

Field Notes

Informants : Eino Parkinen Collectors : Mathew Gallman
 Matti Pelto Sara Poynter
 Eddid Pelto Ellen Stekert

Date : June ²¹~~6~~, 1979

Ellen, Matt, and I arrived at Eino Parkinens house shortly after 9:00 a.m. Eino was waiting for us on his front porch, anxious to get going. Eino was to take us to meet the Peltos at their house. So Matt, Ellen and I were in Joels car and we followed Eino in his car to meet with the Peltos. We pulled into a yard surrounded with woods. In the yard were 5 or 6 old cars, a barn, an outhouse and a sauna, and the house. We entered the house and Eino introduced us to the Peltos, Matt and Eddie. They decided the kitchen was the best place to play their music and since that was where we were anyway we set up the equipment. Eino had brought his own small cassette tape recorder and set that up also. Matt brought in his B.A. and started the music by playing a song. It was then passed to M.P. and he fiddled with it and played a song. Eino suggested to M.P. to get his own B.A.

M.P.'s " Finnish cordine " was a beautiful instrument. It had carved and inlay wood work ornamentation. (E.S. took picture) M.P. and M.G. talked about where they'd gotten their B.A.'s. M.P.'s B.A. was handed down to him. It was origionally his uncle Antons B.A. - who was "one of the best". M.P. began to play tunes. It seemed that he was playing fragments of songs and between songs he'd play notes as he was trying to remember songs. He commentdd on his lack of knowledge about music, " I'm only a beginner." M.G. and M.P. talked about the B.A. - thumb straps, bass notes, button patterns.

Eddie, the older of the two brothers, kept to the background. He was a quiet person, shy and to himself, but he had a smile on his face and seemed excited about our visit. When asked if he played the B.A. we found out that he did but not much any more and he thinks he's too old to play. We tryed to coax him to play un= successfully. However, I think he may eventually play for us.

M.P. was nervous about playing at first. He walked around the kitchen while Eino attempted to encourage him to play some more. M.P. snapped " Eino, don't be in a rush about it." Meanwhile others were talking, M.P. mused, " I'll play the radio."

After a while I think M.P. began to warm up to us. As he played his songs got longer and he played more enthusiastically. He began tapping his foot to the music and smiling more. As he played his B.A. his right hand held the box and it rested on his knee and sometimes he'd rest his chin on top. He'd pull his left hand down and back as he played the bass notes.

During one song M.P. made some mistakes and got frustrated, stopped and exclaimed, " Oh, she went on the rocks!"

M.P. said he learned to play the B.A. from his Uncle Anton, and then bought his first B.A. in 1946 or 1947. He played some more tunes. When asked if he sings he said he used to but not now. He " doesn't like the names or words, he just remembers the tunes."

After a few more tunes and a few variations of Doggie in the Window, M.P. stopped and said, "Your turn Eino."

Eino was eager to play and began almost immediately. M.G. interrupted, saying that he just wanted to ask M.P. a few questions first.

Eino began by introducing his first song as M.P.'s favorite. M.P. quickly spoke up and asked if he could play it. Eino didn't mind at all. After M.P. played it on the B.A. Eino repeated it on his P.A. Eino explained that he learned to play by ear. "I know nuttin about music." M.P. and Eino both concluded, " You get it into your brain, then play it."

At this point M.P. opened the wine and began pouring shots for everyone. Eino explained on the phone the previous evening that we would need a bottle of wine as payment to the Peltos, upon request.

The Peltos house is small and seems to be kept fairly neat. Matti and Eddie are both bachelors. They've lived here nearly all of their lives. When I asked for the bathroom they laughed and said it was behind the barn. Their kitchen sink consists of a basin and a pump. They heat and cook on a wood stove. They do have electricity, but many antiques, coffee grinder, Victrola, etc. are still very much in use. They do have a television. They strike me as living a very simple life, not too different from their childhood.

Still pouring wine , M.P. talks about his record collection of 5-600 records. He bought his first phonograph in 1923-24. He made some remarks about the microphone in front of him, calling it an "outfit." (These are things he is speaking of as he pours wine.) He expresses that he doesn't like rock and roll music, it's all the same. He says he likes to play to have a good time with beer in the yard. He said he would usually play with a guitar and piano accordion. He talked about Friday being sauna day. Usually a few friends would come by for saunas, beer, and music.

Eino continued playing. He played some songs he learned from his father. His father was a lumberjack, and he also mined and farmed. Eino's father played the fiddle, but his mother didn't like it. She considered it the devil's instrument. He said his father held it on his chest not under his chin.

Eino played a few more tunes. M.G. asked Eino if he liked Croatian music and Eino replied that he thinks Croats are good B.A. players. Then M.G. got out his concertina and Eino and M.P. took turns fooling with it. Eino and M.P. began talking about learning to play the "cordine". Eino said if he'd learned when he was young he'd be good by now. M.P. said he was always told to keep his fingers out of the cordine. Then M.P. brought out an old guitar and attempted to tune it, without much success. We began to wind things up at this point. I was noticing a picture on the wall of an old mine with a bunch of workers in front of it . Eddie said his uncle was in the picture somewhere. In the corner was a newspaper clipping of Mrs. Birgit Jaakola from Finland. Eddie, Matti, and Eino all speak highly of her. As we were leaving I asked Matti how many brothers and sisters he had. He comes from a family of 8 boys and 4 girls. He's lived in this house for nearly 50 years.

We left after forgetting to get them to sign release forms, however I think they felt good about playing music for us and were agreeable to having us come back again. The next day Matt and I returned to the house for their signature on release forms.