

TAPE INDEX

Jim Leary
May 11, 1985

Rosemary Menard & Agatha Watson
Colon Boulevard
Rice Lake, WI

1. Collector's announcement.
2. Dad (Anton Korger) came over with parents from Austria (now Czechoslovakia). His father was Freidrich Korger, mother was Josepha Pic (she was Bohemian, but that side was downplayed).
3. Dad left home at 11, went to Brno as a tailor's apprentice. Slept in an attic, given little to eat. Got even with the tailor's wife by feeding her kids salt fish so they'd be thirsty at night.
4. Became journeyman tailor. Traveled from Vienna, to northern Italy, Switzerland, Munich, Vienna. Couldn't find an opening as a master tailor, decided to come to the U.S. Sailed from Hamburg on the Princess Irene. Had an aunt in Eau Claire who, with her husband, was a pharmacist (her shop had been pillaged in the old country by Bismarck's soldiers).
5. Dad had no idea of distances in America. Didn't have enough food for the trip.
6. Worked for a tailor, Bauman, and became a master tailor. Brought over parents and his brother Henry.
7. Henry was no good as a tailor, insulted customers as a butcher. WWI broke out, Henry set up on a farm. Lots of German baiting during WWI.
8. Brought over sister Anna too. She'd had two children out of wedlock-- Rudolph and Stephanie for the crown prince and princess.
9. All settled on Germania Street. Friedrich, a carpenter and cabinet maker, built a house there and on Omaha Street.

10. RM used to play in F's workshop. She put her dolls in his toolbox.
11. Hager, paramour of Annie, came over. Met by the sheriff and a priest. Made to marry A under threat of jail or deportation.
12. F Korger a trumpeter in emperor's army and also in the village when there was a fire.
13. Dad thought music a great thing. Once in U.S. enrolled in night school to learn English and got a flute. Sang a lot, especially while sewing, and belonged to a Sangerverein. There was a hall on Madison St. (R.M. has one of the books they used--she sings a snatch of a toast: "Er Lebe Hoch"/He Lives High).
14. Uncle Henry also joined the singing society.
15. "Bohunks" really looked down on. A stressed his "Austrian" background.
16. Mother's family from Passau in Bavaria. Descended from the Loew brothers. [Agnes searches for the genealogy and then reads a bit; she later gave me the copy.]
17. Mom, Rose, spoke Bavarian and German. RM calls Bavarian "the worst gutteral language." RM cites an article by an anthropologist suggesting that the happy-go-lucky, music loving southern Germans draw their culture from the Romans. Hatred between the southern Germans and the stern, warlike northern Germans exist today. RM recalls a northern German vistor who once insulted her mother, then apologized profusely.
18. Mother was Rose Rada, her mother was Frances Rada, her mother was Karolina Kreji Loew.
19. Lots of singing in mother's family. All the kids took organ lessons from a traveling organ teacher Phillips (grandfather of RM's sister Agatha's husband Bruce Watson).
20. Rose Rada born in Tilden, WI in a log house that was later built onto.

Fell in the house as a young girl, lost several children until she had a minor operation, then had seven kids.

21. Rose Rada and Anton Korger met at a beer garden in Eau Claire, although she never drank.

22. Anton and Rose Korger liked to sing. All kids had to have piano lessons. Boys all played flute--had a flute quartet with their father. Agatha stayed with the piano, RM took up violin. Brother Fred taunted them while they practiced, but each had a place and a time to practice--one in the bathroom, another in the basement.

23. Elvira played cello very badly. Always threw off the family group when they played together.

24. Mr. Herman of Eau Claire, a German, played zither--self-taught. Johnny Hagmann played violin. Mr. Goettlicher played fiddle, not well "but with a lot of gusto." Played as a group at the Hermans. Dad played "push button accordion too" and often played for wedding dances with Henry on clarinet.

25. House dances never planned, people just came over. Grandma Josepha ("Sephka") taught them a Bohemian dance which RM has taught to her 4-H group.

26. To play instruments and to bring them to a gathering was no big deal, nothing you were asked to do: "This was the way it was."

27. Agatha born December 14, 1912. RM November 16, 1916.

28. House parties common from late teens through late 1930s.

29. During prohibition some German families sent to the old country for wine-filled chocolates to have at weddings.

[TAPE ONE ENDS]

30. RM's mother senile before death, would talk to her daughter as if she was a sister.

31. Anton would play button accordion around the house, someone would start

singing. RM would pull out the violin. They played tunes they knew, without sheet music.

32. RM on violin, Gertie Korger)4(Henry's daughter) on piano, Anton Korger on accordion, Henry on clarinet--"The Korgers"--played all around the countryside at Farmer's Union and other get-togethers. Played a "clap dance" but couldn't get people to dance it; has done "the mill," another dance, but it's complicated. Has found the "clap dance" in German and Scandinavian collections and has taught it to kids along with schuhplattler.

33. Tunes played at country dances were ones "I always knew." RM has a good memory for stories and tunes. Played schottisches, mazurkas, and laendlers.

34. Got too busy to play when going to teacher's college in Eau Claire, but at that time worked for her dad in a tailor shop where she learned songs from him.

35. RM's brother Fred probably knows more of her dad's songs, but RM offers a snatch of a drinking song, actually three verses. The song starts out simple, then gets more complex and the mistake maker has to buy a round of drinks. RM announces "This is a song that they used to sing in the taverns," then launches into "I Wish I Were A Hunter That Wore A Green Outfit." German verses are followed by an English summary. [68]

36. A song about "eliminations." [Fred knows the whole thing.] RM sings the one verse she knows.

37. Ruth and brother Fred two years apart. When they were in high school F told the orchestra leader RM was a terrible player. Soon she was concert master and "he had to do what I said." Never could play duets together.

38. RM bothered by arthritis, but can still play simple folk tunes.

39. RM and Agatha took lessons on autoharp from Jim Patraw at the Barron County campus.

40. RM still looks after calves at the farm, but uses spare time to recall her

folk tunes. Likes to search out folk musicians when in places like Puerto Rico and Hawaii.

41. Sings "Ferdinand," a Bavarian lullaby that her mother sang--one verse only. Sings in English and in German.

42. Bavarian beer hall at Busch Gardens in Florida jogs RM's memory whenever she goes there.

43. RM heard her mother singing "Ferdinand" to RM's youngest child. [260]

44. Sings and demonstrates "the German patty cake." [260]

45. The "German equivalent of 'Lazy Mary, Will You Get Up'--"Schpinn, Schpinn," [260] learned from her mother who lived with the Menard's after RM's marriage.

46. Has heard the cumulative song about the bird and the tree and the nest, sung by both parents, but she can't recall the words.

47. Sings part of a tearjerker in English learned from German nuns. Put into English from the German and sung by a Rubenzer girl in Tilden.

48. RM recently found a book of Bohemian tales with stories her grandma Sephka used to tell. Reckons Grimm originals were gory, but never had a bad affect on the Korger girls.

49. Anton and Uncle Henry, who moved to Chippewa Falls, would tell stoires on Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls.

50. Tells her dad's story about Chippewa couthouse built on the American flag--"that story is strictly from Europe."

[TAPE TWO ENDS BEFORE STORY IS COMPLETE]

51. Uncle H told the story of the pumpkin sold as ass's egg, an international tale.

52. Grandma "would dance the boys right down to the floor," particularly with a fast solo dance like an Irish jig that Uncle H had on a record.

53. G'ma had a hard time getting a husband in Europe because she was so tiny.

RM's sister called "the little Agatha" and she was "the big Rosemary."

54. RM also knows "Die Lorelei." She once sang for Madame Schumann-Heidt (sp?) who was "the German contralto." She sang in Eau Claire in the early 1920s. Pastor of Sacred Heart Church, Fr. Orthen, knew Madame S-H in the old country and took young RM to see her backstage; they sang for each other.

55. RM overdid singing and her voice eventually disappeared altogether.

56. Mr. Herman taught them "Herr Schmidt" and RM has heard "Lott is Todt."

57. Mr. Herman's zither was on display at UW Eau Claire during a Viennese doing held each spring. He was a great zither player. Would sometimes put silver spoons under his strings so they'd bounce up and hit the strings.

58. Midnight mass at Sacred Heart very dramatic years ago. Chorus of "Stille Nacht" on zither, then flute joining in, then violin, then pump organ, then gradually more candles lit as the music grew louder, then men hummed, then singing began, then all the altar boys and Fr. Orthen entered. Entire event took 20 or so minutes. Apparently this used to be done in southern Germany.

59. Occasionally a whole church orchestra gotten together to play Mozart and Handel after practicing for months.

60. Germans in Eau Claire settled on the north side, around Germania Street. Houses all self-built, people stuck together.

61. St. Pat's the first church, Irish. Friction between Irish and Germans. Father Untroud (sp?) sent by the bishop to start Sacred Heart. Priest railed against the Bohemians ("Sauerkraut Yankees") from the pulpit. Grandfather Friedrich walked out, would rather be at St. Pat's "with the dirty Irish." [Agatha reads a brief snatch of church history from Sawdust City, a history of Eau Claire.]

62. Rubenzers lived in Tilden. Mrs. R a Magyar gypsy, known as "Alte Hex." Would hex the cows while standing on a hill, then would offer grandfather Rada

money for his sick cow. He paid her to cure the cow; she would pet it and perhaps give it a powder.

63. Mr. R played hammer dulcimer--a "hit it with a hammer." He was the main musician for dances, sometimes an accordion or clarinet player also around.

64. Bohemian dances had a lot of drinking. Toward the end of an evening the old women would urinate in the whiskey bottles and bring it to drunken men to drink.

65. People tended to settle in ethnic pockets: Germans near Tilden, Bohemians to the north and west, also an "Irish World" and an English settlement.

66. Mr. R would lead the litany of the saints at a wake. Held prayer book in front of him, though he couldn't read. Would occasionally say "St. Whatever-Your-Name-Is, pray for us," then turn the page.

67. Music common at wakes held at home, with someone always praying at the body. People would wait for a knock on the door when no one was there--that would be the angel of death at the door to take the soul.

68. Dad was "a friend to everybody . . . just about every nationality came to my dad's wake."

69. Rubenzer Hotshots, a polka band, are from Bloomer, probably descendants of the old Rubenzer. RM reckons Bloomer is a close knit town with "a very small view of the world."

70. Rubenzers made all their "hard dumplings" in the beginning of the year, then kept them under the bed. Always used "milk from a fresh cow," which is sometimes bloody.

71. Big controversy when Agatha married an English fellow, Bruce Watson. Mother objected to mixing nationalities.

72. Music at wakes: Lucy Epps died young, quiet music on the porch, no dancing, but singing of "old German standbys": "Steh' Ich In Finstrer

"Mitternacht" and "Muss I Den." Cards and games not played at wakes.

73. Korger girls played singing games in German as kids, but they can't recall them. Played often at Hermans who were from the middle of German somewhere.

74. Their friend Marcie Herman went back to Europe recently to tour the old ancestral grounds. RM may go to Czechoslovakia in the fall with her son who buys agricultural equipment there. Their hometown, however, was wiped out by Germans and Russians during WWII.

75. Sings a verse or two of a Bohemian drinking song from her dad (and one that Fred, her brother, knows): "I Am the Master of the Art of Drinking."

76. Sings an English version of the Czech song "Andulko" about a geese keeper.

[TAPE THREE ENDS BEFORE THE TUNE IS FINISHED]

77. RM has seen "Annie in the Cabbage Patch" many times in children's books.

She sings her version.

78. For CCD at St. Pat's in Eau Claire RM pressed to teach kids a Mexican dance in an hour; all dances too complicated, so she taught them a Bohemian dance and was found out later.

79. Taught violin for many years, worked with children all her life: home talent shows at Sacred Heart church, babysitting. Has done lots of storytelling. Taught school at Fairchild. Likes to teach children her ethnic experiences.

80. Played her last time in public on violin when pregnant with the fifth of her eight kids--with the Chippewa Valley Symphony. Played for lots of home talent events.

81. Used to play for lots of children when they were young, especially when her voice went. Drs. at the Mayo clinic told her her voice wouldn't come back. It did, however. [A long discussion of vocal therapy ensues.]

82. RM's kids all love to sing, but none are musicians. Granddaughter

Jennifer, however, plays flute and autoharp.

83. RM brings back records from various countries where she and her husband travel.

84. The family had a few German 78s.

[THE SESSION ENDS]