

Collector: Jim Leary

October 28, 1980

Informant: Arnold "Uncle Pete" Peterson
122 Front Street East
Ashland, WI 682-3658

Mr. Peterson runs the show at Badger CATV, a cable company on West Second Street. He worked for twenty-seven years at radio station WATW, during which time he began the "Polka Party" program. Unfortunately, no records or logs were kept of these programs, nor are there any documentations for the various "remotes" Peterson put on at local halls. "Uncle Pete" did mention a few notable musicians, however. One was Jimmy McCauley, an accordian player who "auditioned for Lawrence Welk." Fritz Swanson has pictures of McCauley playing accordian at a Sunday Indian Lake jam session. According to Fritz, McCauley played with Katie Hicks' band in Hayward. Peterson recalls McCauley as a youthful star on an hour long Saturday morning program: "Talented Tiny Tots." It was a variety hour featuring local youths. Apparently, McCauley died young and tragically (in a car crash, from alcoholism? I can't recall.)

Peterson also mentioned Norrie Reykdal and his brother, Tom? who played trumpet "just like Louis Armstrong." Norrie apparently played with Yankovic at one time or another. The two play at Telemark now and then. (Are these Tom Vennum's Oompah band friends who he brought, in their leiderhosen, to the Smithsonian's Folklife Festival?)

Noting my pronunciation of Moquah ("Muck wah"), Peterson launched into anecdote. Although my pronunciation is the prevalent one in this area, there are some who have opposed it. Among them was a Father Florian Herides. One day, having heard "Uncle Pete" say "Muckwah" on the radio, Father Florian came by the station to inform Peterson that "there is no muck in Moquah since the county paved the roads." Ho, ho, ho.

I had hoped to question Mr. Peterson further regarding his knowledge of the local scene and its musicians, but he had to be on television both before and after my arrival. Perhaps we'll meet at some later date?