

PATSY MOSES, 74, was born in Fort Bend Co., Texas, a slave of the Armstrong family. She tells of charms and "conjure," many learned from ex-slaves. Patsy lives at Mart, Texas.

"I was born in Fort Bend County, about de year 1863. My daddy's old master by name of Armstrong brung my folks from Tennessee. My own daddy and mammy was named Preston and Lucy Armstrong. Mammy's grand-dad was Uncle Ned Butler, and he 'longed to Col. Butler, in Knoxville, in Tennessee. Old master sold he plantation and come to Texas jes' befo' freedom, 'cause nobody thunk dey'd have to free de slaves in Texas.

"My great grand-dad fit in de Rev'lutionary War and my own daddy fit in de war for freedom, with he master, for bodyguard. He had some fingers shot off in de battle and was tooken pris'ner by dem Yankees, but he run 'way and come back to he master and he master was wounded and come home. Den he moved to Texas befo' I's born.

"My old grand-dad done told me all 'bout conjure and voodoo and luck charms and signs. To dream of clear water lets you know you is on de right side of Gawd. De old voodoo doctors was dem what had de most power, it seem, over de nigger befo' and after de war. Dey has meetin' places in secret and a voodoo kettle and nobody know what am put in it, maybe snakes and spiders and human blood, no tellin' what. Folks all come in de dark of de moon, old doctor wave he arms and de folks crowd up close. Dem what in de voodoo strips to de waist and commence to dance while de drums beats. Dey dances faster and faster and chant and pray till dey falls down in a heap.

"De armour bearers hold de candles high and when dey sways and chants dey seize with power what sends dem leapin' and whirlin'. Den de

time dat old doctor work he spell on dem he wants to conjure. Many am de spell he casts dem days. Iffen he couldn't work it one way, he work it 'nother, and when he die, do he stay buried? No, sir! He walks de street and many seed he ghost wavin' he arms.

"De conjure doctor, old Dr. Jones, walk 'bout in de black coat like a preacher, and wear sideburns and uses roots and sich for he medicine. He larnt 'bout dem in de piney woods from he old granny. He didn't cast spells like de voodoo doctor, but uses roots for smallpox, and rind of bacon for mumps and sheep-wool tea for whoopin' cough and for snake bite he used alum and saltpeter and bluestone mix with brandy or whiskey.

"He could break conjure spells with broth. He take he kettle and put in splinters of pine or hickory, jes' so dey has bark on dem, covers dem with water and puts in de conjure salt.

"A good charm bag am make of red flannel with frog bones and a piece of snakeskin and some horse hairs and a spoonful of ashes. Dat bag perfect you from you enemy. Iffen dat bag left by de doorstep it make all kind misfortune and sicknesses and blindness and fits.

"De big, black nigger in de corn field mos' allus had three charms round he neck, to make him fort'nate in love, and to keep him well and one for Lady Luck at dice to be with him. Den if you has indigestion, wear a penny round de neck.

"De power of de rabbit foot am great. One nigger used it to run away with. His old granny done told him to try it and he did. He conjures hissself by takin' a good, soapy bath so de dogs can't smell him and den say a hoodoo over he rabbit

foot, and go to de creek and git a start by wadin'. Dey didn't miss him till he clear gone and dat show what de rabbit foot done for him.

"'O, Molly Cottontail,
Be sho' not to fail,
Give me you right hind foot,
My luck won't be for sale."

"De graveyard rabbit am de best, kilt by a cross-eyed pusson. De niggers all 'lieved Gen. Lee carried a rabbit foot with him. To keep de rabbit foot's luck workin', it good to pour some whiskey on it once in a while.

"If you has a horseshoe over you door, be sho' it from de left, hind foot of a white hoss, but a gray hoss am better'n none.

"Conjures am sot with de dark or light of de moon, to make things waste or grow. Iffen a hen crow, it best to wring her neck and bake her with cranberry sauce and gravy and forgit 'bout her crowin'. Everybody know dat.

"I larnt all dem spells from my daddy and mammy and de old folks, and most of dem things works iffen you tries dem.
