

Contact: Wesley William Chattman

Age 86

Address: Ashland, Wisconsin

Ethnic Groups: Scottish, Irish, English

Fieldworkers: Fred Leiberman
Matthew Gallmann

Date: May 15, 1979

ETHNIC HERITAGE
SOUND ARCHIVE & RESOURCE CENTER
NORTHLAND COLLEGE, ASHLAND, WI

I had become acquainted with Mr. Chattman through a set of circumstances involving a dog. Sue, a girl that is presently living at my same place of residence lost her dog. While asking the neighbors if they had any information concerning the whereabouts of her dog she met Mr. Chattman, who lives directly behind my house just across the alley. Mr. Chattman then made a neighborly gesture and came over to our house to offer his sympathy for the missing dog.

We welcomed Mr. Chattman into our home and he spent the afternoon telling my housemates and myself a variety of stories, mostly personal exploits. I found out that Mr. Chattman was 86 years old, Scottish, Irish and English. He told stories of being in WWI. Most interesting to me was the fact that he had once called square dances in the Sanborn, Wisconsin area.

Weeks had passed since I had enjoyed that Sunday afternoon with Mr. Chattman. (From here forward I will call Mr. Chattman by his first name Wesley since that is what I call him when him and myself interact). I had some vague plans to record Felix Milanowski, a Polish accordian player, on this day of May 15, 1979. I telephoned Felix at 5:30 today and he cancelled our plans. I wanted to conduct some sort of field work today because Dr. Fred Leiberman was here to guide and assist me. Thus, I thought that I should pay a visit to Wesley because I knew that he would be willing to spend some time with us regardless of such short notice.

I went over to Wesley's house at 6:15 p.m. to ask him if I could come over tonight. He didn't recognize me at first but he finally remembered the day he

spent at my house. He agreed to allow me to tape an interview and he welcomed me to come to his house this evening with a friend to talk about music of this area.

Wesley is very deaf and has trouble understanding other voices unless they are loud. I believe his eye sight is deteriorating as well. He is a short man of about 5'6". He has emphysema and thus is short winded. Although once he starts talking he will talk for hours. His eyes are blue and his face has whiskers here and there predominantly on his upper lip. His body shows typical signs of age such as wrinkles, grey hair, lack of muscle and fat.

I picked up Dr. Leiberman at the Lake Air Hotel in Ashland at 7:15 and then we proceeded directly to Wesley's home.

Wesley had us in and I introduced Dr. Leiberman simply as "Fred", my friend. Wesley asked for Fred's last name. Fred told Wesley that his last name was Leiberman and Wesley immediately asked him if he was Jewish. Fred simply stated "absolutely". Then Wesley said, "well that's alright". Then he told Dr. Leiberman that he used to "celebrate your day". Wesley explained that he had once been a Seventh Day Adventist who had Saturday as the holy day such as the Hebrew religion.

Wesley wasn't outright anti-semitic but he made me feel as if he was doing us a favor by accepting a person of Jewish descent into his home. He even took the time to tell us a story about a Jewish osteopath named Hoffman that once made his neck feel better. Apparently, Wesley fell off of the dock into the ice from 40 feet. It seemed funny that Wesley had a Christmas card from this Dr. Hoffman that he had received many years ago.

We all sat down in the living room. I'll take the time here to briefly describe the home. We entered into the side door of the house, considering the front as that part of the house that faces the road. The kitchen was the first room we entered. It was kept fairly well for a man of 86. I was surprised at the overall cleanliness of the house but I do believe that Wesley doesn't see

well enough to keep the house immaculate. The room directly off of the kitchen is Wesley's bedroom and bathroom. One must walk through the bedroom in order to enter the living room. The bedroom is in plain view while sitting in the living room. Wesley lives alone but he still keeps a double bed. He has a fairly new color T.V. and a new vacuum cleaner. There was a crucifix on the wall and a picture of Jesus Christ. The records heard on the tape were played on an old turntable. He used a speaker in an old television set for a sound reproduction.

I felt comfortable throughout most of the interview. (I didn't feel comfortable when Wesley made his comments about the Jewish people). Wesley didn't seem to care one way or the other about the tape recorder. I asked him where I could plug it in and he showed me. I felt a little awkward but not unwilling to find a good spot to plug in my machine.

There are several undesirable noises that will be found on the tape. The clock in the living room chimes every fifteen minutes. The dog barked occasionally. The neighbors had loud music playing from time to time.

It seems that Wesley was uncertain about what we wanted from him. He is a very good story teller. He has a large repertoire of stories. While he tells stories he uses hand motions and changes in intonation to make things a little more exciting.

There were many times throughout the nights when Wesley would go on tangents and hop from one story to another. He has had many exciting moments in his life and he wants to get them all out.

Wesley doesn't seem to be a quality musician with alot to offer. It seems that it would take much time to acquire the knowledge we need from him.

I don't feel that it's worth the time and effort.