

TAPE INDEX

Phil Bohlman
February 28, 1985

Dan Gruetzmacher
Wausau, WI

[Note: This is Leary's index of an interview by Phil Bohlman.]

1. 9 years old when started on concertina. Dad liked music, didn't play any.
2. Dad offered to buy any kid one instrument as long as they learned to play it. Eight kids, had family orchestra with D. as concertina player. "Gruetzmacher Brothers," a German orchestra: two concertinas, bass viol, drums, sax, and violin.
3. Put out first record in 1941 [D. born in 1932] at nine years of age. 78 rpm, privately done by traveling recording company.
4. Hired by Jerry Goetsch at Wausau Music Store to teach when around 13. Had 72 students overall.
5. Went to school tuning and repairing reeds with independent accordion service in Minneapolis, electronics schooling too to repair amplifiers.
6. 35 or so of D's students have bands in Wisconsin and Michigan.
7. D describes the push/pull set up of concertina and number system on sheet music; important too to know note values, to have good timing, and coordination between left and right hands. No two concertina players play alike. Takes a very good concertina player to play like an accordion. Describes the various kinds of concertinas and their price range. Reckons you can learn the instrument in 9 lessons.
8. Making the concertina is an art. Talks about tone changes and adaptations. Mentions "organtina" with its Hammond organ sound.
9. D & wife took over Silberhorn library--"biggest in the world." Not that much money in sales: "everyone that plays sell."
10. Making concertina Hall of Fame wasn't playing ability, but having students, being a performer, setting up clubs, promoting the instrument. Just prestige

involved, no money.

11. In 1941 D's family on a farm. Concertina teacher hard to find. Dad wrote to Henry Silberhorn in Chicago, H.S. referred them to Red Schaefer, now deceased, a barber in Merrill. Very fine concertina player, his daughters played too.
12. About getting over nervousness about playing in public. D. mentions playing in Alask.
13. Lot of students from Whitewater, Janesville, Watertown. D. lived in Janesville for awhile.
14. D says concertina is first in his life, his wife is second. "When we got married, that's the understanding we had."
15. On difficulty of playing out and having a family. Helps that wife is involved with concertina library, the little money that's made from playing jobs also helps.
16. D works for Kraft Foods as a shipping clerk now.
17. D's band is a "variety band." There are Poles, Bohemians, and Germans in the band, so they switch around. Careful to play the style that doesn't prevail in an area. In Iowa, where there are lots of Bohemians, "we play Dutchman style."
18. Really likes Yankovic's Slovenian style, but truly favorite style is German.
19. D does "denominational teaching"; i.e. teaches students to play their own nationality's style. D does one number where he puts in all different styles. Band members sing Polish, and German, and Bohemian. Play lotta Slovenian music and "Dutchman" music. D thinks its important to master many styles.
20. Band plays mostly weddings and anniversaries. Concertina doesn't do justice to rock, so they don't play it. At polka festivals they switch styles

until people start dancing, ditto for weddings. They play plenty of requests.

21. D played bass with Yankovic for 10-12 years. "I'm a bass fanatic."

22. D likes to pick up concertina and amplifier and walk into a bar and play. Never has to buy beer or pizza then.

23. Conertina has 52 buttons, 104 keys, 2 notes for each button. There are single, double, triple, and quad reed concertinas, latter are set up with switches.

24. D reckons Wausau area biggest he knows for concertina players. At least 15 recording concertina bands within a few miles. He reckons much of this has to do with his teaching. But some feel this has created too much competition.

25. P.B. relates concertina big in one woman's reminiscences of 1920s. D talks about concertina players at house parties of his youth. Polish come--latelys to concertina--cites Li'l Wally in mid-1950s. Initially and still a German thing. Germans have the "real old way of playing," with an old time repertoire you can sing German to. Germans set the standard.

26. Germans accent basses more, more pizzicato on notes. "A real true concertina player goes for the Dutchman or the German style. The poorer concertina players, they go for the Polish style."

27. First concertina made in England, octagonal. Mentions old concertina numbers in the Silberhorn library--many he'd never heard of before.

[Side A Ends]

28. D says Polish drag notes and blur melodies. German style--melody emphasized. Slovenians drag first bass [he is playing throughout to illustrate]. Runs through techniques imitative of Hohner accordion, Helicon accordion, and "modern" style. Then illustrates other styles: "Alpine," C&W (this demands "a real dry sound"), "Dutchman" (pizzicato and adding notes). Plays a Dutchman Tune ["Jolly Coppersmith"?] twice in different keys.

29. D generally stands when he plays at dances, better for showmanship.
30. "Cuckoo Waltz."
31. A medley of tunes.
32. "O Sussana," a schottische.
33. Talks about switching dance tempos, plays fragments of waltzes, polkas, marches.
34. Comments and illustrates how Bohemian Music emphasizes a constant, heavy melody. Plays several tunes, one of them "Svestkova Alej."
35. Dutchman and Bohemian styles get along because of love of melody. D casts aspersions on Polish style. Relates Slovenians to Germans. Polish "cover up their music with their bass. One song sounds like another." They like "their waltzes fast and their polkas slow."
36. D gets so much playing out that he just leaves the instrument in the case when at home.
37. Launches into "Just Another Polka" and demonstrates and names various stylistic changes: Romy Gosz style, Yankovic style, German style, "Wisconsin"?? style, Li'l Wally style.
38. Polish number is played in Polish, then German style, then back to Polish, then Slovenian to illustrate how a given ethnic tune can be rendered in any of several ethnic styles. Reckons Slovenians make the first note long, the rest short; Polish drag both; Germans give equal play to all notes; Bohemians heavier on the melody. [Note: It's interesting to consider these time/melody distinctions between ethnic styles in combination with other distinctions based chiefly on instrumentation.]
39. D figures hard to teach students how to play "right" if they've had prior experience.
40. D and P.B. look at the "Focus" section of the Wausau-Merrill Daily Herald

with D on the cover and photos inside of some regional concertina players.

41. April 20-21, 1985: a concertina gathering to occur at the VFW in Wausau.

[The Session Ends]