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DOWN HOME DAIRYLAND RADIO PROJECT

Greg Zurawski
Custer, Wisconsin
April 26, 1988

1. Announcement.

2. Grandfather used to play violin, dad played concertina and double-reeded Hohner harmonica. Greg plays harmonica for his eight grandchildren. Has over 2,000 polka albums. Traveled to Europe with polka bands. Pep band in high school played "Beer Barrel Polka." Used to be dances at Stevens Point Armory with fine bands, including Whoopee John, Babe Wagner, Six Fat Dutchmen, Rudy Plocar, Romy Gosz. G has done "bouncer work" for years at weddings.

3. Gosz used to play one Sunday a month at the Wildwood Gardens. 1100 paid admissions, hall full at 400. Half the crowd listened outside. Gosz never used a PA.

4. Whoopee John put everyone in a jolly mood. Duchow used to play at the Armory, so did the Blue Denim Boys.

5. Lull in old time music in early 60s, improved in 70s, strong in 80s. Cites Oklahoma Polka Days, Pilars Polkabration.

6. Born east of Stevens Point, 2/25/27. Grandfather from Poland. G recalls violin and concertina as making up the local family and wedding bands in his youth.


8. Most of the bands outside of Norm Dombrowski influenced by the Minnesota style. Kind of a German-Czech style, but with Polish thrown in, popular in the Stevens Point area.

9. Polish bands started coming into Stevens Point when German-Czech style faded, young people tired of hard rock but wanted music with a little pep, so went for Polish style. Also a Polish radio show on Stevens Point radio with polkas. G now has his 78 library.


11. Local Polish bands pretty much follow Lenny Goumulka, Eddie Blazonczyk, etc. Lil Wally also played in the area numerous times, as did Alvin Stycznski.

12. Popular German style bands in the area: Ray Konkol currently most popular. But even Polka Stars and Jolly Chaps play a few Polish numbers for the Polish people in the area.
13. G began promoting old time music years ago, also works with J&P Czech Record Sales. Had a live radio show for eight years until forced off the air by a change in management. Favored local bands and a few out-of-town and out-of-state bands on his programs. G talks about some of his upcoming polka tours.

14. A great anecdote about Romy Gosz. Booked for a Sunday night job and showed up two hours late because he had been stuck playing for a wedding and the day after.

15. Booze for the band and no intermissions part of the scene then.

16. The old Polish style weddings years ago were three and four day affairs. Not held in halls, but tents were rented to set up out on the farm. Bride dances with silver dollars and broken dishes.

17. Bands would often play from early afternoon until early AM, 12-14 hours with a break every four or so hours. Plenty of good food and moonshine.


[session ends]