

Collectors: Jim Leary and Matt Gallman

January 13, 1981

Informant: Hugo Maki
Finn Settlement
Washburn, Wisconsin

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

Both Matt and I had heard of Hugo on various occasions and, on one occasion, I'd tried to visit him without success. Since it was early afternoon and our luck had been good in Herbster, we decided to chance a brief visit. Hugo was in the garage as we pulled up. He'd just been for a ride in his snowmobile. He stuck me as a short, stout man with a ruddy face, blue eyes, and the fair hair of a Finnlander. I would guess his age at around 60, but the next meeting will tell.

Anyway, I introduced ourselves and our purpose. Hugo immediately launched into a discussion of his music. He plays "strictly old time" which entails "ethnic" piece and pre-World War II "modern" numbers. His father had played button accordion, and he'd played harmonica or mouth organ before graduating to accordions (button, then piano). With a four piece band, he played for many years at the now razed "Fishers Corners" tavern on 13. He also had a two piece band. Now his playing is confined to occasional weddings or benefits and sessions for the Senior Citizens. As luck would have it, Hugo was about to play this Thursday at the Ashland Nursing Home. Matt and I arranged to tape that session, and to hold a fuller interview on January 19th. Those encounters ought to give us a good picture of the man and his music.

While we were talking, Matt mentioned that he knew Hugo's brother, Ray. Soon afterwards a third brother, Einar (or Einard?) drove up. He's somewhat taller (about 5' 10") and equally stout, with a bulbous red nose and a mischievous manner. Noting our "Northland College" car, Einar asked if we were convincing Hugo to go to college, adding that he might learn a few things from the girls there. We continued talking in a joking manner for sometime. Einar's presence was both fortunate and distressing since the mention of college set Hugo to thinking about a daughter who'd died at 21, after several years of college, as a result of complications accompanying a kidney transplant. Understandably, the loss still pained Hugo deeply. It later came out that Hugo was the only one of the Maki brothers who "still drinks." I'm not sure quite how to interpret this statement, however. Does he drink a bit as opposed to being a teetotaler; or does he drink a lot as opposed to a little? The sad expression on Hugo's face at the mention of his daughter and his florid face made me guess the latter.

Fortunately, the topic of conversation soon shifted to the weather. And, after discussing the lack of snow and reiterating our plans to record Hugo, Matt and I departed.