

March 14, 1979

Informant: Carl Wedin
Swedish Hymns
Washburn, Wisconsin 54891

Collector: Marina Herman

MLH left work at 1:30 p.m. to visit with Carl and Inga Wedin about Swedish church music and traditions. MLH drove north on Hwy. 13 until I reached Washburn. MLH took a left on Washburn Avenue. Four blocks up, MLH took a right on 4th Street. CW and his wife Inga live in a large, two-story brown shingled house. The house is over 100 years old and belonged to CW's mother.

MLH knew C and IW through their membership in the Messiah Lutheran Church choir. Messiah Lutheran Church is a result of the merger of the Swedish Lutheran and Norwegian Lutheran Church in the early 1970's. Church membership is predominantly Scandinavian.

MLH knocked at the door and IW greeted. As I entered their home, records of popular religious music was playing. We went in their living room and sat facing the fireplace. There were pictures of their adopted son scattered about the room, on walls and end tables and several paintings on the wall. The paintings were done by CW's brother. After the formal interview, CW showed MLH the difference in colors each painting had. CW noted that the last painting his brother did was quite dark. CW then said his brother committed suicide shortly thereafter. Nic-nacs were on every shelf and end table.

CW is of Swedish descent, about 65-70 years old. IW is Norwegian, about the same age. They have one child, Bill, who was a Latvian war refugee. CW's from Washburn. It seems he came from quite a musical family. His three brothers and he played quite a lot of music when they were young. CW said his mother used to shut each of their doors to try to cut down the noise and practicing. CW played plectrum banjo, which he bought in 1924; and mandolin. He owns 2 mandolins - one he bought in 1921, the other his brother bought in 1918. CW's mandolin is flat-backed; his brother, which Carl says has the better of two's tone, is round-backed. CW played in 2 or 3 dance bands in Washburn before the Depression. The one he talked most about was 3-piece: an accordion, a violin and a mandolin. When he moved to Chicago in the middle 20's, he played in a band there.

He married Inga on October 24, 1933 up in Port Wing where the new Swedish pastor was. Since CW had a strong tie to the Swedish Lutheran Church in Washburn, IW and CW joined that church instead of the Norwegian Lutheran Church. CW talked a lot about the Swedish hymns they sang, and showed me a Swedish hymnal. He sang a few verses from different songs, but said the music to the songs are in a different book Shirley Raarup has. She used to be the organist a choir director for the Swedish Church. Both C and IW agree she's quite a talented organist. They say she puts so much feeling in the songs she plays.

When I asked them more about the Swedish hymns, they talked of the Christmas morning, 6 am service. The Swedish name escapes me now. IW said people would process in with candles. Carl said they used torches in Sweden.

Since both I and CW are quite religious, they started sharing songs/hymns they love. We went over to the organ and sang a few hymns in English. CW asked if I would

play the organ as neither of them sight reads that well. They really felt I should talk to Shirley about Swedish hymns, though.

IW said that she would go and get some milk and cookies at this point. MLH said CW if he played the instruments in the corner by the fireplace. Carl got quite excited when I asked him about the instruments. He stood up and pulled them all out - told me when and where he played them (the dance bands I mentioned earlier) and started picking out a few melodies he remembered. He says he only picks up the instruments once every three or four weeks now. He mentioned that the dexterity in his fingers is gone now, too. He would play a few notes then give the instruments to MLH to play along. He stood up the entire time.

After 15-20 minutes, IW came back in with milk and homemade cookies. CW put his instruments away and sat down again (his whole composure seemed to change).

Talk turned to church music again. They both said they love to sing in choirs. We spoke of the present choir at Messian. They lamented that some of the older songs were not sung anymore - old English, as well as old Swedish hymns. CW said that singing four-part harmony (SATB) and working on familiar tunes was really enjoyable. They both stressed that choirs should be fun, and began to reminisce what it was like when Shirley Raarup directed the choir at the Swedish Church. (Both C & IW showed a great deal of respect and admiration for SR).

After milk and cookies, MLH asked if CW knew any other types of Swedish music or if he remembered any dance music he played. CW shook his head. IW said they gave all that music up when they became Christians (born again).

IW began to reminisce about the Depression years then. CW worked at Washburn. Iron works for a while and owned a bulk oil business in Washburn. IW laughed when she said CW would wear out his clothes changing from one job's work clothes to another. IW also said she drove the bulk oil truck and delivered the oil herself, noting she was quite strong at the time. IW said that on Saturday nights they would go bowling and dancing. MLH commented that she and her husband enjoyed dancing, too. But IW said she and CW don't do that anymore since they became Christians.

MLH helped IW take the empty glasses back to the kitchen. It was around 4:30 pm. Before MLH left, IW gave MLH a tour of their house - through knick-knacks, paintings and photographs. When touring the upstairs, IW pointed out a coiled design in a frame which was made from CW's mother's hair. It was quite intricate. On the way out the door, we stopped by the record player, where CW played a few religious songs he thought I'd like to hear. MLH thanked them, but they said they wish they could have been of more help. IW said anytime I needed a place to stay in Washburn to just stop by. MLH thanked her again and waved good-bye. It was 5 pm.

Additional Comments: I thought that CW would remember old Swedish songs and the 1930's dance music in encouraged and if IW were not in the room. She appears to be the stronger influence in not playing secular music. I spoke briefly with our Pastor about it and he thought it would be a good idea.