



中国对外翻译出版公司

• 英语注释读物 •

# 美国人谈美国

(原名: *WORKING*)

〔美〕 Studs Terkel 著

王槐挺、徐存尧、陶朔玉 注释

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1982年7月

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中国对外翻译出版公司出版

(北京太平桥大街 4 号)

新华书店北京发行所发行

北京新华印刷厂印刷

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787×1092 1/32 10 3/4 印张

1982 年 7 月第 1 版 1983 年 5 月北京第 2 次印刷

统一书号: 90220·8 定价: 1.15 元

## 出版说明

本书作者斯特兹·特克尔 (Studs Terkel) 1912 年生于纽约市, 后随父母迁往芝加哥。他在芝加哥大学法学院毕业后, 曾先后当过广播剧演员、唱片节目广播员、电视节目主持人等, 并在芝加哥广播电台多年从事广播采访工作。

特克尔是美国当代著名作家。本书是他的第三部著作, 出版之后, 也和前两部著作一样, 很快就成了畅销书, 被人称为真实纪录真人真事的“纪实杰作”。

这个选本的篇幅约为原书的三分之一, 所选各篇基本上保留了原作的面貌, 只是对编辑体例和个别字句做了一些改变和删节。由于本书是用口语写成的, 不规范的说法很多, 所以我们在注释时, 只对疑难字句和背景知识做了些解释, 各种语法问题一般就不注了。

# 介绍一本口头文学的作品

## ——本书代序

王佐良

几年前，一个由参加过西班牙内战的国际纵队美国林肯营老战士组成的参观团来我国访问的时候，有人问他们近来美国出了什么好书，他们推荐了特克尔的《工作着》(Studs Terkel: *Working*, 1972)。

作者和书对我们都是陌生的。等到后来看到了书，才知道作者是有心人，书也确实不凡。

不凡在哪里？

第一，这里展现出的当代美国人民生活和工作的情景，不是仅仅看几本时事杂志和流行小说所能知道的。作者花了三年时间，访问了各种职业的美国人，看他们每天在干什么，有些什么想法，然后根据访问时的谈话录音，整理而成本书。这些人当中包括汽车厂工人(黑人白人都有)，墨西哥族的农业工人，民航机上的女服务员，大公司总经理的私人女秘书，律师，汽车推销员，电影评论员，摄影师和摄影师的“模特儿”，专门为钢琴调音的工人，专门尽义务替图书馆修理、装订名贵旧书的教授夫人，专门为附近穷人免费烤面包的“面包合作社”经理，还有一个几十年为附近居民勤勤恳恳地服务，深为他们热爱的药房小伙计。

第二，这本书代表了一种新的文学类型。英美等国广播和电视盛行，其中多的是乌七八糟的东西，但也偶尔有个别广播剧、电视剧、访问记、专题节目等内容较好(或是揭示了社会生活

中前所不知的一面，或是发掘现实较深，或是作者的眼光较锐利，见解较新颖），手法上有所创新，而语言上又体现日常口语的生动、风趣、现实感，于是形成一种口头文学。这种新型口头文学的兴起，正是当代英语文学的一个特色。

第三，对于有志学习和研究当代英语口语的人，这本书提供了难得的材料。口语体材料眼下还是不多的，而且主要是会话之类，内容往往平淡琐屑，场合是虚拟的，篇幅也过短，编写人的斧凿痕太明显。然而在这本书里，我们却能接触到大量的活的美国口语，说话的人来自许多阶层，许多职业，场合与语言都是自然的，又是多样的，因此这里的口语包罗较广，所体现的口语体的特点也较多。

——节自《英语学习》1978年第2期

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## TERRY PICKENS (Newsboy)

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Cliff's<sup>①</sup> brother. He is fourteen. He has a **Prince Valiant haircut**<sup>②</sup>. He is **Newburgh's**<sup>③</sup> leading collector of rock recordings as well as its most avid reader of science fiction. There are fifty-seven customers on his paper route, yet it takes him considerably longer to get his work done than Cliff or Billy. "I ride the bike all over the place. I go both sides of the street. **Cliff hasn't got any hills.**<sup>④</sup> *Mine's all hills.*"

I've been having trouble collecting. I had one woman hid from me once. I had another woman tell her kids to tell me she wasn't home. He says. "Mom, newsboy." She says (whispers), "Tell him I'm not home." I could hear it from the door. I came back in half an hour and she paid me. She's not a **dead-beat**<sup>⑤</sup>. They'll pay you if you get 'em. Sometimes you have to wait...

If I don't catch 'em at home, I get pretty mad. That means I gotta come back and come back and come back and come back until I catch 'em. Go around about nine o'clock at night and seven o'clock in the morning. This one guy owed me four dollars. He got real mad at me for comin' around at ten o'clock. Why'd

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①Cliff 是 Terry Pickens 的弟弟,也是个报童。

②下缘剪齐的一种发型,看上去象带着顶瓜皮帽,所以又称 basin haircut。

③地名,在 Indiana 州。

④=Cliff hasn't got any hills on his route.

⑤赖帐的人。

I come around so late? He probably was mad 'cause I caught him home. But he paid me. I don't care whether he gets mad at me, just so I get paid.

I like to have money. It's nice to have money once in a while instead of being **flat broke**① all the time. Most of my friends are usually flat broke. I spent \$150 this summer. On nothing—candy, cokes, games of pool, games of pinball. We went to **McDonald's**② a couple of times. I just bought anything I wanted. I wonder where the money went. I have nothing to show for it. I'm like a gambler, the more I have, the more I want to spend. That's just the way I am.

It's supposed to be such a great deal. The guy, when he came over and asked me if I wanted a route, he made it sound so great. Seven dollars a week for hardly any work at all. And then you find out the guy told you a bunch of **bull**③. You mistrust the people. You mistrust your customers because they don't pay you sometimes.

Then you get mad at the people at the printing corporation. You're supposed to get fifty-seven papers. They'll send me forty-seven or else they'll send me sixty-seven. Sunday mornings they get mixed up. Cliff'll have ten or eleven extras and I'll be ten or eleven short. That happens all the time. The printers, I don't think they care. They make all these stupid mistakes at least once a week. I think they're half-asleep or something. I do my job, I don't see why they can't do theirs. I don't like my job any more than they do.

Sunday morning at three—that's when I get up. I stay up later so I'm tired. But the dark doesn't bother me. I run into things sometimes, though. Somebody's dog'll come out and about

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①身无分文，一贫如洗。

②美国的一家汉堡包联号商店。

③= bullshit, rubbish, nonsense.

give you a heart attack.① There's this one woman, she had two big German **shepherds**,② great big old things, like three or four feet tall. One of 'em won't bite you. He'll just run up, charging, bark at you, and then he'll go away. The other one, I didn't know she had another one—when it bit me. This dog came around the bush. (Imitates barking.) When I turned around, he was at me. He bit me right there (indicates scar on leg). It was bleeding a little. I gave him a real dirty look.

He ran over to the other neighbor's lawn and tried to keep me from gettin' in there. I walked up and delivered the paper. I was about ready to beat the thing's head in or kill it. Or something with it. I was so mad. I called up that woman and she said the dog **had all its shots**③ and "I don't believe he bit you." I said, "Lady, he bit me." Her daughter **started giving me the third degree**④ "What color was the dog?" "How big was it?" "Are you sure it was our yard and our dog?" Then they saw the dogs weren't in the pen.

First they told me they didn't think I needed any shots. Then they said they'd pay for the doctor. I never went to the doctor. It wasn't bleeding a whole lot. But I told her if I ever see that dog again, she's gonna have to get her papers from somebody else. Now they keep the dog penned up and it barks at me and everything. And I give it a dirty look.

There's a lot of dogs around here. I got this other dog, a little black one, it tried to bite me too. It lunged at me, ripped my pants, and missed me. (With the glee of **W. C. Fields**⑤) I kicked it *good*. It still chases me. There are two black dogs. The other

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①吓你一大跳。

②牧羊狗。

③打过(预防狂犬病的)针。

④开始盘问起我来了。

⑤美国的一个滑稽演员。

one I've kicked so many times that it just doesn't bother me any more. I've kicked his face in once when he was biting my leg. Now he just stays under the bushes and growls at me. I don't bother to give him a dirty look.

There were these two other dogs. They'd always run out in the street and chase me. I kicked them. They'd come back and I'd kick 'em again. I don't have any problems with 'em any more, because they got hit chasin' cars. They're both dead.

I don't like many of my customers, 'cause they'll **cuss**<sup>①</sup> me if they don't get their papers just exactly in the right place. This one guy cussed me up and down for about fifteen minutes. I don't want to repeat what he called me. All the words, just up and down. He told me he drives past all those **blank**<sup>②</sup> drugstores on his blank way home and he could stop off at one of 'em and get a blank newspaper. And I'm just a blank convenience.

I was so mad at him. I hated his guts. I felt like taking a lead pipe to him or something. But I kept my mouth shut, 'cause I didn't know if the press guy'd get mad at me and I'd lose my route. You see, this guy could help me or he could hurt me. So I kept my mouth shut.

A lot of customers are considerate but a lot of 'em aren't. Lot of 'em act like they're doing you such a favor taking the paper from you. It costs the same dime at a drugstore. Every time they want you to do something they threaten you: (imitates nasty, nasal voice) "Or I'll quit."

What I really can't stand: you'll be collecting and somebody'll come out and start telling you all their problems. "I'm going to visit my daughter today, yes, I am. She's twenty-two, you know." "Look here, I got all my sons home, see the army

---

① = curse.

② blank 即——符号，用以代替骂人的话。blank drugstores 也写成——drugstores。

uniforms?" They'll stand for like half an hour. I got two or three like that, and they always got something to say to me. I'll have like two hours wasted listening to these people blabbin' before they pay me. Mmm, I don't know. Maybe they're lonely. But they've got a daughter and a son, why do they have to blab in my ear?

**A lot of the younger customers have had routes<sup>①</sup> and they know how hard it is, how mean people are. They'll be nicer to you. They tend to tip you more. And they don't blab all day long. They'll just pay you and smile at you. The younger people frequently offer me a coke or something.**

Older people are afraid of me, a lot of them. The first three, four weeks—(muses) they seemed so afraid of me. They think I'm gonna rob 'em or something. It's funny. You wouldn't think it'd be like this in a small town, would you? They're afraid I'm gonna beat 'em up, take their money. They'd just reach through the door and give me the money. Now they know you so well, they invite you in and blab in your ear for half an hour. It's one or the other. I really don't know why they're afraid. I'm not old, so I wouldn't know how old people feel.

Once in a while I come home angry, most of the time just **crabby<sup>②</sup>**. Sometimes kids steal the paper out of people's boxes. I lose my profits. It costs me a dime. The company isn't responsible, I am. The company wouldn't believe you probably that somebody stole the paper.

**I don't see where being a newsboy and learning that people are pretty mean or that people don't have enough money to buy things with is gonna make you a better person or anything.<sup>③</sup> If anything,**

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①不少年轻的订户,从前都干过送报的活儿。

②=cranky, ill-tempered.

③意思是:当个报童,你就知道了,现在的人是又小气,又缺钱。可知道这又有什么出息呢。

it's gonna make a worse person out of you, 'cause you're not gonna like people that don't pay you. And you're not gonna like people who act like they're doing you a big favor paying you. Yeah, it sort of molds your character, but I don't think for the better. If anybody told me being a newsboy builds character. I'd know he was a liar.

I don't see where people get all this bull about the kid who's gonna be President and being a newsboy made a President out of him. It taught him how to handle his money and this bull. You know what it did? It taught him how to hate the people on his route. And the printers. And dogs.

## CARL MURRAY BATES (Stonemason)

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*We're in a tavern no more than thirty yards from the banks of the Ohio.<sup>①</sup> Toward the far side of the river, Alcoa<sup>②</sup> smokestacks belch forth: an uneasy coupling of a bucolic past and an industrial present. The waters are polluted, yet the jobs out there offer the townspeople their daily bread.*

*He is fifty-seven years old. He's a stonemason who has pursued his craft since he was seventeen. None of his three sons is in his trade.*

As far as I know, masonry is older than carpentry, which goes clear back to Bible times. Stone mason goes back way before Bible time: the pyramids of Egypt, things of that sort. Any-

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①俄亥俄河。

②Aluminium Company of America(美国铝公司)的简称。

body that starts to build anything, stone, rock, or brick, start on the northeast corner. Because when they built King Solomon's Temple, they started on the northeast corner. To this day, you look at your courthouses, your big public buildings, you look at the cornerstone, when it was created, what year, it will be on the northeast corner. If I was gonna build a septic tank, I would start on the northeast corner. (Laughs.) Superstition, I suppose.

With stone we build just about anything. Stone is the oldest and best building material that ever was. Stone was being used even by the cavemen that put it together with mud. They built out of stone before they even used logs. He got him a cave, he built stone across the front. And he learned to use dirt, mud, to make the stones lay there without sliding around—which was the beginnings of mortar, which we still call mud. The Romans used mortar that's almost as good as we have today.

Everyone hears these things, they just don't remember 'em. But me being in the profession, when I hear something in that line, I remember it. Stone's my business. I, oh, sometimes talk to architects and engineers that have made a study and I pick up the stuff here and there.

Every piece of stone you pick up is different, the **grain's**① a little different and this and that. It'll split one way and break the other. You pick up your stone and look at it and make an educated guess. It's a pretty good day layin' stone or brick. Not tiring. Anything you like to do isn't tiresome. It's hard work; stone is heavy. At the same time, you get interested in what you're doing and **you usually fight the clock the other way.**② You're not lookin' for quittin'. You're wondering you haven't got enough done and it's almost quittin' time. (Laughs.) I ask the hod carri-

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①石头的纹理。

②你老是想教时间过得慢点。

er what time it is and he says two thirty. I say, "Oh, my Lord, I was gonna get a whole lot more than this."

I pretty well work by myself. On houses, usually just one works. I've got the hod carrier there, but most of the time I talk to myself, "I'll get my hammer and I'll knock the chip off there." (Laughs.) A good hod carrier is half your day. He won't work as hard as a poor one. He knows what to do and make every move count makin' the mortar. It has to be so much water, so much sand. His skill is to see that you don't run out of anything. The hod carrier, he's above the laborer. He has a certain amount of prestige.

I think a laborer feels that he's the low man. Not so much that he works with his hands, it's that he's at the bottom of the scale. He always wants to get up to a skilled trade. Of course he'd make more money. The main thing is the common laborer—even the word *common* laborer—just sounds so common, he's at the bottom. Many that works with his hands takes pride in his work.

I get a lot of phone calls when I get home: how about showin' me how and I'll do it myself? I always wind up doin' it for 'em. (Laughs.) So I take a lot of pride in it and I do get, oh, I'd say, a lot of praise or whatever you want to call it. I don't suppose anybody, however much he's recognized, wouldn't like to be recognized a little more. I think I'm pretty well recognized.

One of my sons is an accountant and the other two are bankers. They're mathematicians, I suppose you'd call 'em that. Air-conditioned offices and all that. They always look at the house I build. They stop by and see me when I'm aworkin'. Always want me to come down and fix somethin' on their house, too. (Laughs.) They don't buy a house that I don't have to look at it first. Oh sure, I've got to crawl under it and look on the roof, you know...

I can't seem to think of any young masons. So many of 'em

before, the man lays stone and his son follows his footsteps. Right now the only one of these sons I can think of is about forty, fifty years old.

I started back in the **Depression times**<sup>①</sup> when there wasn't any apprenticeships. You just go out and if you could hold your job, that's it. I was just a kid then. Now I worked real hard and carried all the blocks I could. Then I'd get my trowel and I'd lay one or two. The second day the boss told me: I think you could lay enough blocks to earn your wages. So I guess I had only one day of apprenticeship. Usually it takes about three years of being a hod carrier to start. And it takes another ten or fifteen years to learn the skill.

I admired the men that we had at that time that were stonemasons. They knew their trade. So naturally I tried to pattern after them. There's been very little change in the work. Stone is still stone, mortar is still the same as it was fifty years ago. The style of stone has changed a little. We use a lot more, we call it golf. A stone as big as a baseball up to as big as a basketball. Just round balls and whatnot. We just fit 'em in the wall that way.

Automation has tried to get in the bricklayer. Set 'em with a crane. I've seen several put up that way. But you've always got in-between the windows and this and that. It just doesn't seem to pan out. We do have a power saw. We do have an electric power mix to mix the mortar, but the rest of it's done by hand as it always was.

In the old days they all seemed to want it cut out and smoothed. It's harder now because you have no way to use your tools. You have no way to use a string, you have no way to use a level or a plumb. You just have to look at it because it's so rough and many irregularities. You have to just back up and look at it.

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①指 1929-1933 年的大萧条时期。