

SLOVENIAN BUTTON ACCORDION PROJECT

Tape Notes
5/18/84
jwb

INTERVIEW WITH: Ed Kutzler

Tapes: reel SBB 17, 18 Slides: Sheet 4; 1-11
 cassette CSBB 12, 13

AT: Kutzler Home
 Buhl, MN
 Evening of Friday May 18, 1984

Note: Kutzler died in ~~July, 1984~~ *Aug 3, 1984*

Kutzler owned three accordions:

4 row 1930 Mervar, keys G C F B^b - 440 pitch yellow with decorative inlays

3 row 1926 Mervar, keys C# F# B - 435 pitch wooden box with inlays, new bellows

3 row Lubas, keys B E A - 435 pitch, his oldest box, belonged to his father.

Kutzler was born in Buhl, graduated from schools and has lived there all his life. His age is 62.

Parents were born in Yugoslavia; father, 16 miles west of Ljubijana; mother, from Ljubijana. They met in Waukegon, Illinois, married in 1910 and moved to Chisholm in 1918, 8 years later.

116 His father played button accordion, encouraged Ed. "He more or less pushed it on to me. He was always saying, 'Play, play, play', and he'd put the accordion in my lap. I watched him a' course, when he played. I picked it up, I was only six years old."

He has been playing ever since. He doesn't know if his father brought an accordion from Yugoslavia.

EK has three button accordions. One is ~~slavic~~ 3 row LUBAS, same one that belonged to his father. Nameplate says "Unterdrauberg" Austria?

JB: "Did father encourage, force? you to play?"

EK: "Well, yah, more or less."

JB: "Did you play together?"

24 notes EK: "No, but they took me out when, those days, they had, they had parties, house parties, and they took me along. I sat on one of these little benches. I have one or two around here. I was so small, and my father would put the accordion in my lap, and I was bashful, and sometimes I wouldn't play, and he'd get mad. (chuckles)"

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Ed's first accordion was also a LUBAS, father bought it in 1928. Ed was six years old. 3 rows. Still did not play with his father.

JB: Other players?

EK: Another old timer, boarded with them.

JB: Boarding house?

EK: "No, mother kept just a couple of boarders. Our house wasn't that big."

JB: In Buhl?

EK: "No. Lucknow location, between Buhl and Kinney. It was good sized location at one time. They were gonna build a school there at one time. Things started getting, you know, the mining companies started shutting down, so - - - It was mostly Serbian and Croation people living out there."

Learned songs using "old fashioned phonograph". Talks about winding, learning by playing records, 78's, over and over.

He worked for EJ Long Year Co. as diamond driller for 22 years. (Note: The drill bits used when drilling for ore samples to locate the ore body underground, and for drilling holes for blast charges. The men who operated the drill rigs called themselves a "diamond driller". The term is in common use.)

Then worked 19 years for the City of Buhl.

Plays with the Mesabi Button Box Club. Club started in 1978. Before 1978 he would play at the Slovenian Home, Chisholm. (Slovenian Home is fraternal lodge. One in Chisholm, another in Ely. Bar and lounge, kitchen, meeting hall facilities.)

Range Polka Club

All Slav picnic.

JB asks about button accordion players always at picnic?

EK: Yes, years back there were more, I've got one of these transformers, I guess. It changes the six volt on your car battery to 110 volt, and I would hook up this transformer and put my amplifier by the car and we could play through the amplifier off the battery of my car.

Pauses.

Stop tape. Note: I had a tough time with the interview, the equipment, misc., etc. bothered Ed, I think.

mics

He sat for several minutes then began to speak.

"When I was younger I was bashful. To play at home I would play for hours, like our house, lengthway was east and west, and then we had a shady part on the north side. My folks had a table and chair in this shady part. I used to go out there with my accordion. I was pretty small yet and I'd play out there for hours. But to go play, you know, for an audience, I was bashful. And the neighbor, this was kinda out in the country, and 'course when you play the accordion and the air is still, you can hear that a long ways. And the kids and the little girls used to come there and listen to me. Well, I didn't mind that so much, you know, the kids, but . . ."

JB: "You still feel that way, a little shy?"

EK: "I'm still that way, jah, I still am."

To music. Ed starts with 4-row Mervar

KAMNICK'S POLKA

HAPPY MOUNTAINEER

Ed sits back, asks for machine off. Rests then begins to talk about being in the mood to play and he wasn't.

Tape on again.

Talks about playing for hours in the basement, tired when home from work, weekends, things to do around house.

"As you get older. . .kinda lose interest. Oh when I was young I played lots, yes, play for hours. We'd go to, they had these Johnny Doughboy celebrations in Calumet and we'd go there, and ho man, I played for hours and hours, but I was young then, you know. I didn't even get tired."

Talks about the Johnny Doughboy event. "We'd go play you know, from tavern to tavern."

Pause

Button Box

Mervar, made in 1930. Talks about maybe John Bolster restoring. Ed bought it in 1981 for \$1,500 from Bill Techar, Kittsville. He switched to Melodija with stepped keyboard. Ed plays flat keyboard. "This is what we call Slovenian fingering. And then you'll see like the Melodija's and the Zelesnicks, they are what we call German fingering. You have steps between the rows."

Talks about chords on each, grips "down" on Slov, up on German.

Ed plays both. He had Mervar. Some players can only play one fingerboard.

EK: "That Mervar there, that's got that crying tone to it."

EK: Crying tone is 435 pitch. Keys for singing?

EK: "See, all these accordions originally made by Lubas and Mervar, they were all 435 pitch. And that one was 435 pitch and then it was changed to 440 so that you could play with another piano accordion or a chromatic. See, with a 435, you can hear they wanna go together, but it don't make it. See, 435 means 435 reed vibrations per second. On that one, it's 440. There isn't that much difference, you know, 5, yet there's a difference."

JB: Question about age.

EK: Mervar stamped them. One is 1926, other 1930. Talks about Mervar, killed 1942 in auto accident. "And I oftentime think if that man hadn't gotten killed. Look at the accordions he made, you know, and what improvement he would have made on these boxes, you know. That's too bad that had to happen. The last accordions he made were 1941 and 1942 models."

Pauses

Talks about wood and reeds, returning to 440.

Ed asks about Willy Verant and his instrument.

Stop tape.

SONGS

Note: Ed can be heard breathing (wheezing) during most songs.

Plays 1926 Mervar (435 pitch)

"Jolly Slovene Polka"

end CSBB 12A

Side B

Ed says, "That's the "Jolly Slovene Polka".

✓ "Slovenian Polka"

tape ends late in song
end reel SBB17

(Reel SBB18)

✓ "Slovenian Polka" - repeated

"I just call it Slovenian Polka".

1930 Mervar

"Slovenian Home Polka"

✓✓ "Over Three Hills Waltz"

"Dozed Off Waltz"

B part sounds like "Slovenian
Picnic Waltz"

✓ "Moja Dekla" #2

EK: "That's Moja Dekla, one of them. This is the other one."

✓ "Moja Dekla" #1

EK: "That was Moja Dekla #1. We used to call them Moja Dekla 1 and 2.
The other was #2.

✓ "Grandpa John" - Polka

✓ "Bing Bang Polka"

From Frankie Yankovic

✓✓ "Duluth Polka"

✓ "Samsa's Polka"

Flawed? first two notes

"Oh Marie" - Polka

EK: Yankovic calls it "Oh Marie", also known as "Oj Maricka Pegle"

end CSBB 12 B
CSBB 13 A

✓ "Oh Marie" - repeated in full

✓✓✓ "Zapula" - Waltz

Very nice version!

Kutzler was associated with the WMF⁶ live radio broadcast as a teenager. He and Rudy Jandrey of Ely played as a duo for the last several years.