

Amy Titus

Sandy, Utah

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“Potato Soup”

Genre: Material and Narrative Culture

Informant: Elvina Hansen is the proud mother of two, one girl and one boy. She is also a grandmother of eight, and the great grandmother of four. She is 81 years old and has been retired for many years. She loves to garden and do genealogy. She is a pack rat by nature and hates to see anything that is good for something be thrown away, even if she herself will never use it. She has lived in the greater Salt Lake area her entire life. It is often said, “If you ever leave her house hungry, it’s your own damn fault.”

Context: I interviewed Elvina at her house. We were sitting down in the living room with a few lamps on discussing recipes. There were boxes and recipes scattered on the coffee table. The house was completely quiet except for the noise that we were making looking through old recipes. Elvina began recalling recipes that she made for her children while they were growing up.

Text: “When I got married to Ted we didn’t own one thing. I found a pan set that I wanted very much, it cost \$19.00 I told my mother-in-law that I was in need of some pans, I asked her to purchase the pans for me and that I could slowly pay her back with the money I was making. She agreed and slowly but surely I paid her back for the pans. These pans were the cast iron heavy aluminum I’m sure now days they would tell you that stuff would kill you, but there was this one particular pan in that set that I would make potato soup in. After my divorce of Ted I moved in with my mother, Dale and Gay were kids and times were very lean—I made a potato soup from scratch for them and my mother. My cousin who lived a block away would show up to have some, saying; “she could smell it way up at her house.” To this day Gay keeps after me to make it again, and I guess I’ll try, though I might have “gone and lost the knack.”

Potato Soup

Potatoes- put them in a pot and cook them until they are mush

Onions-lots of them

Water enough to cover the potatoes

Green pepper-not too much

Salt- to taste

Canned milk-make sure that you end with a creamy consistency

Pepper- to taste

Texture: As Elvina told me this story she seemed to be reminiscing about the hard times that she went through in her lifetime. She said that she was not quite sure what she did with that pot and thinks that it was a big part of the reason that the soup turned out so good. She seemed to be thoughtful of these past moments and took a lot of time in between each sentence she spoke, probably recollecting the facts and thinking about those experiences.

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USU

English 2210

Dr. Lynne S. McNeil

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