

PRESTIL/SVEDA LOG

October 29, 1980

Collector: Jim Leary
 Informants: Clara Sveda and Mary Prestil
 Ashland, Wisconsin

ETHNIC HERITAGE
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1. Collector's introduction.
2. Clara gives mother's background. Anna Hruby. B. on farm near Cleveland, worked at Menominee, Mi., moved to Odanah where there was a sawmill. Married a man named John Jilek, 1st husband.
3. Father b. in Prague, came to work at mill in Odanah. Gives father's account of "hippopotomi" in the ocean (probably porpoises). F. worked in Dakotas for the harvest. Moved to Ashland, worked at coal docks. Name originally Joseph Belofsky, changed to Belsky.
4. Clara born on corner of 12th ave. ^{Eos} and 4th st. Bohemians lived on 1st through 13th, 14th through 21st was Polish area, beyond that Swede Finns.
5. On early eastside ^d activities. The Polsih boys' skating rink.
6. Clara mentions family members: half sister, four brothers, and Clara.
7. Mary was Polish but married a Bohemian and learned to speak the language so she could speak with her mother in law. B. in Ashland on west end. Folks from around Warsaw, came first to Gaylord (sp?), Michigan. M. started house and hotel work after 8th grade, married at twenty. Lived on 11th ave. the past 63 years, maiden name--Adamczyk.
8. Mentions Bohemians living in her 11th street neighborhood.
9. On the building of the Bohemian Hall nearly eighty years ago. First hall blown over by high wind, then rebuilt very solidly.
10. Clara gives Mamie Dvorak's account of the economics of maintaining the hall in early days: money from production of plays and Saturday night dances (later changed to Sundays so dances could continue until one.) Dances dwindled with the coming of dances in the taverns. Mary gives charges for hall rentals in earlier days. Her husband was janitor for the hall. Dances ended sometime in the late 50's as a regular feature.
11. Mary recalls dances as early as 1910 or so. Some early bands had violin, drums, piano. Mentions Tom Marincel, Yankovic, and Chmielewski as bands that played in later years.
12. On New Year's eve as the big time for dances. On audience from surrounding area and "all the nationalities." Beer was prevalent at the festivities. Mary watched out for underage drinkers who called her "old eagle eye."
13. Discussion of home brew in Prohibition days. "Everybody did in those days."
14. No dances during the war because hall used as barracks for soldiers guarding the ore docks.

15. Clara talks about Rose Hulmer playing piano for dances and Andrew Drolson played the fiddle. ~~XXX~~ AD a Swede who "played Bohemian music." Late 20's and 1930's. Both still living.
16. Clara talks about the "Bohemian Band" in which her father played. Mostly brass with cornets (see data on similar bands in Broken Hoops). Her bros. played cornet and clarinet in these bands. Band played for dances, C. has pictures. Played Bohemian polkas and waltzes.
17. Special Dances. "Ti, Ti, Ti," or "Annie in the Cabbage Patch." Mary demonstrates by swirling around, facing her partner, and wagging her finger. "Handkershief Dance." Another dance done by young girls at the ZCBJ convention. There's a picture of the dancers in the Bohemian Hall basement.
18. On photographs in the Bohemian Hall.
19. More of the brass bands (END OF TAPE ONE)
- 19 (continued). Clara's mother complains that she couldn't dance with her husband 'cause he always played in the band. Brass band seemed to fade in the late 1920's. Kids went to dances because there were no babysitters.
20. Mary on the Hall's "best dance floor in town." Describes her husband's care of the floor. M. goes on about the hard work of maintaining the hall: cleaning, maintaining the fire, dusting.
21. On other community halls. Eagles' Club's several locations. Third street's fraternal hall on 3rd street where Ward's Garage is. Pufall's in late 1930's on eastern outskirts of town.
22. On the relationship between halls and taverns. Latter superceded former. C. describes coming of jukebox dancing at Hugo's (now pizza pub) and Bayview Tavern.
- 23/ On the general absence of piano accordeons from the hall. Some concetinas. C.'s Dad had a button accordion for playing, "by ear," at home.
24. Dances done: polka, two step, waltz, circle two-step. "Sometimes our floor would just shake there" when the circle two steps with their wild swinging went on.
25. On the "lunch" served at the dance: hamburgers, hot dogs.
26. On the mix of Bohemian and "other" tunes for young people. Mention "Blue Skirt Waltz," "Barbara Waltz" or "Barbaručka" (sp?), "Svestková Alej" was "very popular," "Prsi, Prsi," and "Na Tsem Sirotek" (sp?), and "Berticka."
27. Clara describes the finding of Bohemian 78's in a hall on the west end. Mary recalls a jukebox with a "big bunch of" Bohemian 78's" at the Hall.
28. M. talks about George Prestil's success with young people at the Hall.

29. Wedding dances at the Hall. Breaking plates to dance with the bride. Paying money for shots and dances with the bride. Clara describes her own wedding. "Bohemian wedding or a Bohemian Funeral, you always know you'll have plenty to eat and drink."
30. Mary goes on to describe about baking rolls and hams and kolaches for ZCBJ conventions; on putting people up for conventions held in Ashland. A state convention, around Labor Day, is scheduled for Ashland in 1981. On the insurance function of the ZCBJ, its fraternal functions, and its evolution to where non-Bohemians can join.
31. On the plays put on at the hall. Mamie Dvorak who's in the nursing home and quite ill knows the most. Clara recalls one from the 1930's, but it was put on in English. C.'s Aunt, Barbara Weselka (sp?) was a piano teacher who used to teach the young children songs and poems in Bohemian so they could put on a program for the parents.
32. On early bands who played in the Hall. Hoppeyan, a man who played violin and led a band called "Hop's Entertainers." Band had piano, cornet or trumpet, one of the Talaska boys played. May have had drums.
33. On the Talaska orchestra and participation by "The Old Talaska" in the original Bohemian orchestra. (Was it called "Talaska's Orchestra?")
34. On a band Clara played in with her aunt, called the "Synco-pators." Played at Fisher's Corner, the Hall, and elsewhere. Jazzy and pop stuff, not Bohemian. 1930's.
35. Fisher's Corners was on highway two, Cherryville Rd., near Scottie Club, just torn down.

(END OF TAPE TWO)

36. Mention of Stanley Stangle, trumpet player in local ~~Bohemian~~ Bohemian bands; retired music teacher at high school. Knows about Hoppeyan, Talaska, etc. Father played in Bohemian brass band.
37. Mention of local taverns. Steve's Tavern at corner of 63 and 2; Moll's Tavern "always popular." Hazen's Barn, Nabosny's on Beaser Avenue "in the country." No dancing during house parties, probably since halls so available. Mary participated in many card parties with her neighbors.
38. On singing. Mary mentions considerable singing at Frank and Mimi Dvorak's 50th wedding anniversary. Vera Dvorak Schultz of Washburn can sing plenty of old songs apparently.
39. Lodge picnics held every year on the 4th of July. Clara and Mery show pictures of these events.
40. Mary reminisces about how her late sister-in-law could singing; she laments on the loss of her own singing voice.

41. Conventions were a time for singing and the acquisition of song books. "Hey Slovanya" (sp?) was often sung at the Lodge, a patriotic song. Also: "Domov Moj" (sp?) which recalled nostalgically the immigrant's old country home.

42. Clara talks about her "music minded" father. All the children had to learn ~~an~~ instrument. C. played at home with her bros. ~~Bro~~. Louie had a band called "The Northwoodsmen" in wh/Stanley Stangle played. Mostly popular stuff.

(BREAK IN TAPE AS I SET UP MIC AT PIANO)

43. Clara plays and sings "Svestk^oa Alej" (The Prune Song) Gives a line-by-line translation of the first verse: a boy and girl used to go together to pick and eat the plums; but now the girl is gone. This was a "nice waltz" at the dances.

44. Plays and Sings "Červený Sataček." (Red Skirt)
A man's girlfriend is mad and he doesn't know why; if she wants to be mad, let her be mad.

45. Plays and Sings "Proč Pak Jste Daleko Maminko?" (Why is My Mother so Far Away?)
Anyone who would have to leave their home very young will find everything to be different and will want to be home with their mother, etc.

46. "Prsi Prsi" A Polka ("It's Raining, It's Raining")
It's raining, it's raining, but we're going to keep drinking all night 'til the beer is gone, etc." Mary joined in on this "popular number."

47. "Bertička", ~~an~~ instrumental piece. (No translation of tittle given).

(END OF TAPE THREE)

48. Clara recounts her father telling ghost stories. One concerned a man who tried to bring a monster from the woods back to the forest; he only succeeded in bringing back a handful of hair.

49. Clara's father orders songbooks and sheet music from a distributor of Bohemian materials out of Cicero, Illinois.

50. C.'s mother called her "goat" in Bohemian to reprimand her.

51. On the Polish Kociusko Hall, a small one room place just for meetings, not dances. Had their dances in the Bohemian Hall.

52. ~~Fruit~~ Fruit soup on Christmas eve. Talk of other foods: kolache, rohliki (sp?), growing poppies for seeds, caraway seeds, yiter-nice, sultz (headcheese, jelled with veal and pork) in several versions.

53. Mary recalls parties before Maso Pust. We'd dress up and have a lunch.

54. St. Nicholas' Day. Hanging up stockings: apple or orange if

good; stick of ~~potato~~ potato if bad.

- ~~55~~
55. C. and M. talk about their children and their various jobs.
56. More about the Bohemians 4th of July celebration and how the foreign born always made a big deal of the 4th. Comments accompany a picture of 4th revelers in Sveda's backyard.
57. Comments accompanying a picture of Lodge officers in the 1930's. They are seated in front of a painting on the curtain of the Hall's stage; the painting shows a castle in Prague and was done by a man from Haugen.
58. More on the ZCBJ's three day conventions.
59. M. talks about her son's participation in an Ashland city wide Boys' Bang, some fifty years ago, under Ted Mesang.
60. C. talks about Halloween pranks played on the streetcar driver.
- This whole tape meanders considerably since we are eating cake, looking at photographs, and talking in a fairly unfocused fashion.
61. Mention of the feather pulling party, the gossip that went on; Mary recounts a couple of women "making off" in a humorous fashion.
62. C. and M. talk about how visiting used to be in their old neighborhood. "Nowdays, it seems, everybody's for themselves." M. expressed distress about the Hall and how the old social events have passed away. "There's only three of us really left that are older."

THE SESSION AND TAPE FOUR END SIMULTANEOUSLY