

## FIELD NOTES

Jim Leary  
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Frieda Haese & Heidi Schlei  
125 Lake Lane  
Lake Five, WI

Bill Neumann, proprietor of Zur Krone, had recommended that I get in touch with Frieda Haese and I learned later that she had sung with Rollie Braun's Jolly <sup>Alpine</sup> Swiss Boys. I wrote and then called to make arrangements for an afternoon meeting. Frieda suggested that her own hammer dulcimer playing would be enhanced by her daughter Heidi's zither. Both women were there when we arrived. The Haese's place, on Lake Five, is worth comment. It's an old summerhome built in 1910 but drastically revamped by the Haese's who have only lived there a few years. More importantly the interior is a regular museum of German American artifacts: beer steins, carvings, paintings, framed photographs, and banners proclaiming ethnicity occupy nearly every wall and shelf. There were also books and magazines scattered about that indicated Mrs. Haese's interest in German folk culture, and in music especially, is more than casual. There was, for example, Karl-Heinz Schickhaus's Uber Volksmusik and Hackbrett in Bayern (Munich: BLV Verlagsgesellschaft, 1981)--a well illustrated volume documenting all manner of folk music in Bavaria--and Sanger und Musikantenzeitung, a popular folksong journal with advertizements for records, instruments, costumes, songbooks, and so forth pertaining to German folk song and music.

As the tape index will reveal Frieda is third generation and grew up in the thick of German Milwaukee. Her memory of taverns in the forties is particularly vivid and her parents were friends with many German musicians and singers. Frieda, like her dad the Mannerchor stalwart, has always been a fine singer with a beautiful voice. In the early 1970s she was inspired by touring musicians to order and take up the hammer dulcimer, an instrument otherwise, she reckoned,

absent from the Milwaukee scene. Her daughter learned the zither at an early age and was an eventual princess of the Holiday Folk Fair. These few snips of information illustrate Frieda's position as an urban ethnic folkie of sorts. She's highly conscious of and quite well educated about her own tradition and she enjoys participating in the ethnic events of diverse cultures as well. Her husband Bob, a yard foreman for the Milwaukee Road, is German and Croatian, and the two have been involved at various times in International Folk Dancing and have enjoyed trips to central Europe and the Balkans. No rustic Wisconsin Dutchmen and women here. Still Frieda has learned songs aplenty in a manner that would satisfy the purist definition of traditional.

A few words about style. Frieda's singing <sup>feels</sup> toward the semi-operatic manner of the art song or arranged folksong singer--indeed she's been the featured soloist for zither club concerts over the years--yet it has enough naturalness and fun to avoid the stiffness of the overtrained vocalist. On most of the vocal numbers we recorded, her daughter Heidi added solid harmony in a voice with far less vibrato. Incidentally, Heidi's zither playing is also very solid. Her mother, by contrast, tends to rush tempos and hammer wrong notes from time to time on her hackbrett; singing is her forte. Together they offered us roughly a dozen tunes and songs in varying instrumental, accapella, solo, and duet combinations. It was a real pleasure to see and hear them sing and their voices showed the kind of blend that comes from years of singing together.

After several hours it was time for Heidi to rush home. Lewis and I reckoned to go grab dinner somewhere prior to our next session, but Frieda generously offered us the use of a canoe for half an hour while she warmed up some Hungarian goulash she's fixed earlier. How could we refuse. The ride was delightful and the dinner delicious, especially since it was accompanied by a bottle of ten year old Hungarian red wine that Bob had opened for the occasion.