

ETHNIC HERITAGE
SOUND ARCHIVE & RESOURCE CENTER
NORTHLAND COLLEGE, ASHLAND, WI

ATL 80

Log

79-042-F

1. Mike Orlich first inspired by tambura music in South Chicago in 1937 when he'd hitchhiked down from the U.P.
2. Mike tries to make a tambura out of a guitar, but it didn't work too well. Discussion of why.
3. Mike fools around with other stringed American instruments. 1946 Pete Markovich from Milwaukee comes up to visit and shows Mike how to play, and where to order instruments. Gets a Crnkovich instruction book.
4. Mike gets "seven or eight guys" to buy instruments. Talks about the difficulties of learning to play.
5. Mentions John Gugarich (sp?) who had a tavern and a tambura band with Farkash (sp?) instruments in the early 1930's. Played for dances, weddings.
6. Tells an anecdote about an old fellow who died and the singing that went on at his wake. "Buncha Serbians and Croatians, they get drunk and they all start to singin'."
7. Mike tells about the first bunch of musicians in his tambura group. Talks about the music and records and songbooks he ordered from Chicago. He and his friends only knew about a dozen songs on their own.
8. Mike travels to Milwaukee and Chicago and learns new songs. He talks about the process of learning songs off of records.

ATL 81

1. More about learning songs off records.
2. Mike's group first plays as "The Balkan Strings" at the Anvil Tavern in the early to mid-1950's. Played mostly Serbo-Croatian stuff for five years, \$10 each. Yugoslavian, Italian, and Finn audience. Played polkas, kolos, waltzes. Played for weddings.
3. Mike meets "Duluth Serenadors" and other bands in the area. Talks about bringing in bands from Milwaukee and Duluth.
4. Mike's band plays at other bars and weddings in the U.P. Talks about traveling with the band to Escanaba and Eagle River. On the economics of traveling; playing on the radio at Eagle River.
5. Mike's working life - owned garage, mechanic in iron mines until they closed in the mid-1960's.
6. Talks about ethnic differentiations in the early days in the mines. Finns and Swedes usually carpenters. "Cousin Jacks" were foremen. Croatians worked on track gangs.

7. Talks about the money made from playing and how it helped his family.
8. Buys a bar in 1961. Tells an anecdote about being out in Seattle for awhile during a strike.

ATL 82

1. More about buying the tavern. Difficulties with the tavern in the early days. Eventually they had "the best bar business in town." Music on Thursdays and Saturdays for 14 years in the place now called "Howard's Place."
2. On the band's repertoire. Played with an accordion on Thursdays and all tambura on Saturdays. Did some C & W tunes, "whatever was popular."
3. Mike sells the bar. He still owns five houses bought from bar profits.
4. On teaching the women and children to play in the tambura band. From mid-1960's on. Mentions their sources of instruments, their dance groups, and performances. On teaching older people to play tambura.
5. On arranging to have a record made of their group.
6. On learning new songs for public performances.

ATL 83

1. Mike reveals his feelings and sense of heritage concerning his music.
2. On the proliferation of tambura groups and reports on them in Serbian and Croatian American newspapers.
3. On tambura bands in Yugoslavia and festivals.
4. On Minnesota bands.
5. More on learning new songs for public performances, on "keeping up with the times." On arranging the program for performances, and for their records.
6. On the importance of practicing, especially as you get older, and on the satisfaction of playing with a group and learning new material.
7. On the importance of versatility and a broad repertoire for public performances. On how to "feel out" the taste of an audience in a tavern; on the difference between playing for dances, festival crowds, or strictly Yugoslavian audiences.

END OF SESSION