

TAPE INDEX

Jim Leary
February 27, 1985

Will Eske
Home Plate Inn
Lebanon, WI

[Note: Somehow I fouled up. The recording is barely audible. No radio, slide/show material here, but good data for essays.]

1. W. comments on the recent demise of the Whoopee John Band. Played 364 days a year, had off on Christmass--that's in its heyday.
2. Father a bass drummer, no musical training.
3. At 10-12 years, W. [b. 1923] recalls a town band in every little town. Annual N.W. Band Association Convention where every band played an overture and a march. Judges awarded prizes. Ashippon, Clymon, Watertown, hustisford, CoCord, Neosho, Hartford, Mayville--every small town had a 20-30 piece community band, but they all disappeared.
4. Present Lebanon band formed 1940. Prior to that Immanuel Lutheran in Old Lebanon and St. Peter's Lutheran in New Lebanon each had church bands. Both were folding. As a junior in high school W. took trombone lessons, wanted to play in a band. Encouraged dad to begin church band again, meeting brought little interest, but met with New Lebanon folks and the merged band started.
5. First three rehearsals in Old Lebanon in Emil Gruppe's (sp?) Tavern and Dance Hall; then moved to New Lebanon at Otto Gruppe's Hall. Rehearsals each Monday. Music library and instruments kept there. Rehearsals from 8:30 to 10 p.m., but never got home until 3 a.m. Beanbag and ping pong tournaments, young and old socialized together--not like nowadays.
6. German not spoken at rehearsals. W. talked plenty German at home, went to parochial school and didn't learn English until fifth grade.
7. Played every Sunday afternoon and evening at some picnic in a 30 mile

radius: Clyman, Johnson's Creek, Ashippon, everybody had a Fireman's Picnic. Band probably received \$50 for 40 piece band. Families came along with musicians and the band inevitably outspent its take by quite a bit.

8. W. doesn't recall much singing during rehearsals.

9. Talked low German plenty with grandparents while growing up. Mother insisted that kids went to high school and learned good English. 1938-1941 during W.'s high school monthly milk check \$11 for two families. W. walked 1 1/2 miles to catch a ride to school, paid 65 cents a week for the rides, ten cents a week for high school activities. People nowadays don't know what bad times are.

10. Father, Carl, Jr. born in U.S. and W. reckons great grandfather was too. Ancestors from Pomerania, same as many of his neighbors. Mother's father was in the Prussian army.

11. Father born in 1896, mother in 1894.

12. W.'s sister took piano lessons, took music in college and taught it. Was killed in an airplane accident 10--12 years ago. She wrote a history of the Lebanon Band with help from her father.

13. Plenty of house parties years ago. A little hall in Lebanon where 50-100 people would get together. Then "a little short fat chunky lady" nearby played button accordion. [Kenny Platz's grandmother?]

14. Used to have wedding and anniversary parties in the barn or, once, a cousin got married and they built a plank platform with a tent over it for a dance.

15. Concertina was quite popular years ago. Has brass reeds like the old pump organ. Ed Peirick used to live around Lebanon, brother Leonard played too; so did Harley Jaeger and Arnie Braunschweig, brother to W.'s uncle. Today a 7-8 piece band, Push & Pull (Vern Miller's Band of 174 Grand Ave., Hartford, 673-3879), has concertina. 4-5 piece Watertown Dutchmen Band (the Melvin Knaack's,

1216 Douglas Avenue, Watertown) features twin concertinas.

16. House parties usually in living room. Pushed round hooked rug in the corner, concertina and often fiddle combined in another corner.

17. Directions given to Harley Jaeger's place.

18. Cakes popular at house parties: tortes, angel and devil's food. Birthday parties all celebrated within Eske's eight family threshing ring. Beer, big lunch at midnight.

19. Feather stripping, corn husking, quilting, butchering all done by neighbors together. Ditto with cutting firewood.

20. Had woodstove and hand fired steam boiler. Hard work really made men and women out of people. Nowadays everybody has it too easy.

21. W. a "baseball nut" as a kid. Complains about greed of today's big league ball players. Country baseball's given way to "easy" slow pitch softball.

22. Women played rook and men schapskopf at old time houseparties.

23. Tunes from old time house parties: "Du Du Liegst Mir Im Herzen," and "Ach Du Lieber Augustine."

24. W. has German marching band: Yankee Dutchmen Solar Powered Precision Marching Band. [Tape stops as W. gets a notebook listing repertoire; see Field Notes for a partial listing.]

25. On old time bands that toured the area: Lawrence Duchow, Fezz Fritsche, Bab Wagner, Rudy Plocar from Manitowac, Romy Gosz.

26. W. had 7 piece band in the 50s. Played 5-6 nights a week in 100 mile radius including Elgin, Ill., Appleton, Dubuque, Ill., Milwaukee. Called "Will Eske's Band": played old time and some fox trots on the "Polka Circuit."

27. Every town had a weekly public dance. Sunday night at Turner Hall in Watertown, Tuesday night at the Music Box in the Johnson's Creek area, Wednesday night Hustisford Fireman's Hall, Thursday Whitewater American Legion; various

places on the weekend. Some dances declined during Lent. But all this "fell by the wayside after awhile."

[The tape and the session end.]