

# RAY HICKS

of Beech Mountain,  
North Carolina

*Telling Four Traditional "Jack Tales"*



*Photo by Sandy Paton*



**FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC. SHARON, CONNECTICUT**





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North Carolina

*Telling Four Traditional "Jack Tales"*

*Recorded and with notes by Sandy Paton  
Texts transcribed by Lee B. Haggerty*

"Used to be, whenever we had a long, slow job to be done, like a corn-huskin' or something, we'd just gather all the young'uns around and put 'em to work. Then's when we'd tell the old tales about Jack. Why, them kids would work for hours and never a sound out of 'em, long as I'd keep tellin' 'em tales."

Thus, Ray Hicks, North Carolina mountain farmer and part-time mechanic, put into words, more concisely than the folklorist could, one function of the traditional folk-tale in the lives of the back-country people of the Southern Appalachians.

The Hicks family has been farming the steep slopes of Beech Mountain for many generations, each generation transmitting to the next its store of songs, ballads and tales. Ray Hicks learned the tales as a boy and, I'm convinced, his children will pass them on to their children in the years to come. Folk traditions on "the Beech" fade slowly and die hard.

It takes a special sort of genius to tell a tale the way Ray does — delighting in it, inventing just a little each time to keep it fresh, coloring it freely with his rich, mountain speech. Throughout Appalachia there are folk who sing old songs; occasionally one may discover a real ballad singer, a master of an ancient art. But the true "folksayer" is rare, indeed. Without question, Ray Hicks is one of these.

S. P.

## Side 1:

Jack and the Three Steers

Big Man Jack, Killed  
Seven at a Whack

## Side 2:

Jack and Old Fire Dragon

Whickety-Whack,  
Into My Sack

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FTA-14

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RAY HICKS

Ray Hicks leaned his long frame back into his favorite chair, propped his feet up near the coal-and-wood-burning stove in the center of the room, closed his eyes, and began:

"Well, Jack and his mother, they was havin' it hard..."

"Daddy's gonna tell some 'Jack tales,'" a young voice hollered, and immediately there was a scurry of young'uns from other parts of the house. In almost no time at all, Ray's children were settled around the room, eager faces looking up at their father, eyes aglow with anticipated fun. For Ray's children love to hear him tell the old tales every bit as much as Ray, himself, used to love to hear his father, and his grandfather, tell them.

Ray waited patiently until the bustling and wriggling had subsided, then he began again:

"Well, Jack and his mother..."

Ray's wife, his mother, and his sister, Bessie Proffitt, quietly continued peeling and slicing apples, placing the slices on a sheet of heavy cardboard balanced on top of the stove, to dry them out. As they dried, the children pitched in and helped by stringing them into long loops, many of which were already hanging from the ceiling, their pungent odor filling the warm room, stirring pleasant memories of my own childhood visits to the family farm in the Ozarks, many years before.

Bessie's husband, Frank Proffitt, smiled as he lighted a cigarette and eased back on the couch between two of his own sons. It was Frank who had finally persuaded Ray Hicks, an extremely shy mountain-man, more than a little wary of strangers from the flatlands, to tell some of the old tales for us. We knew, of course, that the "Jack Tales" had long been told up on "the Beech," as this high, dark, laurel-covered mountain is known locally, for Richard Chase had found them in abundance here thirty years earlier and had published them, in somewhat revised forms, in his two popular books (*The Jack Tales* and *Grandfather Tales*, Houghton Mifflin, 1943 and 1948, respectively), but this was our first experience at hearing them told, first-hand, and by a master tale-teller, too.

"Why, Ray's been known, up on the Beech, for telling the old tales ever since he was a boy," Frank Proffitt had told us during one of our earlier visits to this remote northwestern corner of North Carolina. "I'll see if I can talk him into letting you record some of them." It took some time, but Frank had at last been successful. Our microphone was set up in front of Ray's chair, his long legs were stretched out on either side of the stand, the tape-recorder was running, and one of the ancient tales of Jack's incredible adventures was beginning to unfold, mountain-style, in Ray's rich, backwoods language. As Ray warmed to his task, it was for us, as it would have been for anyone interested in America's heritage of folklore, a magic moment.

Ray Hicks must be at least 6'8" tall. He towers over Lee Haggerty, Folk-Legacy's president, and Lee stands 6'2" in his stocking feet. When we first saw him, he was angling down the mountainside from his potato patch with a gunny-sack full of freshly dug "taters" slung over his shoulder. On his head was a well-worn mechanic's cap, slightly askew — he always wears it that way — and on his face was a curious, somewhat hesitant smile. His faded overalls



seemed a bit too short for his gangling legs and the sleeves of his khaki shirt too short for his long, raw-boned arms. His welcome was shy, but cordial. We chatted awhile, admiring the view from his house, a view which sweeps across the valley toward Stone Mountain on the Tennessee border, then went on into the house to meet his wife and children, and his mother, Rena Hicks. As we crossed the porch, we glanced up and noticed the "hex-signs" that decorate each outer corner of the porch ceiling. Signs of this type, I'm told, used to be quite common on the Beech, but are now quite rare.

The Hicks family has been farming on the Beech for many generations now, each generation transmitting to the next its rich store of songs, ballads and tales. Ray learned his tales as a boy and, I'm convinced, his children will pass them along to their children. Folk traditions on the Beech fade slowly and die hard.

At one time or another, during my many trips to Beech Mountain, people had told me: "Why, yes, I used to hear them old stories being told when I was young." A few had even outlined a plot or two for me. But it takes a special sort of genius to tell a tale the way Ray does — delighting in it, inventing just a little each time to keep it fresh and spontaneous. Ben Botkin has used the term "folksayer" for those who possess this genius. Many mountain people sing folksongs; a few are real ballad singers, masters of an ancient art. But the true "folksayer" is rare, indeed. Ray Hicks, North Carolina mountain farmer and part-time mechanic, is, without question, one of these.

Sandy Paton

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JACK AND THE THREE STEERS  
(Tale Type 1525D)

Jack and his mother, they was without of flour and nothing to eat. So he says, "Mama," he says, "I believe I can make it and get us something to eat." And he headed off. She let him go. Looked like it was just have to go; peat(?) was on the table. And so he headed off and got lost in the woods — dark woods — dark in the daytime. And so it come night on him, and it let in raining. And finally at last, he kept crawling and pulling around in the woods, and he looked and he seed a little light down in a holler, a-shining, and a little dim, way down in a lonesome holler through the dark, and hit a-raining. And so he kept pulling and got there.

And when he got there he pecked on the door, and hit a-dripping off of the house and wet. And a little woman come out. She said, "Great..." said, "Law me!" Said, "What is you a-doing here?" Said, "This is the highway robbers' house." And says, "Son," says, "They kill everybody that comes here." Says, "They say 'dead men tells no tales'."

Well, he stood there and talked with her awhile in the rain, and he was a-getting so wet, and he says, "Well, bedad," he says, "I'm a-coming in! I'd just as soon die, be killed, as to drown'd out here." She says, "Well," says, "come on in then," said, "just as you please." And there was a little pile of straw was a-laying over in the room. Don't know what they had it there for, but a little pile of straw. And, so, he was wet and drowsy, and he went over and laid down in that little pile of straw, and he got warm and went off to sleep.

And, up in at midnight, the robbers had come in with their stuff and put their guns out on the table and was a-dividing it — what money they'd got and



other stuff. And so, Jack kindly roused and made a mumble of a fuss. They says, "What's that, old lady?" "Oh," she says, "I forgot to tell you'uns." Said, "It was a little old boy come in." Says, "I told him that you'uns would kill him, but he said... he said he'd just as soon be killed as to drown out there in the rain." And said, "He just come on in."

And he said, "Well," says, "get up." Says, "What's your name?" He says, "My name's Jack." Said, "Well," said, "we kill everybody that comes here." Said, "Dead people tells no tales."

Well, Jack was ragged and looked pitiful, and he says, "Well," he says, "I ain't got nothing." He says, "You'uns is robbers, no doubt, and a-robbing for what you get, but," said, "if you rob me you don't get... kill me you don't get nothing." Says, "Me and my mother is without of anything to eat, is why I'm out like this."

Well, they got to looking at him and got sort of sorry for him. And they said, "Jack, do you reckon you would be a good hand to steal?" He said, "Bedad, a man ought to be a good hand," he said, "if it would save his life!" "Well," they said, "it could save it." Says, "There's an old farmer back over yonder," he said, "some way he's... that he watches his stuff, and it's come out where you're here and you can do the job for us." Said... said, "We've tried every way." They said, "He's got three steers," and said, "we've tried every way to steal them, but," said, "we can't get them." And said, "We was a-figuring on trying it tomorrow, but," said, "being you've happened out to be here, we'll... if you'll get them for us," said, "we'll give you three hundred dollars apiece and spare your life. Well," said, "now in the morning he'll be a-taking the first one to town."

Well so, Jack got up a-feeling awful bad about it; his heart was a-beating up in his neck, still thinking that he was a-going to be killed — he would fail. So, he went down by the lower end of the house, and the robbers had had a calf or something tied down there, and had forgot and left the rope. So he just snatched the rope off of the pin and wrapped it around him and went on down to the old road where he was a-driving the ox to town to sell it, and he looked up and seed a stooping tree. And he says, "Ah, bedad," he says, "I might fool that old man and not have to hurt nobody to get that steer." And, account of the robbers being in that country, struck his mind, too. So he clumb... climbed this stooping tree over the road and rolled the rope around him and fixed it, and got it around his neck like he was hung. And hung there, and the old farmer come along, "Sook, Buck, saw, Buck, let's get to town." And he got on around that turn where Jack was there a-hanging like that, and he looked — says, "Law me!" Says, "I'll not get to town today." Says, "Hit'll be a funeral!" And says, "No doubt that them robbers has hung a boy, and it's out of my settlement." And says, "I better just tie my ox and get back and get my neighbors and get him down, and (it will) be a funeral, in place of going to town." Said, "I'll just tie him here, now, and I'll get him directly."

Well, he tied his ox and struck back and told it all over the community there was a boy hung there, and had about fifty or a hundred men a-going with him, that the robbers had hung a boy in a tree, and had them all alarmed.

And so Jack, just as quick as he got out of sight, untied and got the steer and struck up to the robbers', and was back with it in about two or three hours. And the robbers said, "Good gracious," they said, "you're the beatingest hand to steal that's ever been on this job!" Said, "You're a-doing well." He said, "Bedad, a man has to do something, if it will save his life." And he said, "I don't believe in hurting nobody." "Well," they said, the next one... you'll go with the next one in the morning." And Jack laid and never slept too much. He was worried, a-studying yet, it was two to go, and didn't know how he would get them.



So, he got up the next morning, and there laid a brand new woman's slipper where they'd dropped it on the floor. And (it is) said, some way he just snatched it and just put it in his pocket. And said, he got down to the road and set down. And said, directly he heard the old farmer a-coming with the second one. "Sook, Buck, saw, Buck, let's get to town before the market closes." And said, he heard him a-coming pretty close and he just eased out and threwed that slipper in the road.

And the old farmer come up and said, "Saw, Buck! Saw, Buck!" Looked, and picked it up, and said, "Law me!" Said, "There's a brand new slipper them robbers has lost." Said, "If I had the mate to that," he said, "I believe they'd be exactly to fit for my old lady." Said, "Just her fit, no doubt." Said, "Just looks like her size. But," said, "they've lost it, and it wouldn't be any use without the mate to it."

Well, so he throws it back down, and don't take it with him. And, "Sook, Buck, let's get to town," and started on. And Jack just went out and grabbed it. And he forgot to notice which foot it went on, never paid any attention. And Jack took a near-cut through the woods, about a mile ahead, and set it in front of him again.

Said, "Sook, Buck, saw, Buck!" Said, "Law me!" Says, "Hain't I a fool!" Says, "There is the mate to that shoe, and me a mile on this-a-way." Said, "Hain't I a fool!" Says, "I ought to have put the other one in my pocket." Says, "They've lost one back there and they've lost the other one here."

So he said, "Saw, Buck," and tied him, and grabbed that one up and run back to get the other one, and got mistaken in which place the other one was laying and got excited so, and them a-being new, till they said he run there nearly till twelve before he quit running, his tongue a-hanging out. And by that time, Jack had that one and was in to the robbers. And him a-running yet with his tongue a-hanging out, saying, "It looked like it was right here, where I seed that slipper. No, it was up there." And he'd run there. "No, I believe it was that turn right back down yonder." And just run, they said, that his tongue was a-hanging out, before he give up. And then, when he went back, his steer was gone.

Well, they said, "Great, Jack! You're the beatingest!" Said, "You've done made six hundred already, and a-saving your life! Well," they said, "now, in the morning, is the third one." Said, "You bring hit and we'll give you nine hundred bucks and your life is saved. We won't hurt you; just to keep your mouth shut about us."

Well, so Jack goes back and just sets down, and he can't figure on ary a thing to get that one with, the heart beating in his neck. And, finally at last, he heard him a-coming. "Sook, Buck, saw, Buck; get to town." Said he had to think of something or he was gone. Said it just happened to think, fly in his mind, that he could get up in the laurel and bawl like two oxens, two steers, and get him up in there after him and dodge him like a rabbit. And he just went up in the laurel. "Moo, maw! Moo, maw!"

"Just as I expected; they just got loose!" And says, "I'll get up in there and catch the other two, and just take them all three on to market today." Said, "Just what I thought! They just got loose!"

And so, he got up in there after Jack, and he'd jump across thick laurel and keep him after him, and, "Moo!" on one ridge, "moo!" "Yeah, that's them," he'd say. And then, directly — Jack was awful; he'd rabbit hunted a lot — and he give him a dodge like a rabbit and got him tangled with his britches under some thick laurel, and the spikes in his britches, and him there a-pulling



and hung up. And he jumped out and got the steer and took out, and while he was a-getting out of them green briars and laurel and stuff, and got on in.

And they paid him the nine hundred, and he went back. And said him and his mother lived good for then awhile.

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BIG MAN JACK, KILLED SEVEN AT A WHACK  
(Tale Type 1640)

Well, Jack and his mother, they was seeing it hard, and he got out a-hunting for a job. And he was a-walking along and he come to three forks of a road. And so he says, "I'm a-gonna throw my hat up and, whichever way the air takes it, which road I'm a-going." And so it went in the right-hand road, and he took it. And he hadn't gone too far till he'd picked up a piece of wood and was a-whittling on it. And the first thing he knowed, he had a paddle made, and didn't know it. And he come to a mudhole in the road and, just like it is, butterflies had lit all over it, a-sucking it, and he whacked down with that paddle he'd hewed out and killed seven.

And so, as he went on his way to the blacksmith man, he met a man that said the king had out word that it was a wild boar out a-doing lots of damage — killing people, cattle. And a unicorn was out doing lots of damage. And so, this got on Jack's mind. And he went on to the blacksmith man and had his belt... had a big leather belt made and put reading on it: "Big Man Jack; Killed Seven at a Whack!" Didn't say what — but it was just seven butterflies — but just said: "Big Man Jack; Killed Seven at a Whack!"

And so he went on and kept inquiring and found the king of that country, and hollered him out, and he said... he said, "I've heared you've got out word that there's a wild boar a-doing lots of damage and that a lot of people had went and got hurt trying to kill it, and some killed." And the king says, "Yeah, but," he says, "if it's ever killed a man, the way you look... kill it... it'll not... it'll live on and do more damage." And Jack said, "Well, bedad, if that's the way you feel about it," says, "just get her killed!"

And as he turned around a little ell(?) to walk off, the king caught that on his belt. He says, "Wait a minute here!" He says, "What's that on your belt?" The king looked at it. He said, "Big Man Jack; Killed Seven at a Whack. Oh," he says, "wait! But you're the man that I'm a-needing!" Said, "Great goodness!" Said, "Are you up to that that's on your belt?" He says, "Yeah, I'm up to it." And says, "Well," says, "come on in and we'll eat supper, and tomorrow morning we'll try you out."

Well so, next morning come and they eat breakfast, and he took Jack on the horse where they last said it was seen. And said (that he) took and let Jack off, and it was a sight to see that king whip his horse, feared that it would get onto him before he got back out of there. And Jack says, "Well," he said, "bedad," he said, "now my life is in danger!" And he said, "If hit's that dangerous, the way he whipped that horse," he says, "I might better slip out of here and go back on what I've got on my belt."

And, well, he started trying to slip out and old wild boar smelled him, and said it come a-knocking, and tushes a-cutting big trenches outen the trees, and got onto him. And said, directly it got so clost on him that it was all the way he seed he could save his life — he happened to see a little old log house, way down in a holler, with the roof rottened off of it. And so, he took out for



hit and, the time he got to it and just started to climb the logs over in it, the wild boar was so close till it bit off a corner of his coat-tail. And the wild boar run in at the doorway then, to try to reach up to get him, and he jumped back off outside and propped it good, where it couldn't get out. And checked it good, and took off in for the king's house.

King come out and he said, "Did you do any good?" He said, "Huh," he says, "I don't know whether I done any good or not." He said that, "I got up there, just a few minutes after you left," said, "something like a little old shoat come out, with things out of its mouth about that long." (At this point, Ray indicated a length of about six inches.) And said, "Me and hit got to playing." And said, "Hit got a little mad, directly, and bit the corner of my coat-tail off." And says, "I just flew a little mad, too." And said, "I just picked it up by the tail and ears and shoved it in a little old log building up there." Said, "You can go see if that's what it is."

And so the king ordered up his men and the rifles. And said when they went, the king's men seed it and wouldn't get close enough to shoot it. And Jack grabbed a rifle and sighted and, said, when he shot, it was so big that it just tore down that whole little old building. And they cleaned it out and it cleaned up to eight wagon-loads of meat.

And the king said, "Well," said, "now," said, "being you've done so good," he says, "hit's a unicorn a-doing lots of damage." And so, Jack was a-dreading it. And the king took him, the next morning, and left him where they said they'd last seed it. And he says, "Bedad," — you see, it was five hundred dollars, I believe it was, he was to give him for each, the hog and the unicorn — and he said, "bedad, I've got five hundred dollars in my little old ragged pocket;" and he said, "I could spend that and get the good out of it. But," he said, "I'm going to mess around here yet, and get killed, and lose it all." And said, "I believe I'll see if I can slip out of here." Said, "I've got five hundred in my pocket now, off of getting the wild hog." So, he got to trying to slip out and the unicorn smelled him. And that horn on the end of its forehead, it 'gin to size at him; and he got to dodging this way and that way, behind a tree, and finally the unicorn got worried so, till it made a dive and just centered the big tree and stuck that horn plumb through it, and wedged it. And so, Jack took a switch and whipped it, to see if it could get loose. And said it was so big till it was nearly a-grubbing that big tree. And said he decided he better not switch it much, and just hurry on to the king.

And so, he went on to the king. And the king said, "Did you see anything?" He said, "Gosh," he said, "I got up there, just a little while where you let me off," and said, "something come at... got with me that," said, "it looked like a horse, kindly, but," said, "it had a little old horn of a spike on its forehead." And said, "Me and hit got to playing a little bit." And said, "It got to sizing at me, like it was wanting to hurt me." And said, "I just grabbed it up by its head and tail and stove that through a tree and wedged it, to hold it there." Said, "You can take your men and see if that's what it is."

And so he went, and the men, and they wouldn't get near hit to shoot it. And Jack took a sight on it and, said, when he shot it, it was so big that it grubbed that tree when it fell. And they skinned hit out and got its hide and saved it and went back. And the king paid him off and Jack started home — and was glad of it. Had a thousand dollars and he was out of it.

And so, he hadn't got around the road but a little ways till the men of the community had sent in word that they was a lion had got out. And said the king said, "Huh," said, "great goodness!" he said. "Why couldn't you have come a little earlier?" (Here, Ray leaned away from the microphone to toss a cigarette into the stove.) Said, "My man that killed the unicorn and the hog has



done gone. I've paid him off. But," he said, "it could be, now, I could overtake him."

Well, so, Jack seed he could make a raise there, on that. And the king overtook him and he says, "Oh, great..." he said, "they said there's a lion out." And he said, "You're the man for it!" And says, "A-doing — killing people and around the — been around the courthouse." And Jack says, "Well," he says, "I don't know that I'll go back for what I done the other for." Well, the king says, "I'll give you a thousand... a thousand." Said, "I'll boost it five." And Jack took him up, and the king took him where they told him they'd seed it. And so Jack says, "Now, me with a thousand in my little ragged pocket, I'd better — a lion!" He says, "Now, that's awful, to tackle a wild lion." He says, "I better see if I can certainly slip out of here!"

So Jack got to trying to slip out and the lion heard him. And said it roared so big it started rock a-rolling off of the mountain when it smelt him. And come on, and getting so close he had to climb a great big old poplar tree. And so he clumb it, and the lion begin to gnaw — gnawing, trying to gnaw it down. It was so big till the lion give out in its jaws and laid down and went to sleep. And didn't lack but about a third of having it down where it would fall.

And so, Jack's heart, he said, was a-beating in his neck. Decided he'd better see if he could slip down and get out over that lion while it was asleep. So he started slipping down the tree and got his foot on a brickle limb and started sliding and hit right on the lion's back, and woke him up, and excited the lion, and he just started out running with Jack on his back. And run and got in around the courthouse, and they was a-having court. And Jack... they got out word to the king's men that Jack was in there on the lion and couldn't get off, and a-running around there, and had them all scared to death.

And so, the king's men got there before the king got there. And they kept on trying to get a shot and get the lion, to keep from hitting Jack. And, finally at last, they got a aim and shot the lion. And he was running so fast till when they shot it, it stoved Jack's shoulder and head in the ground. And by that time the king had got there.

And Jack rose up off, a-brushing the mud off. He said, "King," he said, "now look what your men is done!" He says, "What do you mean?" He says, "I had that lion trained for you a ridey-horse." And said, "They've had to up and shoot it!" And he said, "You'd a-looked big, a-riding around over the community, the country, over your people, a-riding a lion," said, "place of a horse!" Said, "I had that trained for you a ridey-horse!" And says, "These men has shot it."

And the king flew mad off of it, and he says, "All right, now, men," he says, "I would a-looked big." Said, "It's just like Jack said." Said, "I'd a-liked to rid that." And said, "You men has got to boost Jack five hundred for shooting that lion." And so, they boosted it five hundred, and that made him two thousand and five hundred dollars. And said him and his mother then lived pretty good for awhile off of that.



JACK AND OLD FIRE DRAGON  
(Tale Type 301A)

This one is about Jack and Tom and Will — of old Fire Dragon that spit balls of fire. And Jack's dad had a great big track of land, owned it. So, he give it to Jack and Tom and Will to clear; give 'em the land and made 'em a deed for it, to clear and start clearing it theirselves. And so, they got up a wagon-load of vittles and went where it was at and built 'em a... notched 'em up a shanty to stay in. And so, they knowed that the next... that when they got ready to clear it, that they'd have to leave, uh, leave one till twelve — and he could help, then, after twelve — to cook dinner. So they left Will the first time.

And Jack and Tom cleared, and Will got dinner and rung the dinner... blowed the dinner horn. And, just when he blowed it, up out of a holler come old Fire Dragon, up with his pipe in his mouth, and come in at the door. And just come on in. And Will had the dinner set on the table, and he come in and never said a word to Will. And Will was so scared he hid behind the door. And Fire Dragon eat every bite, sopped the dish, and went back through in by the fireplace and got the biggest chunk of fire that he could find and stuffed it down in his pipe and went off.

And Jack and Tom got to the house, come in, and says — Will shot out from behind the door — says, "Where is the dinner, Will?" Says, "Hain't you cooked no dinner?" He says, "Gosh!" Says, "If you'd a-seed what I seed," said, "you wouldn't want no dinner!" And they 'gin to laugh, and Will says, "All right, laughing's catching," he says. "Tom," says, "tomorrow'll be your turn." And so they fixed up a little, right quick, extra, then, and eat it, and went back and cleared that evening. And the next day they left Tom to get dinner, clean up, till twelve. And Will and Jack was a-clearing till twelve.

And so, Tom got dinner and blowed the horn, and up come old Fire Dragon. And just come in and never said a word — and Tom hid — and eat every bite and sopped the pot. And went through by the fireplace and got the biggest coal of fire he could find and put it in his pipe. And Jack and Will come in, and Tom shot out. And says, "Where's the dinner, Tom?" He says, "Gosh!" He says, "Tom's right!" (Here, of course, Ray meant to say "Will's right!") Says, "Jack, don't laugh!" Says, "Tomorrow'll be your turn." Says, "Great..." says, "you won't want no dinner when you see that!" And he says, "He went in by the fireplace, after he eat up all the eating, and got the biggest coal of fire he could get," Tom said. And he said, "When he put it in that pipe and puffed it a few puffs," said, "it looked like a steam-engine took off with the blowers on!" Well, they fixed up a little, right quick, and eat 'em a little bite extra, and all went back that evening and cleared. And said, "Jack, now tomorrow'll be your turn."

Well, so, they left Jack the next day and Jack fixed dinner and cleaned up and went to setting it on the table, and he blowed the dinner horn. And, while he was scooping out of a kettle a mess of beans, he looked out and there come old Fire Dragon, with his arms crossed behind him.

And just as he come to the door, he (Jack) said, "Hello there, Dad!" Says, "Is you hungry?" Said, "Nope." Said, "Don't want a bite." 'Cause Jack offered it to him, he didn't want none. Said, "Yeah, Dad," says, "just get you a seat in there in the fireplace." And says, "I'm a-setting it on the table now." Says, "Will and Tom will be here in just a few minutes." Said, "I blowed the dinner horn."

Said, "Nope," said, "I don't want a bite." Said, "I just stopped by to



light my pipe." He said he went in and got the biggest chunk, a great big stick of wood, too, Jack said, and stuffed it way down in his pipe. And said that beat any cloud of smoke, when he give that a few puffs, he ever seed in his life. And said he just struck out behind him then; follered him by the smoke down through a wilderness, way down in a holler.

And while he had gone, Jack had... while Jack was gone, Will and Tom come in and said, "Good gracious!" Says, "The dinner's on the table." Said, "He's eat Jack this time!" Said, "Boys, we've done lost Jack!" Said, "He's eat him." Said, "The dinner's on the table."

Well, so Jack come in, directly. They said, "Where you been?" Says, "We thought he'd eat you up, account of dinner on the table." He said, "No." Says, "I called him 'Dad,'" and said, "tried to get him to stay and get him a chair in the fire-setting room and wait, and was setting it on the table." And said, "I found out where he went." Says, "He went down there, way down in the wilderness of that holler." And said, "He went in a hole in the ground."

And so they eat then and 'gin to rig up to find out what was in there. And they eat and fixed 'em a basket out of splits and took and made 'em a rope out of hickory bark and went down to the hole. And they let Will down first. And they fixed it... Will... if that Will hit any trouble, he was to shake the rope of the hickory bark. And so, just hadn't went down but just a few feet till Will shook it and they snaked him back out just as fast as they could, and they says, "What did you see, Will?" He said, "I seed a house under there." And so they put Tom in it then, and let him down, and he was gone down just a little longer and he shook it, and they jerked him out and says, "Tom, what did you see?" He said, "I seed a house and barn." And so they put Jack in then and let him down, and Jack let 'em let on down till he hit on the top of the roof. And he let it ease on down and he slid off of the eaves. And he let it ease on down in the yard.

And so he got out of the basket and went and pecked on the door. And a girl come, the oldest girl, which he didn't know it, when he pecked. And he says, "Howdy." And she was so pretty till he just started in talking courting right when he seed her. And she says, "Oh," says, "don't do that!" Said, "The second room you come to," said, "has got one in it prettier than I am." And so Jack went on in and seed her and she was so much prettier till the first word he spoke was courting, wanting to court. And she says, "Oh, don't do that!" She said, "The third one, in the third room," she said, "is a beauty!" Said, "She's the prettiest one of the bunch." So Jack went on in and seed her, and he just got to talking about getting married, she was so pretty.

And so, she 'posed to him and tied a ribbon in her hair, and she put a wishing ring on his finger. And so, told him that the Fire Dragon was a-coming back any minute. And said, "Here's some ointment." Said, "If he hits you with any of them fire-balls," says, "they burn a streak!" And says, "Here's a sword," said, "is all that'll hurt him is a silver sword."

Well, so Jack took the ointment and, in just a few minutes, the Fire Dragon come in and seed him and 'gin to make at him and spit them fire-balls. Said it was a sight to see them sparkle over the floor. And he dodged him around and some would glance him and burn him, and he's rub that ointment right quick, and try to get a lick with that sword. And said, directly, he got a lick and just swiped his head slick off.

Well, he them fixed up to get the girls out of there. And he put the first one in the basket, that he met when he knocked on the door, and sent her up — or shook the hickory rope and they pulled it up. And Will and Tom got to jarring off of it. Said, "This one's mine!" Tom would say, "This one's mine! Boy, ain't



she purty? This one's mine!" And the other would say, "This one's mine!" Directly she says, "Don't do that." Says, "The next one is a-coming is prettier yet than I am." And so they shoved the basket back down in quick as they could, and Jack put the second one in it and shook the hickory rope and they flounced her out, and he heard 'em a-raring over her. And said Will said, "Good gosh! Don't you put your hands on her; that one's mine!" Tom said, "Don't you touch her; that one's mine!" She says, "Oh," says, don't do that." Says, "The third one, the last one that's down there, is a beauty." Said, "She's the top."

And so they shoved the basket down as quick as they could, and that was Jack's — they'd done 'posed to be married and had the ribbon in her hair. And so Jack put her in the basket. And Will and Tom, she was so much prettier, they got to fighting around over her. And she says, "Don't fight." Says, "I'm done supposed to be married to Jack." They said, "Well," — just pitched the hickory rope and the basket right back down in the hole — and said, "let the rascal stay down in there." And said, "He'll not get you."

And so they took and went back to the new ground shanty. And Jack stayed in there and eat all the rations up that the Fire Dragon had, he thought. And he stayed a week or two. And, directly, he got to getting weak, and he hunted around and he found a few more bites to eat, a little more. And he got to feeling so weak, till he looked down and... looking at his fingers to see how much he'd fell off, what time he'd been down in there. And he looked, and his fingers was fell off, and that made him notice the ring. Hit was so loose it would fall off his fingers, from the time he'd been in there. And that made him think about the ring, and he said, "I wish that I was home with my mother, a-setting in the chimley-corner, a-smoking my old 'kachuckety' (?) pipe." And said, just as the words got out of his mouth, there he was a-setting, and his mother a-talking to him. She said, "Jack," she said, "looks like you ought to be to the new ground a-helping Tom and Will clear." He says, "Bedad, that's where I'm started!"

And so, he got on up there and they had the three girls and was still a-fighting over them. And so, him and the youngest one, the prettiest one, married — that had put the ring on his finger — and the ribbon was in her hair yet. And her and Jack married, and Tom married the next one to her, and Jack... ah... Will had to take the oldest. And the last time that I was around there, they'd built more shanties and they was a-doing well.

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WHICKETY-WHACK, INTO MY SACK  
(Tale Types 330 & 332)

This is one where he went to the army, and he spent thirty years. And, at that time, all you got was — when they discharged you — was two loaves of light bread. And they discharged him, and give him his two loaves of light bread, and he started coming in home. And he got in a little old town, and he met a beggar. And this beggar was a-begging him for something to eat, and he just give him one of them whole loaves of light bread. And went on, and hadn't went but just a little ways, till he met another. And so, he begged him for hit. And he just cut it open in half, and went on and got down a little ways and got to studying that he'd cheated that last one, that he'd give the first one a whole loaf. And he run back and overtook him and he says, "Here, I cheated you." He says, "I met a beggar before I met you, and I had two loaves, and I give him a whole loaf." And said, "Here's the other half."

And the beggar says, "Thank you." And he said, "Being you was so honest," says, "I'm going to give you something." Said, "Here's a sack." Said, "Anything



that you need, or bothering you, or anything that you need," said, "just say 'whickety-whack, into my sack.'" And says, "Here's a drinking glass." And says, "Get it a third or half full of water," and said, "if the blubbers (bubbles) is to the bottom," says, "they're going to die." And says, "If they come to the top, they're going to live."

And so, Jack thanked him and went on his way. And he got in a... on up late in the evening... and he got in a kind of a bunch of woods where it was wild turkeys. And he seed twelve wild turkeys a-setting up in a tree; and he said, "Bedad," he says, "right here is a good time to try that sack out." And he got it down atween his legs and looked up at the turkeys and said, "Whickety-whack," says, "come down into this sack." And said it was a sight to watch them turkeys crowd down in there — twelve big ones. And he just shut it up and slung it across his back, and come on and got in another little old town. And it was a-getting up in the night, and he seed he had to stay over. And he was hungry and tired. And he went into a hotel and showed 'em them turkeys. And he made a deal with them to give 'em the turkeys, and they give him fifteen cents to boot and kept him all night.

And so, next morning, he started on to come on home. And finally he got on in home. And stayed around awhile and, directly, there was a man in that settlement had a big farm, so many acres of land. It was haunted. Ghosties was about to run him off of his other place. And so he put out word, if it was any man in that country that would whip them ghosties out, he'd deed him the house and land, make him a clear deed for it. So Jack got out one day, inquiring and finding out about it, and finally he found him. And he told him, yeah, that was right, that he'd put that out. And so Jack took him up.

And he took some vittles and went to the house where the man took him... fireplace... and fixed up. And it got to getting up dark and he fixed his supper and eat, and decided he'd lay down aside of the fireplace, the firelight, and take him a good rest and a nap. And he hadn't laid there but just a few minutes till he heared something a-coming down the stairs. And it come on down, and it was six little black devils, had a bag of money apiece and a deck of cards. And they roused Jack up and they got to playing poker. And Jack had that fifteen cents that he'd got out of the boot with the turkeys. And they got to playing and, finally, at three games — yeah, three games — he lost all but one nickel. And he had that nickel and they was looking at his hole card. And he watched careful and got one pot and 'gin to gain and then, directly, he broke 'em up. And they got to making at him with a sword apiece. And he jumped around and dodged 'em, and thought they had him, but he happened to think of that sack over in the corner. And he jumped and grabbed it and said, "Whickety-whack, into my sack!" And said it was a sight to see them little black devils go down in there. And he shut it up and went to sleep then.

And the next morning the man come up, just knowing certain he was gone, and he says, "What did you find out?" He says, "It's a-laying over there in that sack." And he told him then, he says, "It's six little black devils shut up in there." And the man was in such a eager till he said, "I want to see them beat up on the blacksmith's anvil!" And says, "They've a blacksmith right down the holler yonder, to a place." And so, him and Jack went on down there and got the man that run the blacksmith shop out to hammer 'em up on the anvil. And said when he 'gin to hammer, so many sparks flew out of 'em it set the blacksmith shop on fire and burnt it down.

Well, so Jack got the deed for the land and 'gin to stay there and work on the place. And finally the king of that country's daughter was sick, and death was on her. And he'd had... he'd done had all the doctors of that country be-headed because they couldn't cure his daughter. And so Jack, one day, decided that he'd, uh, go up, hunt him up and see him and he'd take a... see if he could



do her any good. So he went to the king's house and hollered the king out, and the king says, "What's you here for?" He says, "I hear that you had out word if any man could cure your daughter the money wasn't a-lacking, and, if he couldn't cure, you beheaded him." And so he said, "Yeah, but," he says, "you look like that you couldn't do a job like that." "Well," he says, "bedad," he says, "I might look like that, but you said anybody, or any man, that you put out in the news." So he says, "Well," he says, "that's right. I'll have to give you a try."

And so Jack went in, and he sent one of 'em to get that glass about a third or half full of water. And they brought it to him and he looked, and the blubbers was to the bottom. Death was on her. So he got his sack down beside of the bed. Said, "Whickety-whack," says, "Death, come down in this sack!" And Death went down in the sack and he shut it up. And the girl, his daughter, just jumped up and went to jumping over the floor, a-praising. And so the king tried to pay him and he wouldn't take nothing. And he went back and got some boys to climb that tree, big poplar was in the yard, and tied the sack up in it. And it went on and on and on, they didn't know how long it'd went, and nobody couldn't die.

So, finally at last, Jack, one day, decided he'd take a little walk around the road. And he hadn't went but a little ways till he heared something a-coming around a turn — rickety-rack, bumpety-bump; rickety-rack, bumpety-bump. And he got on around and it was an old woman, just went to bones and hide. And her bones was a-reaking(?) as she walked, and her nose a-bumping on her knees. And he says, "Howdy-do, ma'am?" Says, "Howdy-do?" She says, "Law me," she says, "I can't get around no more." Says, "I'm so poor, I've just went to bones and hide." And says, "I've been a-living," said, "it seems like a million years." And says, "I can't die!" And says, "I've heared some blame rascal had Death tied up in a sack." And said, "We can't die!"

And so that made Jack think, and he went back and got some boys... another young boy to climb up... in another generation... to climb up and get the sack out of the poplar and brought it down to him. And they said when, uh, when Jack opened it, he was the first one that fell dead.

And that was the end of Jack, in that tale. He died in that one.

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COLLECTOR'S NOTE:

The collector/editor has not attempted to analyze the four traditional tales heard on this record. Such a task would require the skills of a specialist in the various forms of the folk tale, skills which he, unfortunately, does not possess. However, the index numbers, as established in the work of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson (*The Types of the Folktale*; FF Communications LXXV No: 84; Helsinki, 1961) have been noted beneath the title of each tale. Those interested in exploring the incredibly wide-spread occurrence of similar tales in cultures other than our own are urged to consult their work. Further, it should be pointed out that motifs which appear throughout these tales are common in orally transmitted literature the world over. These motifs have been classified and indexed in Thompson's revision of the *Motif Index of Folk Literature* (Indiana University, 1932-1936), although no attempt to identify them has been made here.

For a splendid and thoroughly readable study of the folk tales of the world, see Stith Thompson's *The Folktale* (New York, 1951).

Sandy Paton



#### A NOTE ON RAY HICKS' SPEECH

Ray Hicks' speech, except for glottal stops peculiar to certain families living on Beech Mountain in North Carolina, is as pure Southern Appalachian speech as one is likely to find. Essentially unchanged since the eighteenth century, speech in the Appalachians differs considerably from Southern speech.

Notable characteristics of mountain speech are the emphasis on *r*; the high, forward placement of the diphthong *ou*; the fracturing of short *u*, as in *cup*; the use of short *i* instead of short *e* preceding *m* and *n*; and the fracturing of short *a*, as in *that*. Vowels and diphthongs preceding *r* tend to become blended immediately with *r*, especially in such words as *there*, *bear*, *hair*, *where*, and *fire*, which become *thar*, *bar*, *har*, *whur*, and *far*. In narrative speech there is a rising inflection at the end of a phrase. Speech becomes more melodious by the free use of contractions, elisions, and ultimate stress in such words as *judgement* (*jedgemint*); or, by unstress, insertion *a*, and frequent use of "says" and "said." Strong past tenses of verbs are generally preferred, but such verbs as *caught* (*ketched*), *heard* (*hyeered* or *hyurd*), *tached*, *see-ed*, *blowed*, and *drowed* often occur.

Idiomatic constructions, figures of speech, and rhetorical devices are those of oral tradition. The unselfconscious mountaineer, without inhibitions concerning grammar and diction, telling a folk tale for the sake of the tale, and at the same time using English that would have sounded familiar to George Washington and Daniel Boone, is unique today. Ray Hicks, who stands at the end of a tradition, is just such a mountaineer.

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# A NOTE ON SAY HICKS' SPEECH

Say Hicks' speech, except for glottal stops peculiar to certain families living on South Mountain in North Carolina, is as pure Southern Appalachian speech as one is likely to find. Essentially unchanged since the eighteenth century, speech in the Appalachian hills is considerably from Southern speech.

Notable characteristics of mountain speech are the emphasis on r; the high, forward placement of the tongue on; the treatment of short a, as in cup; the use of short i instead of short e preceding n and m; and the treatment of short e, as in chest. Vowels and diphthongs preceding r tend to become diphthongs, especially in such words as show, hair, wait, west, and like, which become shaw, har, wair, and far. In narrative speech there is a rising inflection at the end of a phrase. Speech becomes more melismatic by the use of contractions, ellipses, and omissions in such words as judge, most (judging), or, by vocatives, insertion a, and frequent use of "aye" and "said." Among past tenses of verbs are generally preferred, but such verbs as canned (canned), named (named or named), treated, sawed, and drawn often occur.

Idiosyncratic contractions, figures of speech, and rhetorical devices are those of oral tradition. The vocabulary is mountainous, without linguistic concern for grammar and rhetoric, telling a folk tale for the sake of the tale, and at the same time using English that would have sounded familiar to George Washington and Daniel Boone, in earlier days. Say Hicks, who stands at the end of a tradition, is just such a mountaineer.

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