TAPE INDEX

August 3 ~~February 8~~, 1979

Fieldworkers: Jim Leary
Matthew Gallman
Informants: Arnie Johnson
Ailie Johnson
Oulu, Wisconsin

1. The tape begins amidst talk. Arnie mentions the Finnish Halls in the area: Oulu, Waino, Brule, Herbster, Washburn. Halls eliminated by beer, tavern dances, lack of volunteer labor, outmigration.

2. On old time communal labor as an expression of community. Haying and shingling bees. Nowdays someone would get sued if there was an accident during such events. But "years ago, people had to stick together."

3. This leads back to a discussion of the halls with their plays, homemade food. Nowdays, people "have to show a profit."

4. Arnie still plays many songs that he did in the 30's. "Kulkurin Valssi" is one. A. goes on to talk about J. Alfred Tanneri (Tanner) the Finnish songwriter. Another favorite song is "Orpo Pojan Valssi." Arnie also acknowledges the influences of Leo Kauppi, Hannes Saari, and Matti Jurva (all of whom recorded on Columbia). Arnie and Ailie also made a 78 around 1937 or 1938; it was recorded on a Finnish radio station in duluth.

5. A. talks about playing on Marquette radio. There was a Finnish program every Saturday noon and they wanted the Johnsons to play more steadily.

6. Arnie talks about outlets for their records: Marquette radio, Tyomies press in Superior, and many sold mail order from the home.

7. About modern music: "years ago, at least you could rub tummies." Nowdays, everybody's jumping around in different corners.

8. Arnie claims he's not much of a musician since he can't read music, but he enjoys meeting people. He complains briefly about getting shunted around on the Chmieleski Brothers' program.

9. This leads into a statement of aesthetics: when performing, you've got to hear yourself in order to put some expression into your singing.

10. Arnie talks about his wife's accordion playing helps him stay on key.

11. Shortly after marrying, Arnie and Ailie lived in Decatur, Illinois next to a couple named Jones. They would be invited over with Ailie's accordion for hamburger fries and he'd sing "My Wild Irish Rose" and "When I Grow Too Old to Dream," and "some of them old songs."

12. Arnie recalls a man who figured him to have "one of the best natural voices he'd ever heard."

13. In the 50's and 60's Arnie and Ailie played very little.

14. Ailie now joins in. She asks Matt to pull out his accordion. Matt asks Arnie if he know "Njulantalkpo Polkka." Arnie starts to sing the words and adds that the song is an Alfred Tanneri composition. Ailie has her accordion out too.

15. They play "Njulantalkkoo Polka."

16. "Rattiko," Arnie begins to sing. Then they talkabout how to dance it.

17. "Villirussi" (sp?) I think.

(END OF TAPE ONE)

18. Matt asks if there's a difference between a schottische and a yenka, Ailie reckons the timing is pretty much the same.

19. Walt and Ailie do "Green, Green Grass of Home" with Finnish singing.

20. "You Are My Sunshine," with Finnish singing, then English.

21. Arnie reckons he and Ailie have always mixed Finnish and English singing.

22. Arnie goes on about "this Finnish printing place in Superior" (Tyomies?) that imports and sells alot of Finnish music and encouraged the Johnsons to make their record.

23. On their record, Arnie reckons they put English words in "for the dumb ones who can't understand Finnish."

24. "Maillman Matti."

25. "Summer Winds" (English title).

Summer winds are blowing,
If you could just give me a few memories
When I'm gone.

Arnie continues with a full translation.

26. On Arnie and Ailie's public repertoire: some waltzes, fox trots, and schottische, plus a lot of requests." Sometimes the program makes itself."

27. "Kulkurin Valssi," only a fragment.

28. "Down By the Old Mill Stream." "That's an old timer, that's an old, old song."

29. Ailie talks about learning to read music when she was young; their other musician on the record reads music. Arnie talks about how they wanted simple tunes and easily understood words on their album. Ernie Rann

30. Matt talks some about performing with his band.

(THE TAPE ENDS)

31. We looksover some of their songbooks. Arnie notes "Harbor Lights" which is on their second album, then they perform it.

32. Ailie is trying to decide on songs that she and Matt can play together. They begin with "Johan Pa Snippen," I think, then kick into another tune. Ailie can't recall the title.

33. Arnie notes when his wife raises her elbows, she starts to make her fancy moves. Ernie Rann gets lots of expression on his face. Old man Lahti in Oulu used to hum as he played in the accordion.

34. Ailie's grand mother used to have Finnish records and Charlie Lahti would go over there to learn tunes.

35. Ailie plays "an old Finnish polka, but I can't remember the name of it either."

36. Ailie offers to lend Matt some records by Viola Turpeinen.

37. Ailie talks about how she doesn't "even intend to play good any more." At Arnie's request she plays"Kotailan Kulia" (sp?) and he sings. The song concerns a dance at a place in Finland. A man happens along and when the accordion started to play various beasts started to sing and they "drank everything that they brought when they had the dance there." (Ailie is talking to Matt at this point and their voices pretty much obliterate what Arnie and I are saying). Arnie goes on to talk about Arthur Kylander who wrote plenty of songs including the one just described.

38. They talk about Lauri Rassi Maki who plays button accordion and lives in Iron River.

39. Leary tells his "Yack Johnson" joke.

40. Arnie sings a bit of "Kukuri Kokkori" (sp?).

41. The Johnsons talk about the Lahtis of the Oulu Hot Shots.

(THE SESSION ENDS)