

Norm Seiss Transcript

CC. Ah, we are at the Alpena County Library, this is September 22nd, 2015, we, ah, Cindy Kus and Carole Cadarette, interviewing Mr. Norm Seiss, and ah, we will be asking Norm questions and I'm sure he's got the answers. Norm, ah, I've known you for a while, and, ah, I've known most of these musicians for a while, but your history is now about to become public. So, how many years have you been in-, involved in the music scene in your hometown or elsewhere?

NS. Well, I was born and raised in ah, up here in Michigan, and I've played accordion since I was, ah, eight years old, entertained here and around Michigan ah, since 13, ah, been in the music business since 1949, so I guess that's like 65 years. And then I began ah, wintering in Arizona, and played both in Tucson and, and Phoenix since 1982.

CK. Did you say you were born in Alpena?

NS. Yeah. Yes.

CC. Ok, did, did your music ever involve, ah, your family? Did you get your, your influence from something in your family?

NS. Oh, yes. Ah, my grandpa, ah, on my mother's side, he could play any instrument – you know, he could play any instrument that come along. And he wanted me to do the brass and that, and he started me off too young, and I couldn't handle that trumpet, you know, so . . . and my mother and dad, they all played ah, instruments, you know, accordions and that. But I actually started off on the piano, when it was . . .but they had it in the back room and it was so cold that . . . I didn't get a chance to-

(laughter)

CK. You didn't want to go back there.

NS. -do it very much. But ah, that's who influenced me to get started.

CC. Ok. And, and, and, when, when you say that, "get started", I'm very, very sure, ah, that you probably went out, you weren't doing the professional gigs, you were goin' to people's homes, and playin', playin' those old-timey, ah . . .

NS. House parties.

CC. House parties.

NS. Birthdays, anniversaries, stuff like that.

CC. Yep.

NS. Family, lotta family.

CC. Yep, and it was, it was required, really. If you played an instrument, that's what was required of you, besides bringing a dish to pass.

NS. That's right, yup.

CC. Ok. (laughter) Ok, so you started with family, and you've already said how you played here, and you played in, in Arizona, um, so did ya have, over the years, many, uh changed names of your band, Norm?

NS. Oh, yes. I originally started off ah, country with, uh, Russ and Pearl Connor - she used to be Pearl Swindlehurst, you probably remember her on the radio?

CC. Russ and who?

NS. Russ and Pearl Connor. She married Russ and she was a Swindlehurst from Harrisville and we started a country band, and then I trained, uh, Barney and Maynard Lentz . . .

CC. Do you remember the name of the band? Did you have one or not?

NS. Oh, Ranch Riders.

CC. The Ranch Riders.

NS. Ranch Riders. Yup.

CC. Ok.

NS. And then I was with ah, Lentzes for, I think, I believe like 13 years. And then I broke off with them we, Johnny Wolosyk and I got together and we formed the Thunder Bay Polka Jacks, and that included Johnny Wolosyk, Ted Kapala, Jim LaCross, Al Zdan, Doug Allyn, and, uh, also, uh, Lyle Bisanz, Dick Laney, Elwood Smith, Ray Marzean, Don Lewis-

CK. That's a big polka band!

NS. Roy Damrose, Randy Bouchard, Harold Bates, Kirk Mousseau and Arnold Jahnke.

CC. You're kidding.

NS. Over the years.

CC. Over the years - And you were called The Thunder Bay what?

NS. It was, ah, Thunder Bay, uh, Polka Jacks. Oh, and then, uh, uh, Cordovox Trio, we branched, branched off of that and.

CC. That gives me another question, you said you started out on piano-

NS. Mmhuh.

CC. - then you went to accordion. When did you go to Cordovox?

NS. Cordovox was, uh, ah, I believe '75.

CC. That's when they became pretty well known.

NS. Yeah, yeah.

CC. You still play Cordovox, Norm?

NS. No, I play Elkavox. I play Elkavox now, it's more updated and, uh, it's easier to get more sounds, and, uh . . .

CC. Less temperamental?

NS. Uh, I wouldn't say that, well, it's easier to get to different, ah, tones . . .

CC. Ok.

NS. You know.

CK. Norm, before we go off, I'm guessing someone out there besides me doesn't know about the Cordovox.

NS. It's an electronic accordion that incorporates about every instrument that you want to call up - in itself. Usually when I play, I play like four or five things at one time. I do the accordion, the organ, and sometimes I put ah, brass in there, and it runs the accordion, uh, a bass, and also like the guitar bass.

CK. Oh!

NS. So, uh, I do a lot of, you know, solo work out in Arizona, and, and I pick up a drummer or a sax player, you know, if they want more or whatever, you know. But it's a, it's a really, uh, nice unit. And it's ah, they quit making Cordovoxes, uh, and then they started off with the Elkavox, and now they don't even make Elkavoxes anymore.

CK. What was the difference between the Cordovox and the Elkavox?

NS. It's easier to switch over - it's easier to get the tones. Ah, actually the old Cordovox was nothing more than, uh, a Lowrey organ. Even the keys, the switches were all green and red and white, and, you know, the, you know the contacts.

CK. Huh.

CC. How much does one weigh for you to hold it up?

NS. 32 pounds.

CC. 32 pounds.

NS. Yeah.

CK. You hold it?

NS. I stand, uh . . .

CC. Well, yeah – accordion.

NS. A lot of ‘em sit, there’s not too many that, uh, that uh, stand and play-

CK. OK.

NS. -especially my age. You know, so . . .

CK. So who was in the Cordovox Trio?

NS. The Cordovox Trio . . . aaaaaah, The Cordovox Trio consisted of Lyle Bisanz, Don Lewis and myself, and then later we join – uh, uh, changed a little bit. Uh, we had Elwood Smith and John Marzean. And now our band is called, uh, the Norm Seiss Variety Band.

CK. Oh, ok.

NS. And that consists of, uh, right now - but it changed over the years, too, but right now it’s, uh, John Marzean and we have, uh, Judy ah, Suchey, uh, and we have, um, Ed, um, Siwiec on, uh – well, you know Eddie.

CC. Yeah, I don’t know how to pronounce his last name,

NS. Seeveich.

CC. . . . but I know who Eddie is . . . he is in the Polka Music-

NS. Hall of Fame.

CC. Hall of Fame.

NS. Yes, he is, and he plays with us, and he

CC. Lives downstate.

NS. And he plays . . . yes, he lives in, uh, uh, Northgate, I believe, downstate. And he joins us, uh, at the casinos and stuff, to play. So, uh, he’s very, very good. And, uh, he plays sax and clarinet. And uh, of course, over the years we’ve had uh, **Corny Haskie**, Greg Adamus, Butch Lyons, Bill Suchey. So, that’s all in our, uh, Norm Seiss Variety Band.

CK. And you play mostly in casinos – that particular band, or . . . in . . . ?

NS. No, uh, I get, sometimes they need four piece, and we play, then we get Eddie to play that, but most of the time it's three, and that's, uh, festivals and, and uh, Oktoberfests and all that. Most of the time it's three, but we have Eddie, you know, for the fourth person.

CK. Ok.

CC. Referring to your style of music, I'm sure, you already said you started out as in country, but I know it's evolved as . . . over the years.

NS. Ok, the style, uh, changed, you know I originally took off, you know, country, and then I was influenced by Frankie Yankovic at 18 years old and, uh, he wanted me to join him on tour with him, right after I graduated. And that was a tough decision there, you know, but I decided not to.

CC. Premier band! Polka band.

NS. I . . . I decided not to do that, and I went into uh, other businesses, you know. But, um, the style of music I do now, uh, is more, uh, I do German, Polish, uh, polkas, waltzes, country, and, uh, these, with uh, this electronic accordion, the Elkavox, I can, uh, do a lot of other stuff, uh, variety of dances, easy listening, and, uh, it's a, it's a different, it's not that Yankovic style was, you know, get up and go and fast – you know, well, people are gettin' older so their ah, you gotta slow down a little bit, and this is a softer tone and it works really nice.

CC. Besides your . . . your family, and uh, and the uh, people that asked you to play with them, any other influences that just, uh, you heard and said, I need to do that, I'd like to do that style, or any influences you'd like to talk about?

NS. Well, my biggest change was when um, I was in ah, Arizona, and Marv Herzog was playing at the uh, um, uh, Civic Center in Mesa and there was different bands there, and he spotted me, and the place was packed, there was 2 - 3,000 people there – and he says, “I see Norm Seiss is here, so I wonder if he'll come up and play a few numbers?”

And . . . well, I knew him from before, because we went fishing together and stuff like that, but I never, he never ever called me up onstage, we just was really good friends.

He says, “Yeah,” he says, uh, “we're gonna try to get him up here.” He said it over the mic.

So, um, I got my stuff, I had everything there, brought everything up, set everything up, and I played with him for a while, and it was a big stage, and when I, we got done playin', it was big applause and everything and I walked down the steps from off the stage, the back of the stage, and there was a, a guy there representing the German Club of Tucson and he says, “We need you down in Tucson.”

And I says, “Well, I'm not very far from there.”

And he says, “Meet me in the morning.”

And from that time, we met in the morning and he got me into all this stuff down in the Tucson area, and it opened up a whole new field for me. There was, ah, German families there, that have homes in Germany, they have summer homes in Arizona, pretty well-to-do people, and I got to work with them, I've done, uh, playing jobs, I've played at festivals down there, and, uh, then we ended up playing Oktoberfests and we had – we, we still, it's ah, it's a lot slower now, I mean, the Polish Club dropped off, and ah, I did all the music for the Polish Club down there, and Italian Club, two German Clubs, there's only one left now, and uh, but that opened - that was a, a big deal, there. I say, and I mention it a lot of times when I'm playin', if it wasn't for Marv Herzog, I wouldn't be here today, and that's the honest truth, you know. Because he – he told me all the time, he says, "Norm, you can't give up", he says, "you gotta get goin'", cuz I was in a, in a stage in my life, there, I didn't know which way I was gonna go there, and he says "You gotta do this, you gotta keep goin' and ah, we lost him at the age of six – ah 70. He'd just turned 70, uh, thirteen years ago this December, it's gonna be, and I'm still goin'. So I'm thankful for that.

CC. Would you like to tell us how old you are, Norm?

NS. (Laughter) 79, won't be long to be 80.

CC. See, that's – we could do the math, you know, you said you started when you were eight, and you've been at it so many years-

NS. Yeah.

CC: -but, uh . . . Um . . . when, when you met, uh, when you meet these folks, of course, they want you to come up and play music with them, and uh, when I hear you, I sense very much the German side-

NS. Mmhuh.

CC.-of the music that you do-

NS. Mmhuh.

CC. - but you do also all styles because of that instrument you play, you can, you can make it do what you want it to do.

NS. Yes, I can.

CC. Ok. Ok.

NS. Yeah.

CC. Folks that don't understand what you're playing would be interested in knowing how long did it take you to be able to, to work those stops on that instrument and, and put those rhythms in – was it a long process?

NS. The rhythm, the rhythm, uh, I have to put in myself, there's no rhythm, automatic, uh, drum machine or anything in there-

CC. OK.

NS.- that's, that's not in there. The newer ones, now, they have the console and, uh, they can program that in there, they can, like the keyboards and stuff like that.

CC: Mmhuh, mmhuh.

NS. But I have to do that all myself over there. It doesn't take long to do that, ah, in fact, ah, what makes it easy on the Elkavox, easier, is everything is named, you know: ah, clarinet, sax, ah, guitar, whatever. You can do it solo, or you can have it in orchestrated, you can have it joined with more, you know, two, three clarinets, or a clarinet and a sax, and whatever, you can join that in there, and, uh, it's, it's not too, uh, not too complicated to do that.

CC. So the voices is easy, it's the rhythm that you gotta work with more.

NS. Mmhmm.

CC. Ok. Ok.

NS. Yup, it's the rhythm. And I never took a lesson in my life. It's all . . . it's all, um, ahem . . .

CC. You don't read notes.

NS. No, I don't, and I don't know one from another, it looks like hen-scratching to me. So, my, my parents didn't, either, but my grandpa, he wrote music, for all he had a, a, a eight- piece brass band that he formed in, in Sanford Township., in Ossineke, there, and, uh, they played all that stuff, and he wrote all the arrangements. He knew all the notes. He, he come right over from Germany, him and, uh, you know, grandpa and grandma, and my dad, actually, come over from Germany, too, when he was 6 years old, but, uh, uh, they did everything by notes, you know, Grandpa and Grandma, there. But my folks didn't, so I never did pick up on it.

CC. Ok. Never was required of you?

NS. Uh-uh, nope.

CC. Ok, ok.

NS. No, I'm blessed with a -- I hear a song a couple times, especially if it's a catchy one, I hear it a second time, I can play it, which makes it good because I play with a lot of different people out in Arizona, and, uh, it's, uh, very important to, to play it exactly, what, you know, how it's written, because if you're floundering around, I mean, you, you can't do that. So I, I like to do that.

CC. Um, a lot of times you find, uh, that playing a particular song here, in our area, when you get out to, to wherever it is you're playing in another, in a another state, they have a little different take on it. Do you ever find that? That they, they play it a little different?

NS. Oh, a little different. Yeah.

CC. Than we do here?

NS. Timing is a little different, you know, yup.

CC. Yeah, yeah.

NS. But for the most part, uh, all the big bands that come out in, in the winter months in Arizona, they're all top musicians and they're, they're right, you know – they're, you can, you can get any one of those to play with you, and you can play with them-

CC. Mmhuh.

NS. - which makes it really, really nice. There's . . .

CC. They're retired, and they just want to play music.

NS. Mm hm.

CC. And they don't worry about the pay, not much – there's none!

NS. (Laughing) There isn't! No, like you say, bring a potluck-

CC. Yep.

NS. - bring something to eat-

CC. Yeah.

NS.- and something to drink, and you can play!

CC. Yes.

NS. Gosh . . . yeah, we have a lot of jam sessions out there, there's, there's uh, all kinds of, uh, down the strip, we call it the strip – down main street, and, uh, there's nothin' to it. This one place, uh, that's got, like, uh, seven or eight accordions set up, and saxes, and, uh, guitars, and keyboards and drums, and, and everybody is in a rotation, you know,-

CC. Mmhuh.

NS. -you just go down the line, pick out your number, and say what it is and what key you're in and away you go.

CC. Yeah, you take turns.

NS. Yep.

CC. Like you saw the other night. So, you talkin' about, aaah, Arizona. Now, when you think about your home town, what was the places you played in around here? Did you play – you played bars . . .

NS. Oh, yeah.

CC. And taverns.

NS. Mm hmm.

CC. Locally.

NS. Oh, yeah, I played in every . . . every place that had a dance floor and some without even (laugh), you know . . .

CC. I'm sure it was Cedar Grove

NS. Oh, Cedar Grove for thirteen years, and ah, like uh . . . uh, uh

CC. Bolton?

NS. Oh, Bolton Bar, I played there for- forever. Ah, and like, The Owl, and at The Owl, um . . . I guess we were there, too. But, ah, on ah, where the bank is now, there used to be a . . . a, what the heck was name of that? Not the . . .

CC. I can't help you, 'cause . . .

CK. On Second Avenue?

NS. No, no, right on Ripley Boulevard., there used to be a, a Lodge there

CC. The Eagles.

NS. The Eagles.

CC. The Eagles was there.

NS. Yeah, the Eagles, and that's where, uh, uh, Dick Laney played with me there forever. And, uh, uh, any, any bar, uh, Rogers City - Deer Hunt, we played there for years, you know. And, uh,

CC. Hideaway?

NS. Hideaway, Hideaway . . . And um, Grand Lake Lounge, ah, there was Three Pines, there was all these other . . . oh, down in Posen, there, some of those old bars down in there, I played in every one that ever was around, so . . .

CC. Sure, sure . . . so back then there was a lot of places to play – what about now?

NS. It's getting fewer and fewer and, uh, the people are getting fewer and fewer, because, uh, the . . . that's why we've had to really change, because it's not polka-waltzes and, uh, and, you know-

CC. Two steps.

NS. - two-steps all the time – it's, it's a variety, and uh, it's our swing music or upbeat, uh, that's taken over the polkas, you know.

CC. Mmhuh.

NS. Used to be, uh, really heavy on polkas and waltzes, and now, I mean, uh, average uh, three hour job I bet you we don't play over probably 12-15 polkas all night, you know.

CC. Mmhuh.

NS. And it's all this other stuff, you know. We don't play any rock n' roll, but, uh, upbeat, you know, nice swing stuff we play.

CK. And who are your audiences? I mean, are they - do they tend to be older people, is it a mix?

NS. Yeah, yeah, they're older people, yeah, they're older people and they're ah, faithful followers, they follow us all over, where we go, we have a good following all over, uh, when we play at the casinos up in Brimley, or, or down in Little River at Manistee, or Petoskey, I mean, these people make an effort to come down. I used to arrange, uh, uh, bus trips for years, but the last couple of years I've kind of gotten out of that because the price is so, uh, you know, for the rental of the bus, and the fuel, you know, is so high that people are – a lot of people have vans, so they'll, they'll bunch up and, you know, get some more, and they'll come up, like that. Just like, this, uh, this weekend we're playing down in Saginaw, well, there's, there's uh, I think three or four van loads that are coming down. You know, they just bunch up, and - and the price went up, uh, so much on the bus trips that, you know, if a 35 bucks, uh, a couple is 70 bucks, well, with the gas prices down, we're gonna drive, you know. So.

CC. Yeah, we're gonna drive. Well, I also know that, uh, you also, uh, at least once a year, you put, you do put, you take it upon yourself, and, and uh, to put on your own special dance in October. Of course October has a special meaning, doesn't it?

NS. Oktoberfest, yup.

CC. Yeah. It's a, it's a, it's a German -

NS. Yes.

CC. - dance and food.

NS. Oh, yes. See, it's tradition in Germany, it started Sunday – uh, it's in September now, it used to be October – it all started off with, uh, King Lud – Ludwig and his wife getting married in 1812, or 1810 . . . uh, I think it's 16, yeah, 18 . . . 12 . . . and he had this big wedding, and so many people participated in that, so, he said, “we're gonna do this again.” So it was in ah, November, October. It was in October, and they had it the following year and they had a big snowstorm.

CC. Ok . . .

NS. So, King Ludwig said, “we're gonna to do this in September”. So, it's always the last weekend in September, and it goes into - this year it ends up October the 4th. But it started last Sunday.

CC. Ok.

NS. So, it's a traditional thing. And that's when you - they tap the kegs and, uh, have the . . . you know, you're there, you play a lot of upbeat polka music, it's a different style stuff, you know. Things go a little different.

CK. So is there an Oktoberfest . . .

NS. Here?

CK. . . . event here?

NS. Yes. Uh, I teamed up . . . I uh, teamed up with the K of C now, to uh, three years ago, uh, actually five years ago, our German Club here disbanded. I played, I was the first one to play for them, and I was the last one to play for them, in the span of 50 years. I played for, from the beginning, and I finished it off at the end, and I said, I can't let this go, so I got ahold of the A-Plex, Darlene, and ah, she said, “We're going to have Oktoberfest, we're gonna keep going with that.”

So we went, we transferred over to, to ah, we organized a, a dance thing, and we had it over at the A-Plex, A-Plex for two years. And then the K of C, we got together with the K of C uh, uh, members, or the board, and they said, “Well, we can – we need something out here.” So, this'll be our third year out there, and that's a huge success. I mean, it's just-

CC. It's a sellout.

NS. Yeah. It's a sellout. We decorate everything, uh, uh, German style, and have our lederhosen, and, and uh,

CK. It's a one day – one day event?

NS. Yeah, it's a Sunday afternoon, uh, music from 2 – 5:30, with a dinner, uh, at 5:30, and ah, it's a pork loin dinner with a great turnout, lot of prizes given away, there's raffles and whatever. I mean it's a fun time, you know. It's been working out really good.

CK. So, what is the date of this year's?

NS. Uh, 25th of uh – Sep – uuuuh, October.

CC. October. The last Sunday of the month.

NS. The last Sunday in October.

CC. Yep.

NS. Yep.

CC. Yep.

NS. I usually have fliers around, but . . .

CC. I left mine at home, I'm sorry, Norm. Well, do you, um – you've given us a lot of information, but I'll just betcha somewhere there is some special stories you could tell us.

NS. Well, the ones that I mentioned, you know, uh, before, you know, with uh, when Yankovic approached me, I mean, that was ah – I, I was just flattered by that, you know, that, that ah...

CK. How had he heard of you?

NS. I was, uh - I attended a lot of his dances. Er, he played downstate, at, uh, bars and Ravina Gardens was one of the places he played, and he played at different places and I was – I was just attracted to him and, uh, I got a lot of literature and pictures and everything else and then, ah, he played up here at the Memorial Hall – the Armory – and, uh, it was after that that we went out to The Harvest Table was still in business, you know, and we went out for, uh, for lunch after, you know, after the dance. And he says, "I'd sure like to have you to join us and - and be a member of our touring group."

And I said, "Oh, my gosh." I says, I – I was just floored, I - I didn't have words. So, I says, "I'll get back with you." And I got back with him later and I said no. That's not gonna work because, uh, I – you know, I was in the National Guard and that, but, uh, I was never away, in service or, you know, I mean at that young age, what are you gonna do, you know. So . . .

CC. Was you already married, Norm?

NS. No. Mm mm, no.

CC. No? You weren't.

NS. No, no . . .

CC. I thought maybe that was part of it.

NS. No, I was just a homebody, you know-

CC. OK.

NS. -tryin' to get um, ah . . . where I was going to go in a business. I was offered a job at Besser's because of my engineering, and I turned that down. And I went into the home construction business, that's what I went into, and, and I was glad I did. And the other big thing was, ah, with Marv Herzog ah, gettin' me up there to play – I mean that's what opened up this whole thing, ah, what can I say? I mean, I just ah, feel blessed that I can keep doing this, and uh, so . . .

CC. Have you got anybody that you've ah – do, do, do you have family that, that also, that you hand this onto, this - your ability to do this?

NS. No

CC. No?

NS. No, none of my children, ah, ah, my daughter started off on ah, we had a - a Lowrey organ in the house and, ah, she st – we took her to have lessons, and she was gettin' pretty good at it, but then, you know, as time goes on, they have different views-

CC. Life changes.

NS. -things change, so she kind of drifted away from that and, and boys come into the picture and that, but then my youngest one, which was ah, four years younger – she ah, picked up quite a bit from my older daughter, because, you know, ah, she seen what she was doin'. And then, ah, my son, ah, we got 'em, he wanted to play brass, so we got him a saxophone and that started off, uh, pretty doggone good, but then, its got to sit in the corner and it went by the wayside.

CC. Yep.

NS. So there's none in my family that ever took it up. And my sister tried to play a little bit, ah, and I think she still has accordion there someplace in the closet, but, but maybe not. But, ah, she gave that up, too.

CC. Ok.

NS. So.

CC. Ok. Ok. Any more questions, Cindy?

CK. I'm wondering, we talked a little bit before the recorder went on about recordings that you have made – can you talk about those?

CC. Where did you do them, for one thing?

NS. Well, uh, the first one, we went down to uh, was it Ithaca, or was it downstate?

CC. Ok, reel-to-reel? Reel to reel recording?

NS. Reel to reel. Reel to reel. Yup, on uh - it was on John Antos (sp) and ah, it was down below, we recorded that in a studio. The other ones we recorded live, just by a - a tape recorder.

CC. Mm hm.

NS. And we – bits and pieces, and whatever, but we couldn't - it had – you, it come out just the way you played it, you couldn't separate, you know, like in a studio.

CC. You couldn't track it.

NS. No, you couldn't track it at all, it was just, ah . . . So, ah, we, we recorded a – a – a Okt-, Oktoberfest one, and then we did uh, one live on, on uh, Mt. Lemon, which, uh, I played there for 13 years, it was ah, 10,000 feet up above, uh, Tucson.

CK. I've been up there.

NS. You've been up there! Ok. Uh, how long ago?

CK. 30 years ago.

NS. Oh, well, things have improved – we quit playing there in, uh, the last time we played there was '05. But through the years, the 13 years that we first started, you drove up there and it was just little turn-offs that you could park on the side and let another car come down; over the years, that's all been improved – now, the last two years that we're up there, we could just sail up there, it's a two lane highway all the way up there, and I said, why did they wait this long? I mean, we got two good years out of it, but the other 11 years, we had to fight construction and . . . terrible.

CC. But those were inside gigs, you weren't playing outside, were you?

NS. Outside.

CC. Oh, outside – oooh.

NS. Outside. It was like Oktoberfest, right outside – in fact, they had the uh, uh, ski lifts goin'!

CC. I was going to say – there's snow up there!

NS. No, not in October.

CC. OK.

NS. Well, it did snow a few times, it's, you know, snow flurries come down, and we had to keep on playin', but these – these people would, uh, uh, get their tickets, ride those, uh, those – and they said it was just like Germany, a lot of people who were over in Germany to the – to the Alps and stuff like that? That reminded them. We were in a big – you know, and a - had a great big dance floor, about 50 by 100 or something like that, you know, it was under the – you know, next to some trees, and we played right outside. And we recorded that and we have - that's one of my recordings. It ah, ah, ah, was all recorded live, I, I know that, and, uh, I have. But, uh, we ran out of our CDs and stuff and I never figured we'd be playing at this time. I should have made more recordings. In fact, uh, Eddie wants to record us when we're up, you know, together-

CC. Mmhuh.

NS. -but uh, they have better equipment now, you can be on different, you know, tracks.

CC. Tracks. Yep.

CK. Then I have one question about this article I found in the *Alpena News* about you being in the Polka Hall of Fame – the Michigan Polka Hall of Fame? Is that true?

NS. Yes, it is.

CK. That's impressive. Oh, look what you brought us.

NS. There's another page in there.

CK. July 27th, 2011.

NS. Well, I was actually inducted, uh, in October, isn't it – October . . . right here, October the 2nd, 2011. That's when they first uh, notified me, I believe, that first date that, that you mentioned.

CC. They would have notified you in July-

NS. July.

CC. -of 2011, and you went in in October.

NS. In October.

CC. I think you had a bus load go down there, did you not?

NS. Yes, we did. Oh, yes, we had a big, big turnout there.

CC. Ok, yup. Ok.

CK. So, is there an actual – it looks like there's a building?

NS. Oh, there's a building with *all* the names on there. That whole wall is got pictures of everyone on there.

CK. In Owosso.

NS. In Owosso. Yes.

CK. So it has your picture?

NS. Yes.

CK. And does it have information like a bio or?

NS. Oh, yeah, I have all the plaques at home, for on the walls and all that.

CK. Well, congratulations, what a

NS. Well, that's a privilege. That was - *that* was an honor! I'll tell you.

CK. Yes.

NS. Yeah, yeah.

CC. Sure, absolutely.

NS. Yeah. You know, I'll tell you, there's a whole – ah, wall that's solid pictures, from one end to the other. I believe that wall is probably 75 feet long?

CC. Sure.

NS. And then there's – it's just all pictures and it's got the write-ups on everybody.

CC. And in there, for another reason – you help me out here – did Don Partyka get into this, too, because of his being on radio and playing polka music? He was in a hall of fame, too, as a broadcaster in the Polka Hall of Fame, I thought.

NS. Uh, I don't think he was in this one, this is a-

CC. Not this one? This is a different one?

NS. Yes, this is a different one – this is a side, the Michigan State Hall of Fame. Polka Hall of Fame. The other one is Polka Music Hall of Fame.

CC. There you go.

NS. And Don's in that one, and there's quite a few other ones that are in that one, but, uh, like me and Dick Kosloski, Harold and Martha Hopp, uh, from here are all in this one.

CC. In this one.

NS. In this one.

CC. Ok. Yeah.

NS. The, the Michigan State one.

CC. OK.

NS. Yep. Yeah, that was a – that was a surprise when I got – actually, Joanne called me and says, you know – you’re gonna be surprised what you’re gonna get in the mail, she kinda forewarned me a little bit. Then I did get the letter, and-

CC. Someone must’ve submitted your name, or did they-

NS. Yes, uh, down below, um, a good friend of mine, um, aah, Eddie aah, umm, uuuuum, what do they call him, uh, can’t even think of his name.

CC. That’s ok, but I know you have to be recommended by somebody. I . . . you know.

NS. Yeah, well there has to be - it has to be submitted and has to be voted on, you know, so . . . uh, I guess he brought up the name there and I was known very well down, down below, too, and then they got inquiring around here and then my name got on there. Yep.

CK. So what was the ceremony like?

NS. Wonderful! Big bands playing, uh, dressed up, everybody was . . . you know, it’s not a – it is a first class operation. Yeah, there’s dance music, uh, they have a big dinner, a big catered dinner comes in and takes care of everything, and, uh, and of course all our, uh, all the people from here come down, and we took in . . . We had the most people, we had a whole side of people, uh, everything filled up our side. We had the biggest. In fact, we had more than the other three guys put together.

CC. There ya go.

NS. Yeah. Yep, it was a big, it was a big festival.

CC. Ok, um, is there anything else, um, that you could share with us about yourself, or . . .? Have we covered it all for ya?

NS. I think we covered quite a bit of it, you know. But how things have changed over the years from goin’ 90 mile an hour stuff, you know, to slow, easy, you know, more of that, so. And I just hope that, uh, you know, some of these younger, uh, people would ah, you know, participate in some of these festivals and dances, but you can’t get ‘em out. You can’t get ‘em to come.

CC. That’s a worry, isn’t it?

CK. Yeah, the worry of the tradition being lost.

NS. Yeah. It's going down.

CC. It is a worry.

NS. Yeah, just like in Tucson, I mean, that was a bubbling town. And that's why we had to move outta there, we moved up to Mesa now, because, ah, it was just dying out. You know.

CC. Yep.

NS. You know. So, we have to go where the, where the action is. We're just limpin' this German club along in Tucson yet and it's, uh, down from 550 members to probably 95 right now – and they're worried, you know. They want me to play for their 50th also down there, and the last, eh – I'm always booked ahead, we're up to '17 already, I says, I don't know about, for one thing, myself plus, you know, what's going to happen with the club. Because the clubs all went by the wayside because it dwindles down to 20-25 people who have to do all the work. and those 25-30 people are getting older and there's nobody coming to help and they can't afford to hire people to do this work. So it's goin' down. So, uh, I'm a keep it goin' as long as I can, I promised them - they were really, uh, disturbed when they heard that I was going to move to Mesa, which is 110 miles away, and I says, "As long there's going to be a club there, I'm gonna keep comin' down there." So, I – you know, made 'em feel better on that, because there's *nobody*, I mean, *nobody* that can come in there and play that. There used to be a gal that had a German, uh, band, she come right from Germany, and she used to do some, uh, dances around there and festivals and stuff, but she's no longer doin' that, either. She's done.

CC. And basically, exactly what you're saying's happening in Arizona is happening right here in our hometown.

NS. Mm hm. It is.

CC. It's basically the same thing.

NS. It is.

CC. We, we we try to keep the traditions alive – you, you, myself, every other musician that's interviewed, and it's just, um, I don't know, it is worrisome.

NS. It is. And we all have to work together – I, ah, we all say, we're a musical family here. I mean-

CC. No matter what you play, we're a musical family.

NS. Yeah, regardless of what you play, and, and who, who needs help – there's people that's come up to help fill in, I mean, uh, you know, we've seen this, we experienced this many times.

CC. Yeah.

NS. If something happens someplace along the line, we're right there to help out. And that's the only way it's going to keep goin', is ah, we have to keep workin' on that.

CK. Support each other.

CC. We support each other no matter what.

NS. Yes. Yeah.

CC. Yep.

NS. We are a musical family, regardless of what style.

CC. I don't think I know of anything, from my personal point of view, that brings more people together, working in the same direction, as musicians.

NS. That's true.

CC. Yah mean, you got, no matter what your professions, you got doctors, you got this, you got this, but musicians, I have found, as we get older – now, I'm not telling you it was that way, way back when, there was a lot of jealousy and things going on, right?

NS. Right.

CC. You know, but now where we are at this point, don't you think?

NS. We're hangin' together.

CC. Yep.

NS. Yep. Sure.

CC. Yep. And that's why I think what the Alpena County Library is doing, with this, which is gonna be as we've discussed, and I kept me awake at night thinking, wow, this is quite a thing, that this is so important - to Alpena and the surrounding area.

NS. Yeah.

CC. Because I – I've never lived any other place, but boy, there is a lot of musicians and a lot of talent out there.

NS. Sure are.

CC. That needs to be remembered.

NS. Yep.

CK. When are you leaving for Mesa?

NS. Uh, we leave, like the second day after Christmas.

CK. Oh, good.

NS. And then, now we have family halfway in Oklahoma. They uh, they were employed here, with the ah, ah, gas and oil industry and they got transferred to Texas first, and then, uh, uh, they got from TX they got into Oklahoma, and then ah, they brought the family there, and they're there and they found ah, husbands there, and they've got children there, and now we have children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren there. So we go there and we spend, uh, we have our like a second Christmas there. We join together, and ah, and I have to be in Arizona by the 6st of uh, January because our first job there, our first playing job there is the 8th and then it's busy throughout the three and a half months, then we come right back here in the middle of April and first of May we start our first jobs here.

CC. Mm hm.

NS. So that . . . Uh, coming back to, uh, why, uh, you think that we're stickin' more together, you know, I mean, it's a closer relationship – uh, the music business is not the money business. It's not money. These professional people, uh, attorneys, uh, and what have you, doctors and stuff like that, there's more of a – it's a cliquish thing, I find. There's exceptions. But the music business, there's - there's nobody out for the big money because it's not there. You know. Sometimes you'll land a you know, a nice, you know, you'll land some nice jobs here and there, but the basic thing is, I mean if you keep it, just like my, my um, my Elkavox, and just a little setup is like – my Elkavox alone is eight thousand, and you got the setup, you're talking ten thousand, you know? I mean, it's - and then you're replacing and repairing and stuff like that, there's guys tripping over cords and pullin' out cords, you have to replace cords and ah, mics and whatever have you, you plug things in, you don't know if they're gonna work, you know, I mean it's . . . it's not a money making thing, there.

CK. It's a labor of love.

NS. Yeah, and it's, it's a hobby, and the enjoyment, uh, that I get out of people when they're out there, and there some of them - and I play nursing homes out in Arizona, too - and they can't get out of their wheelchair, but their feet are goin' and their hands are goin', and a lot of places I play here – uh, casinos, even the one up here in, uh Brimley, there, uh, it's older people – um, we have a lot from here goin' up, too; but there's residents there and stuff, and they'll just come around, they'll, they'll take up tables and they'll just, just beam right at ya, just like that, just watch every, every move you make.

CC. Mmhuh.

NS. And, uh, they're just on, and you get off the stage, and they, they want you to come to the – 'cause some have a hard time getting up, you know, and they want you around the tables – and it's just- that's what keeps things goin'.

CC. Mm hm. Well, we'd like to thank you, uh, Norm Seiss, for coming in and talking about yourself and everyone else that's been with you and around you – um, and just a big thanks from both Cindy and I, and the Alpena County Library, uh, we appreciate everything you have done and everything you do, and everything you're going to do.

NS. Well, thank you very much, it's been an honor to be here and uh, all the people I mentioned that through the years, all the musicians, they need the credit, too.

CC. Absolutely.

NS. So, thank you very much.

CC. You're welcome.

CK. Thank you.