

Informants: Gogebic Range Tamburitzans (G.R.T.)
 Collectors: Richard March (R.M.)
 Matthew Gallmann (M.G.)
 Joel Glickman (J.G.)
 Date: August 21, 1979
 Place: Wakefield, MI

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

We drove from Ashland to Wakefield to see the G.R.T.'s practice at Mike Ohrlich's house. We arrived at 7:30 p.m. and were escorted to the basement recreation room where the practice was about to begin. Other members of the group began to arrive immediately and the collecting team broke up in order to converse with various members of the G.R.T.'s.

R.M. looked at the sheet music and established that most of the instruments were made by John Valentich of Pennsylvania, with the exception of one brae, played by Gertrude (Kovasovich) Michaels, which was from John Rencic of Cleveland.

Mary Trtan-Nantell prepared a list (see archives) of all G.R.T. members present and absent. R.M. established that with the exception of the Miljevich brothers, all of the members are from Lika. Either from the area around Udbina, or from the hinterland of Sevj. Two sisters that are members, Jean (Surprenant) Buchto and Charlotte (Surprenant) Kolesar are of French and Czechoslovakian background.

The group began to play. Mike Ohrlich (M.O.) played bugaria at first because their bugaria player, Eli Miljevich, had to be late. When Eli showed up M.O. switched to brae and sat in front facing the other players. M.O. always selected the numbers to be played, while others offered suggestions - most of which didn't get played.

Three women sat beside the group and sang but didn't play any instruments. (See archive for a listing of the numbers played.)

The group generally wanted to play older tunes but M.O. wanted to practice a newer, stylish, tamburitzan repertoire.

The last eight numbers recorded were performed by a quartet called "The Balkan Strings" which is a part of the G.R.T. consisting of M.O. brae, Rolli Miljevich, brae and cello, Eli Miljevich bugaria and bass.

The quartet emphasized newer material. Some of the other players would try to follow them by ear.

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Flora, M.O.'s wife, served coffee and banana bread as practice began to break up. While people were leaving they discussed whether to meet next on Thursday or Friday.

We talked to them awhile and explained what we wanted to discuss in the interview with M.O. the next day and they told us a couple of stories about the Miljevich brothers.

They mentioned that Rollie had undergone three open heart operations while still a rather young man in his late thirties. We were told that Eli's spine was once injured by a falling tree but he was able, with assistance, to walk two miles to receive help.

We were also told that the Miljevich brothers were once on Gary Moore's "I've Got A Secret" T.V. show as the nation's champion sawyers. They demonstrated on T.V. that they could saw a log faster than a power saw.

We left the Ohrlich's and spent the night in Marenesco.