It was bad luck for the bride to be tripped by the spirits of the house as she entered so to avoid this, the bride would be carried in!!!

Collected: Letter, March 5, 1972

Informant: Barbara Fitch Haumann, 24

Class: D

If two people shold on to the ends of a wishing bone, make a wish and then try to break it. The person who ends up holding the long end will have his wish come true.

Collected: Ricker College, Houlton,
Maine, May 2, 1972

Informant: Linda Pittella, 20

Class: C

If Water boils way quickly from a pot it's going to rain.

If you play with a frog you'll get worts.

Informant: Janet Sheridan, 22

Houlton

Janet Sheridan

If a frog pee's on you you'll get worts.

To get rid of worts wash them in rain water.

Collected: Ricker College, Houlton
Maine, May 2, 1972
Informant: Sue Leffler, 20

Class: B

(Things Happen in Three's)

Things happen in three's: My gramp believed in this strongly. The last few years of his life, he would be all uptight 'til the 3rd person died in our town say, we might lose 3 people in a month or during the winter. Personally, I think the 3 - idea may have some basis. And, it was weird with his death ... he died beginning of Sept., 1965, my mom's brother died 1½ months later; my mom's mother died 1½ months later ... three deaths in our family in a row.

This thought, though, is not just connected with death, though that's the one that I associate it more as that's what Gramp emphasized more and not only with people - my dad has found some correlation with his cows, losing 3 cows in a row usually, the way my dad believes in it is that if just 1 thing happens, ok; but, if a 2nd identical thing happens, there has to be a 3rd!

Collected: Letter March 5, 1972
Informant: Barbara Fitch Haumann, 24
Class: D

Houlton

Janet Sheridan

REMEDIES

If you have a sore throat tie a dirty sock around your neck.

Note: The informant does not believe this will work. In fact, he thought it was quite funny when telling me.

To prevent yourself from getting sick put garlic and asefetida in a bag around your neck.

Collected: Cooperstown, New York
March 30, 1972

Informant: Charles Vander Maas, 56

Class: C

Note: I did not know what asefetida was so I had to ask. Charles explained it as being an herb. He does not believe it will prevent illness.

To cure a chest cold fry onions and put then in flannel on a persons chest.

Collected: Wilbraham, Mass. April 8,
1972

Informant: Dorothy Sturtevant, 78

Class: C

Note: Mrs. Sturtevant remembers her mother using this on her many times when she was young and it did help her. She doesn't believe in this procedure any more for she believes in modern medicine.

*Cooperstown, N.Y.
Wilbraham*

Janet Sheridan

Spring Tonic - thoroughwort plant brewed like tea. It was set out in a pitcher on the breakfast table in the spring. It was suppose to give you pep and to keep you from getting sick.

Collected: Wilbraham, Mass. April 28,
1972

Informant Dorothy Sturtevant, 78

Class: C

Note: Thoroughwort is a plant similar to golden rod. Mrs. Strutevant remembers drinking this when she was a child and said it has a very bitter taste. She doesn't use it any more but believes it was sued because vitamin pills were not available when she was young.

Wilbraham, Mass.

Janet Sheridan

PLACE NAME LEGEND

(Rattle Snake Bite)

Merrick was a young man recently married. One morning he went out to mow the field accross the street. Lunch time came and he didn't come home. His wife got worried and went to look for him. When his wife found him he was on the rocks above the brook and he had been bitten by a rattle snake. He died not long after his wife found him. (They call the are were this young man died Rattle Snake Bite).

Collected: Wilbraham, Mass.,
April 8, 1972

Informant: Dorothy Sturtevant, 78

Class: C

Note: Dorothy Sturtevant is my grandmother and ownes the property where this incident took place. Merrick's wife was a Bliss girl and her family still live accross the street from my grandmother.

Wilbraham, Mass.

Janet Sheridan

JOKES

What does the toilet say when you flush it? I-ris-sh (Irish)

Little Jack Horner sat in the corner and had a square ass.

Collected: Ricker College, Houlton,
Maine, May 2, 1972

Informant: Linda Pittella, 20

Class: B

Dirty Ernie (called this because he was always saying dirty things) was in class at school. That day they were doing the Alphabet. The teacher said, "A if for?" Dirty Ernie raised his hand and was very eager to answer. The teacher thought, I can't call on him he'll say something like ass. So she picked on another student. She answered "A is for apple." The teacher goes on to "b is for?" Again Dirty Earnie raises his hand. The teacher is afraid to call on him for fear he'll say something like bastard. So another student answers B is for ball. This continues through the alphabet until she gets to the letter R. Dirty Earnie raises his hand again. The teacher thinks he can't say anything dirty for the letter R so she calls on him. Dirty Earnie answers, "Ris for Rat. The teacher answers, "Very Good" and Dirty Ernie answers, "Ya a big fucken rat."

Collected: Ricker College, Houlton,
Maine, May 2, 1972

Informant: Linda Pittella, 20

Class: C

Houlton

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Janet Sheridan

SONGS

I had a little chicken and he wouldn't lay an egg

So I poured hot water up and down his leg
And the little chicken cried and the little chicken begged
and the little chicken layed a hard boiled egg.

Fuzzy Wuzzy was a bear
Fuzzy Wuzzy had no hair
Fuzzy Wuzzy wasn't fuzzy wuzzy any more

OOey Gooey was a worm a worm that you can see
he lay accross the railroad tracks the train he did not see...

OOEY-GOOEY

Informant: Janet Sheridan