

SLOVENIAN BUTTON ACCORDION PROJECT

Tape Notes  
5/29/84  
jwb

INTERVIEW WITH: Paul and Julia Sersha

AT: Sersha Home  
1120 S. 12th St.  
Virginia, MN 55792

DATE: Tuesday, May 29, 1984

Tapes

Reels SBB 25, 26

Cassette CSBB 18

Slides: Sheet 4, 15-16

Paul is the musician. Has lived in Virginia for 30 years. Before that he lived in Eveleth. He was born in Leonidas.

Parents came from Yugoslavia to Eveleth, then Spruce location, later to Leonidas. Mother still lives there.

Talks about moving, locations, pocket house movers. Someone standing on roof as house was being moved to lift the power lines with a stick.

Father from Ljubljana. Mother from outskirts,  
(Julia joins conversation.)  
Was part of Austria when they left, 1914.

Father worked at Fayal mine underground.

Boarding house life.

Arranged marriages, money lent to pay passage from Europe.  
"Fixed the marriage here."

JS: "The lady that sent your mother the money to come over here had as a boarder your father, Paul Sersha. When your mother came here, she said, 'Oh this would be a nice man for you to marry. He's working steadily.' And in a few months they were married. And in this way she got her money back from Paul's mother, so it was dual purpose. She got her money back and Angela Procene got herself a husband."

Boarding houses in Eveleth, Fayal Road.

Paul talks about mother's arrival in Eveleth, ride from railroad station on beer wagon.

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6 children in family, 5 living.

Paul is 65, born 1919.

Occupations - CCC camps, odd jobs, worked in Chicago, into service, bus driver, owned Western Auto store, now works for the State. Also worked for Erie Mining Co., laid off. Wouldn't rehire him because of back problem.

How Paul got started playing.

Father played. Uncle John too, but German fingering. Father had a Mervar. They played together.

1:22  
1:30  
Nermanick's Store in Leonidas had a drum. Paul liked to play it. Interest in accordion, but father wouldn't let him play. Mother and he conspired so Paul could play when father was gone. She would warn him. Paul sat on floor to get into the straps on the accordion. Taught himself, melody then basses, talks about learning to play. When he was a bit older, he played for his father. Dad was proud of him because he knew how to play. Father never knew he was learning.

2  
Talks about Father's Mervar's flat fingerboard. Difference between the two. Slov - 'from the top down'. German - 'from the bottom up.' He plays flat fingerboard. His box is the same one his father owned, the one he learned on. It's the only one he's ever had.

Tells the story of his father selling the box to him for a dime, did this before the whole family.

Julia adds a few details.

This happened 28 years ago. Father was 59 or 60.

✓ Talks about the dances where his father and uncle played. Wedding at Eveleth Recreation Building. Grocer hired them and paid them with groceries.

✓ Dance hall in Leonidas, above Nermanick's Store. They didn't play in taverns.

Summer gatherings. Ely Lake

Any teachers?

No, but would watch. Talks about push-pull. Trial and error. Only heard his father and uncle. No other players.

Paul has played continuously all his life. Would often sit in with other bands. Talks about his Mervar box, only tuned twice. Bolster mentioned. Wood used in instrument. Warping problems with new instruments.

Will retire June 28. Plays more now than ever before. Often at Interpretative Center, Mesabi Button Box, out of town trips.

Julia talks about Paul playing at the lake, pontoon boat rides. Never for his own enjoyment. Even if he hadn't played for awhile, he could still pick up the instrument "and it was right there."

Wishes he had purchased other accordions he has had the opportunity to buy, but didn't.

Thinks his Mervar is dated 1912 or 1913. Talks about Mervar instruments. He can recognize them by their sound. "Mellow Pitch."

End Reel 1, Cassette side A

Reel 2, Cassette B Music

Julia spells the titles.

"Marianca" - Polka

Maybe

"Pojde Z Menoj" - Waltz

They sing, too, but it gets lost in the accordion's sound.

Adjust mic placement

"Pojde Z Mehoj"

Better vocal sound

"Zapula" - Waltz

With vocals. Nice accordion

"Moja Dekla" - Polka, slow tempo

With vocals.

"Peppy Polka" - Polka

They don't know the name. Probably learned from his father. Julia says no one else plays this tune. "Peppy Louie?"

"Clap Dance"

Julia says that's 'a real old one.'

"Daj Daj Srcek Nazaj" - Waltz with vocal

Julia translates, explains the hand motions, she does the singing.

Talks about shoemaker song 'goes like this'

" - Waltz

Talks about dances

Pillow dance

Broom dance. Paul explains a little of this dance. "Short one woman."

Old songs

"Kaj Ja Moj Mile Dom"  
"Where is my Homeland"

Julia's mother would sing, get tears  
in her eyes.

"Fantje Zbirajo"

Boys leaving for Army.

"Regiment Po Ceste Gre"

The regiment is marching down the road.

"Dekla Kaj Tehis"

end cassette