

TAPE INDEX

August 29, 1979

Collectors: Richard March
Matthew Gallman
Informants: Charlie and Celia Polich
Mason, Wisconsin

1. Collector's announcement.
2. Charlie talks about the two Yugoslavian villages which populated the Argo community in Wisconsin.
3. He mentions that Matt and Tony Radosevich are the ones to see in order to learn about Benoit.
4. Charlie talks about growing up in the old country during World War I. Hard times.
5. On Sunday afternoon everybody got together to dance all afternoon. Mostly to accordion music, but some ~~degenbas~~^{tamburas}, and an occasional goatskin bagpipe. There were also flutes. Accordions were #1 among the youth; many were Italian made; they were button accordions.
6. The flutes and bagpipes, Charlie recalls, were mostly for private performance. Accordions with tamburas were mostly for wedding music.
7. Charlie's mother and friends carried on old style singing both in the old country and here until the 20's.
8. House parties with beer and moonshine were common. Annual picnics with lamb roasts were also held here, often together with the "Croatian Pioneers" branch of the Croatian Fraternal Union.
9. Back in the old country, "tamburas came into their own after the war." (Charlie came here in 1920). This was the time when men returned from the service.
10. Charlie's father had come to the states several times, then returned, before finally bringing his family over.

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11. Charlie's dad came to the states four or five times from Fiume. He became a citizen as early as 1903 and wanted the family to come earlier than they did, but the mother was reluctant and the war also intervened.
12. Letters that came from America were read publicly in the village; but during the war there was a blackout on communication.
13. The family's trip, together with four other families, was arranged by an agent. Charlie describes the trip in some detail.
14. Charlie talks about his mother as a clever peddler and dealer on the black market. She never learned English in this country.
15. Pete Kruzic in Caspin, Michigan (near Iron River) is 89 and still able; he may know some very old island songs.

16. Charlie gives Richard and Matt a copy of a songbook from which he learned many songs (where is this? does Matt have it?). He remembers the words to most of the songs he used to play; and most of them he knew before he got the book of notes. He mentions "Kukavica," "Majko," "Ja Sam Sirota," and some others that I can't get.
 17. Richard tries to get an idea of Charlie's repertoire by mentioning different songs. He goes through plenty from outside C's region.
 18. Charlie got his musical experience in Chicago where he played in an "orchestra." Most of his "people" were in the suburb of Lyons (Lynes?); people from Zlobin in Yugoslavia.
 19. Charlie and his mother arrived in Wisconsin in a miserable November on logging roads through thick brush. "She cried all winter."
 20. There was no electricity in the area until 1945. Charlie tells about how electricity was finally introduced.
 21. About his neighbors hunger for land; on how they got through the depression. (Coffee is being served at this moment).
 22. Charlie begins to talk about how his father did demolition work in quarries and in the mines.
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23. Charlie continues to talk about his dad's railroad construction work in Vancouver, British Columbia, and in Alaska.
 24. His dad normally worked in the woods in the winter, then migrated to other jobs in warmer weather. Many Yugoslavians worked in the mines and Charlie goes on about them.
 25. C's dad was blacklisted by Hanna mining and other companies for his union activities. For those and other reasons, he went back to the ~~the~~ farm.
 26. About communal labor in the area. (Amidst this March gives a collector's announcement.) Barn raising, threshing, etc.
 27. Community celebrations were in the evenings for weddings and christenings; also Sunday afternoons in the winter time. The priest could only come about once a month then, from Saxon.
 28. Christmas and New Year's were mostly a family affair. They talk about various seasonal foods: salted codfish, polenta, etc. No special songs.
 29. Charlie recalls funerals in the old country. There were 2 or 3 professional mourners in each village. "They would kinda bring up his history in a sing-song morning way."
 30. 1928 Charlie returned from Chicago and got some local friends interested in playing tambura; he mentions the seven instruments

and shows a picture of the musicians: Charlie, John Kuchin, Joe Krnskovich, Joe Petrim, John Petrin, Emil Shubert, Joe Shubert. ~~Four~~ Two are dead.

31. The group played sitting down; they played inside, and they generally used music stands. They played at the local Croatian picnic, at barn dances, at the Woodman Hall in Sanford, "a couple of dances at Benoit." The Croatian picnic was a two day affair over Labor Day.
32. Charlie talks about Matt Radosevich as the person to see with regard to Benoit.
33. C's band never charged for picnics, occasionally got ten to fifteen dollars at weddings. They didn't get tips; they tried to play requests, but their repertoire was limited.

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34. People in Benoit requested songs that those in Sanborn didn't know. In "our area, everything is based around the mother and love." When "you get ~~x~~ further out, it's more of a masculine thing, more of a hero thing." ~~Lijanci~~, especially, have a military style. *Litani*
35. One of the first songs they learned was "Samo Nemoj Ti." Also "Horo Polka" and "Becarac" (The Bachelor's Song). Guys made up verses "as they went along." Some were funny, and bawdy but clean. Only the ones born in the old country knew Croatian well enough to improvise verses. "Becarac" was danced to in 2/4 time: "like a schottische in a way." They would dance "kolos" too.
36. Charlie talks about the pathos of many of the songs they played. In response to Richard's question, he also recalls doing the patriotic number "Vila Velebita" which was "easy to play and we played it." They also played the "Notre Dame Victory March" (note Matt Radosevich played this too, "On Wisconsin" also).
37. Many of their American songs they got from Crnkovich along with "polkas, waltzes, mazurkas, whatever you wanted." Never played any Slovenian songs. But they did know some universal numbers like #Gremo Na Stajersko."
38. Charlie's band played for about five years until they got married and didn't have time. The community helped the band out with buying instruments and supporting them; the musicians, therefore, weren't seen as worthless bums who played in taverns. Band played about 1929-1935.
39. Charlie learned every song and taught the others to play the seven different parts on the other instruments. They relied on the catalogs from Crnkovich and Charlie's mother also knew many songs which Charlie learned.
40. Charlie's daughters took piano lessons from Dorothy Nettleton. He'd sometimes play along with them.

41. The band would practice at a half way point in the summer and at John Petrin's in the winter. He played the berda which was a hassle to carry around in cold weather, especially when traveling by snowshoes or skis.
42. The main dance hall at Sanborn was the Woodsman Hall, but there were also pie socials at the schools.
43. Richard and Charlie talk in Croatian, with Celia joining in. Then Richard quizzes them on vocabulary and pronunciation so as to get a notion of the couple's dialect. They discuss American words which have crept into Yugoslavian speech.

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