

TAPE INDEX/DOWN HOME DAIRYLAND

George Meuret, et al
Haugen, Wisconsin
May 27, 1989

Interviewed by J.P. Leary
Nagra 4-L (mono)

Tape One

1. Announcement. George and Ruth Meuret of Haugen, and Bob and Kathy Krug of Cameron are present.
2. G's folks on his father's side fiddle and guitar players from the Dakotas. Didn't learn from them. Started in 1933 on fiddle, 16 then. Used to play guitar. Prohibition had just ended, was in Chicago. Every joint the west side had a square dance going. Played from 8PM-3AM Fiddle player paid twice as much, so G went out and bought a fiddle. Was playing a few weeks later. [pretty good story]
3. Uncle Harry Meuret just died 6-8 months ago. Played fiddle as did grandfather Meuret. Harry had some classical training from a brother-in-law, Stradaberg (sp?) who also made violins. George has one. They played Indian Reservations near Lemon, South Dakota, just east of Montana line on Nth./Sth. Dakota border. Harry and brother, Robert, played for ranch and school house dances, home parties. Fiddle and guitar. They played some on the Rosebud Reservation and on another reservation to the north.
4. G b. in North Dakota, to WI at 5, to Dakotas at 13, then to Chicago, then back to Dakotas, then to Chicago, then "finally got smart and moved to WI." Born in 1917, moved back to WI in 1957. WI "my favorite state . . . I drove truck and I seen them all." Folks are Scotch and Irish on one side and French on the other. Doesn't know a real lot about ancestors. French side "done the fiddling." Never learned French tunes, although grandfather played French tunes. Doesn't think his uncles played much French stuff.
5. Shortly after moved back to WI in 1957 asked by Ted Owens to play when regular musicians took a vacation. Asked George Rousseau to play banjo with him, Ruth, Meuret's wife, played guitar. Played Saturday night dances in taverns for five years or so, but was always busy with farming. Finally got a group of people to play music. Kathy Krug, John Pisa, and other locals came to George for lessons and tips. Now have regular get-togethers of 10-25 people, Blue Hills Fiddlers and Pickers. Play for Senior Centers, Heritage Days, Music in the Park, etc.
6. G and Ruth go to fiddlers' contests all over the country, including contests in Duluth, Cotton, Lake Elmo, and St. Cloud in Minnesota. "If I don't get nervous I do pretty good." Tells a story about being nervous during a contest at Weiser Idaho. Fingers going good, bow standing still. Came in 106th. [might be useful, a good quote on contests]
7. Ruth entered field of six women at International Peace Gardens: North Dakota/Manitoba border. Ruth makes the finals but only knows three tunes.
8. G reckons Peace Gardens and Duluth contests influenced by Canadian fiddlers,

western contests dominated by southwest Bob Wills sound; southeast sound is different again, not so fancy. Thinks it's wrong that their isn't a Scandinavian category, although this is found in Minot, North Dakota. [Might be a useful quote with some editing, a prelude to a Scando tune?]

9. Once came up to this part of the country to trade fiddles with Otto Rindlisbacher and "lo and behold I met my wife." Good old time fiddler and good Scandinavian fiddler and had Hardanger fiddles that George "Could've bought for fifty dollars and I thought: 'what would I do with a thing like that.'" [might be a good quote for Rindlisbacher show, use a hardanger cut not used by Judy on Patchwork?]

10. G has run into a few Indian fiddlers. Lived in Duluth for awhile, met Roy Anderson who had a band with Joe Goushay (Gouget?) and Buck DeLaPaz, Buck on fiddle, Joe on bass and guitar. "They was from the reservation . . . they didn't play Indian tunes, they was playing country music." [use for Indian fiddlers show?]

11. G plays with a local accordionist, Joe Tomesh, who plays a lot of Bohemian tunes. "When he gets them going I can play them, otherwise we don't play them." Louka Zelena/Green Meadow Waltz, At the Spring, Red Handkerchief Waltz/Gerveny Satacek. Joe has from relatives from Czechoslovakia coming to visit this summer.

12. When G arrived in Haugen in 1957 Elmo Bronstad and Ray Olson were fine Scandinavian fiddle players when G arrived, Eddie Solie too. One died, one's in the rest home, "Eddie Solie we see every once in a while." There's a fellow from Bruce who comes to play with their group every once in a while who plays Polish tunes. [Someone to pursue later on.] Bernard Dobrowolski of Chetek also plays concertina with the Blue Hills Pickers and Singers.

13. G talks about Randy Sabien and his band playing at the UW branch in Rice Lake.

14. G called for square dances for seven years in the 1930s. When beer came back, all the taverns in Chicago had square dances. But not like they square dance here.

[tape runs out, end of Tape One]

Tape Two

George, fiddle; Ruth Meuret, guitar; Kathy Krug, second fiddle; Bob Krug, guitar.

1. Scotland the Brave.
2. Life in the Finnish Woods.
3. Hup Sudayna.
4. Cripple Creek. [good]

5. Ookpik Waltz.

Ruth plays fiddle and George guitar for the next two numbers.

6. Maple Sugar.

7. Helsa Dem Darhemna.

George back on fiddle, Ruth on guitar.

8. Barbara Polka. [good]

9. Clarinet Polka. [better]

10. Soldier's Joy.

11. Turkey in the Straw.

12. The Swede, comic vocal by George.