

Collector: Jim Leary

November 24, 1980

Informant: Terese Aho  
Silver Star Tavern  
Wentworth, WI

I dropped in the Silver Star about 3:00 p.m. hoping to meet the proprietor Ernie Aho. I had brought him a tape of Pekka Gronow's reissue of Finnish American performances on Victor. Ernie wasn't there, but the young woman behind the bar proved to be Terese Aho, his daughter. Terese is the mainstay of the Aho's family band, the Northernaires. She plays accordion, fiddle, guitar, and sings (I've been told) in a high, sweet voice reminiscent of Dolly Parton.

I introduced myself, presented the tape, and asked Terese if I might tape her band's performances sometime. She thought the idea was fine and suggested that I simply call in advance. We talked a little about the band and Terese showed me a Scandinavian Songbook - N. Y.: Edwin H. Morris, 1975- which the group drew from. The book, purchased from Johnny's Music in Duluth, contained mostly Swedish selections like "Nikolina," "Lordogs Vals," etc. Terese said that she has seldom seen sheet music for Finnish tunes. She learned these mostly from her father, who played by ear. Ernie had been inspired as a young man by the performances of Viola Turpeinen at Co-op Park in Hibbing. While we were talking of Viola, a man in his late 50's joined the conversation. Part Polish and Finnish, he regularly came to dance with his wife at the Silver Star. Years ago he had seen Viola play at the Brule Co-op Park. Now torn down, the place was north of Brule off County H. It had three huge rooms: one was a kitchen, one a gathering place for old timers to talk, the third was



the dance floor. This man recalled that no drinking was allowed, so they would hide their brew in the woods or go to a nearby farmer's.

Viola drew huge crowds - all the local Finns and other ethnics as well. A slim and pretty girl early in her career, she reportedly ballooned to over 200 pounds at the end. Nonetheless, she could still play. She used to outdraw Yankovic, who also played at Brule, by a considerable number.

We went on to talk about old time Finnish music and Terese made some pretty astute comments on the sound and rhythm of Finnish polkas (I will interview her and her father on these matters later on). Terese also told me that, at the Sunday night dances particularly, old timers would show up to dance. Beyond polkas, waltzes, and schottisches, some of them still did as well as special dances which went with "Raatikko" and "Kerensky Waltz."

Filled with this knowledge, I promised to return to tape and photograph a Sunday night dance.