

Fall 11-12-2017

Country Boys

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Recommended Citation

Reische, Devan, "Country Boys" (2017). *USU Student Folklore Fieldwork*. Paper 146.
https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/student_folklore_all/146

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Laverne Reische

Meridian, California

November 12, 2017

Country Boys

Personal Experience Narrative

Informant: Laverne (Verne) Reische is my grandfather on my father's side. Verne still resides in the same area our family has been for many years; his home is located on our family farm where walnuts are grown. My grandfather grew up on that same farm, however it was much smaller than. My family has resided in the Sacramento Valley along the Sacramento River for four generations now. Most of our family on that side still resides in that same area, so there are many cousins who become very good friends while growing up. This was the case for my grandfather, he was less wealthy than his cousins, so he spent lots of time with them growing up.

Context: My grandpa told me this story over a Sunday morning chat while I was home to visit family. While I am home I always go and talk to my grandpa. Lately, I have been inquiring about our family history as well as his experience growing up. This story came as a response to the question, "Do you have any stories about you boys running a muck and making trouble when you were younger?" I had never heard this story before, later I found out that my aunt also knew this story. My grandpa does not tell stories unless someone asks him a question that reminds him of a particular story. He is in the early stages of dementia, so it has become increasingly important for me to learn as much as I can so that I can carry on his stories for the future generations.

Text: Well we uh, Jim and Kerm [Kermit] always, well uncle Eldon was very successful so he always had money and the boys always had money and cars and stuff. So that's where I spent my time. We had an old, well it was new then, tin motor boat with a 10-horsepower motor. All of us skinny kids learned how to water ski behind it. On a pair of skis that we made ourselves that we didn't know what we were doing. We took two planks and some innertubes from some old tires and made the foot pieces on it. We used an angle iron to make the toes go up. Like I said we used two pieces of wood and used a piece of metal to make the toe go up and that was our first set of skis and we didn't know how to make them work because when you ski on a flat board you can't steer it. And when you would get on them they would just do this [uses his arms to show that the skis would go in all different directions]. So we learned you had to put a fin on the bottom of each one so we nailed a piece of tin underneath there to make them so that we could steer them. It would cut your leg off if you weren't careful, it was so sharp. We

skied behind a tin motor boat with a little 10 horse power motor. But you know none of us were big. You know all of us were about this big around [makes a small hole with his fingers]. Didn't take very much to pull us out of the water.

Texture: My grandpa told me earlier when I asked him about helping me with the folklore project, that once I got him started it was going to be hard to get him to stop. Although people don't ask often my grandpa does like to share his memories, especially with us grandkids. He told this story with a big smile on his face. You could tell he remembered this story fondly. Early this year Jim passed away, so any opportunity that my grandpa gets to remember Jim brings joy. Jim was his best friend from the time they were born, basically, they were first cousins and they were the same age. You could feel the love and loss emanating as my grandpa told the story. It was a bittersweet tale of childhood best friends. [This one event managed to turn into somewhat of a tradition for our family. My grandpa and his cousins used to do this in the canal, now we do it in the ditch. We call it ditch surfing. This rendition of my grandpa's original ski, is we use a four-wheeler and a rope and pull each other on some kind of thing that we put our feet on.]

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Fall 2017