

FIELDWORK NOTES

Interviewer: Philip Martin

November 14, 1984
German-American Project

Informant: John Muller
Sunny Ridge Nursing Home
Sheboygan, WI

Mr. Muller was the person the activities coordinators first thought of when I asked about older people interested in old German music; they recalled that he played the accordion and liked to reminisce. The interviews on this day (with Mr. Mueller and others at Sunny Ridge) were held in the basement floor activities room, a largish-room with concrete walls, a pool table, plastic chairs, couches and a fireplace on the far wall. I set up in a corner with a mike on a stand. Mr. Mueller was brought in with a wheel chair, his button accordion balanced on his lap. For the first part of the interview a visiting daughter was present, though midway through she had to leave. Later in the interview we were joined in the room by another resident, Mr. Ernest Kading, whom I eventually asked to join the conversation, setting up a mike stand with separate mike for him (hoping that the two of them would get each other talking). As it turned out, Mr. Kading was from another part of the state and did not grow up in the Sheboygan area, so they had little specific to talk about together.

I began by asking Mr. Mueller to play a tune. He tried to oblige, but seemed rusty and realized this himself. He could not think of many tunes, and played with a tentativeness. I asked him instead if we could just proceed with some questions about his music and memories, and we ended up having a very pleasant and informative interview. Mr. Mueller had some very nice descriptive accounts of playing for dances in the area, himself alone and with a partner. He confirmed the basic nature of the small-sized wedding band in early years, at typical gatherings, as being perhaps an accordion player and a drum player, with occasionally trumpet and/or violin as additional instruments. He spoke on weddings and neighborhood Sunday get-togethers, among other subjects.

Mr. Kading was younger, and in very good physical health, it seemed; he had just become a resident very recently. While he had grown up around the central part of the state, he added some interesting comments of a more general nature. Perhaps the most interesting came after the interview, when he mentioned his opinion most strongly that it was the automobile that broke up the neighborhoods' closeness.

The interview was held ca. 9:30-10:00 AM.

Fieldwork notes by Philip Martin
11/25/84