

SLOVENIAN BUTTON ACCORDION PROJECT

Tape Notes
5/19/84
jwb

INTERVIEW WITH: Frank Frol

AT: Frol Home Basement
914 11 St. So.
Virginia, MN 55792
218/741-6523

DATE: May 19, 1984

Tapes

Reels SBB 19, 20
Cassette CSBB 14, 15
Slides: Sheet 5, 1-4

Frank has lived in Virginia for five years. Before that, he lived in Eveleth "all my life".

Parents from Yugoslavia. Father from the Italy side, mother from Jyublajana, about five hours away. She went to Cleveland, then to Eveleth. He went to Ely, then Eveleth, where they met.

Frank has worked in the mines, owned a gas station, sold/delivered candy to retail stores, sold insurance, now back at mines as equipment operator for Eveleth Taconite Co.

How he got started.

1:14 "Well, John, I was three years old, and my father had an old accordion and every time he got feeling a little bit good, he would play. But the stamping of his feet were louder than the music. So he told me every time you press on a bass, you stamp your foot. That's why you see a lot of these old accordion players stamp hard because that was their beat. And so finally they bought me a one row accordion in Eveleth, at Jerome's. They had a hardware store there. I learned how to play it when my mother would sing. So I learned "Moja Dekla". And I played the darn thing all day. Then when my Dad came home from work, I forgot how it went. The next day I'd have to, she'd sing, hold the note, then I'd find it on the accordion and so the next day, while I was practicing all day, of course I got tired. Just before my Dad got home from work, I forgot again. Well, the third day, that took the cake. So I played it all day until he came home. Then I knew how to play it real well. So from then on, she used to sing for me, then I'd find the note and that's how I learned to play."

JB: "Was your father a player as well?"

FF: "No, not too well. He couldn't carry a tune in a sack."

Frank talks about learning from other players at parties or dances. He'd sit and watch the accordion players. Some would show him a few things. Mentions Jake Butala from McKinley.

Progressed to three row, played in taverns by age nine. Talks about plays in the Slovenian community, need for music in background. His father would go along when Frank played in taverns. "He'd have a good time by the time the evening was over." Laughs.

Has played all his life. Also plays piano accordion. Button accordion is limiting. Bought piano accordion in 1938 or '39 from Henry Staffaroni, Buhl. Was too far for lessons from him, he took three lessons from Willard Erickson, Eveleth. He told him he "had a little too much 'ear music'." Frank would play the songs by ear. Couldn't read music. Learned by teaching himself, basics, keys.

Talks about family friend, piano accordion player, who told him he was a button box player and could never learn piano accordion. "Boy, I was bound and determined that I was going to learn. That's what started it. And I learned."

Has led orchestra for dances sponsored by Slovenian clubs, SNPS, KSKJ, others. Also weddings. Four pieces, banjo, sax, clarinet and button accordion, at first. Later took both accordions, varied repertoire. Band still playing.

Discusses his Mervar accordion. Purchased in 1937. Had one that wasn't 440 pitch. Ordered from Mervar who had one left with German fingering. Silver. Borrowed money from his folks. Paid \$150 with case. G C F B^b - keys of his instrument. Old box was 435 pitch, also Mervar. Folks sold it when Frank went into the service. Doesn't play with any button box club.

Talks about family. No other musician in family. He was the only child. Jokes about "one good one". What music means to him. Make other people happy.

Other players in Eveleth.

Frols lived on Fayal Road. Older player in Chickentown, some from West Eveleth and Fayal. Accordion repairman. Also Ed Petrovic. Pete Sterine, Troy location, Tony Toman, piano accordion, John Tomsich, Mr. Sersha. Most of them learned in 'old country'. Some brought boxes with them, others bought them here. Relates story of one old fellow, left accordion behind, no room in luggage.

Sunday picnics at lake or farm. How word was spread. Women would cook booya. Home brew. KSKJ picnic for old timers. Some Finnish players, too.

INTERVIEW WITH: Frank Frol

Page - 3 -

✓ Talks about songs played today, old ones revised. Bands change them, different bridge.

Cleveland's role - Anton Mervar and John Lubas, builders, lived there.

Lubas brothers

Swedish reeds

To music. Frank introduces songs.

"Klace Klace" (sp) "Where's my Pants Polka"

"Old Timer's Polka"

(adjust mics)

Medley of old time waltzes

"This one is called 'The Sun is Shining Over the Hills', or something."

"Daj Daj", but Frank calls it something else.

"Slovenian Picnic"

Talks about "pillow dance" at weddings.

Talks about "clap dance".

"Clap Dance" Two times through

Explains the dance, plays again

"Turn around, turn around, stamp your feet. Turn around, turn around, one, two, three."

"Clap Dance"

cassette side A ends in middle of song.

Side B

repeats explanation and 2nd version of

"Clap Dance"

Reel 2 SBB 20

Talks about "Shoemaker's Dance" and a Slovenian version of the schottische. Hard work, dance on weekends, kids came too.

Explains "Shoemaker's Dance".

"Shoemaker's Dance" with explanation.

Talks about next dance.

"ZRIBM ZIT"

Talks about old dances, good dancers.

Phone rings.

Talks about barn raisings, haying as reasons for get-togethers.

"Moja Dekla" - the old way

"Moja Dekla" - the other way

Bass was broom handle rubbed in corn meal on the floor, kept the beat.

Weddings, 3 - 4 days. Relates about wedding in Chisholm that lasted from Saturday to Wednesday. "Everybody had a good time, except the musician, 'cause he had to play all the time."

"O, Maricka Pegla" - Polka

"Klabasa Polka" - "Dinner music" - 'Sausage Polka'

" - Waltz - can't remember the name.

Talks about how songs have changed, different dances.

"Mi Smo Mi" - Polka (Tony's Polka?)

"I Can't Dance" - Polka

Mentions dancing again.

"Top of the Hill" - Polka ". . .like they play now." From Frankie Yankovic

" - Polka