

Richard Kosloski Transcript

CC: We're at the Alpena County Library, today is October the 27th, 2015. I'm Carole Cadarette, here with ah, with Cindy Kus and we are interviewing today Mr. Richard Kosloski. N is it? Is that your middle initial- Richard N. Kosloski?

RK: Norman.

CC: Norman is your middle name- okay. Reason being we're specifying that because he tells me there's two other Richard Kosloski's, so-

RK: Both, both play music.

CC: Both playin', playin' music, so-

CK: Two others in Alpena? Oh, okay.

CC: Lots of cousins.

RK: They used to be.

CC: Okay, so this I'm gonna ask ya ah, questions, and, and I know we've given ya an opportunity to write things down. I know you have a lot of information, a lot of um, of pictures, ah, Richard. So, um, how many years ya been playing music, Richard?

RK: Since 1938.

CC: Well!!! Since you were how old, when ya started playin'?

RK: Eight years.

CC: You were eight years old when ya started playin'. Okay, so and I-

RK: I played a banjo with my dad.

CC: Ya played banjo, okay...

CK: What did your dad play?

RK: Accordion, drums, saxophone, violin.

CK: You say here that he came, he came to this country from Russia?

RK: Yes, he did.

CK: And, when wa...

RK: 1903.

CC: Okay .

CK: And how old was he when he came here?

RK: Three.

CK: Okay, okay. So his family, *his* family must've had music-

RK: They were all-

CK:- in their blood too.

RK: Yes, mmhuh. Both sides, in the Sommerfield side too. My, ah, other grandpa played the button box. Grandpa Sommerfield, Emil.

CC: Okay.

RK: But he cut off a finger, and ah, he quit playin', when he was young. Hmhh.

CK: What's the button box?

CC: Button box is buttons instead of keys.

RK: Right here, there's a picture of it.

CC: There's, it, it, there's buttons on it instead of keys.

CK: Ohhkay.

CC: Okay. So over the years, rather than make us do the math, before we get started, I, I asked you how old you were, and you told me you're eight-five.

RK: I am eighty-five.

CC: And, and you started when you were eight. Ah, I shared with you that my thoughts, that I do believe that this point time, without, with saying with all, ah, courtesy to you, that, that, I think you're probably the oldest continuous, ah, musician, playing the style of music that you play, ah, in and around the Alpena area at 85. Ah, and it's mostly, would you call your, your music, ah, polka music, German, on, the German-style, what?

RK: Depends where I played. When I was playing in Florida for sixteen years, we played the old standards. We played, ah, "Misty", "San Francisco", "New York, New York". We played the old standards. I don't play 'em here, because the guys, they just don't play 'em around here; but that's what we played, and we played maybe one to two polkas a night, and maybe two, three waltzes, the rest was either country, or the old standards.

CC: Okay. Big Band.

RK: Big Band stuff.

CC: Okay, alright, interesting.

RK: Don't play it much anymore.

CC: Aaand- do you play extensively, mostly, the accordion, then- in that style?

RK: About- with the Alpomes, twenty-five percent of the time, I played saxophone.

CC: With the Alpomes?

RK: Yep.

CC: Okay. Um, so let's talk about with whom. You obviously have played with many, many different musicians- with whom? Ah, can ya name some of the bands?

RK: Oh well, of course, I played with the, uh, the Woodchoppers in the '50's; but I started with my dad and my Uncle Steve and me. Ah, in the '40's, with dad and I; first in the '30s, I sat in on the banjo with him on the accordion. And that was, he was called Blondie's Orchestra in the Hubbard Lake Area.

CC: Okay.

RK: Until 1948, '47 really, cause in '48 I left –

CC: Okay.

RK:-Alpena.

CK: Where would you play? What kind of venues?

RK: We played polkas and waltzes-

CK: At people's, for parties_

RK: We played weddings-

CK: Did you play in bars?

RK: Weddings.

CK: or...weddings.

RK: No, no bars. I, I did play in the bars some, I played Hubbard Lake Corner, ah in '44 and '45. Uh, but then in '45, when the war ended, they wouldn't let me play anymore. And then we had a guy by the name of Don Cadarette took my place with my dad. And he played there with my dad for a while and then, then dad quit playing there. But that would be your-

CC: My uncle.

RK:- uncle.

CC: Mmhuh. I did not know that Richard. That's news to me.

CK: Okay, so Blondie's Orchestra was your first-

RK: Well, yeah, family band.

CK: Family band, mmhuh.

RK: Mmhuh.

CC: Okay, and then, and then, you moved to, you moved to another part of the state, and you formed up another band?

RK: No, I went into the Air Force and I took my accordion with me while I was in the Air Force. I played in, you know, around there. And I didn't really play for almost four years-

CC: Okay

RK:-much. And then I went to, ah, Sturgis (clears throat) and I wasn't, I was, never thought of goin' back playin'; but my dad volunteered us to play for a 4H party there, and I picked up a drummer, and a couple of ah, guitar players, and I played for that. And right away we booked, three, four jobs, and, and I was right back playin' and I sat in with another band then, as lead accordion player. And I was playin' three times a week for the next three years.

CC: And did those bands all have names, ah, Richard?

RK: Ah, I don't know what the other names- but the one was the Woodchoppers. We had-

CC: The Woodchoppers.

RK: -we had five, five people in the Woodchoppers.

CC: Okay.

RK: Ah, the drummer was my brother, Victor, and, ah, and Billy and Don and, and ah, yeah, Jesse and Smiley, these are the guys that was playin' with me then.

CC: Okay, alrighty.

RK: And we had, we played on the radio, we had a radio show for two years- half hour show, once a week. Live.

CK: WATZ?

RK: WSTR.

CK: Oh! In Sturgis.

RK: WSTR in Sturgis, Michigan.

CC: Okay. And then, after, how long after that you moved to, back to Alpena?

RK: '57. 1957.

CC: Okay.

RK: Actually, December '56, just before Christmas.

CC: Okay.

RK: And again, I, I quit playin'. Ah, I wasn't gonna play anymore, I had a nice band, we had good jobs, and ah, and, Charlie S. called me and said, "Dick I got a job," he said, "'I'm gonna have Ted Kapala on second accordion, you on lead, me, and ah, Woloyks on drums. He said, " I got a job here we gotta do at Maple Ridge Hall." So we, I went and played that job and right away I got calls from my cousin, that's, he says, "with the family band, for, for a little while. " You know, we, right away picked up weddings, and we was playing weddings again. I wasn't gonna play no more. I really wasn't. And then, then I, ah, got together together with Ruby and, and Jean and Corny, again, it was a deal where their musicians quit, ah, they had two of 'em, ah, I don't remember what their names- Ruben something. Anyway, they needed a guitar and Mary Lou hadn't played- she had played with me before you know, And so, ah,

Mary Lou and I went and filled in and we booked three more weddings that night right away. And then we went, the same four, for twenty-five years.

CK: Twen...

CC: The Alpomes.

RK The Alpomes.

CK: Can you talk to-

RK: Played over a hundred jobs a year.

CK: Tell us about the name- the Alpomes.

RK: Alpomes is from Alpena- AL, Posen-PO. And Metz. A-L-P-O-M-E.

CK We're you all, so-

RK: The Alpomes

CK:- your band memebers were from-

RK: Oh yeah, we played, we, I figure that group that played probably, ah, two thousand weddings and anniversaries .We played over a hundred jobs a year. A hundred and five to a hundred and fifteen- we had a book , we used to keep track.

CC: And at that point, somewhere is when you wrote this song.

RK. Yeah, "The Potato Polka" for Posen.

CC: Okay.

RK: Festival. We played at the Posen Festival from 1960 to '65, we were the featured band. And then we played another fourteen years, we played nineteen years at the Posen Potato Festival.

CC: Okay.

CK: Now when you were with The Alpomes and you were playing a hundred and some gigs a year, were you, did you have another job or was music...?

RK: Oh yeah, I worked full time.

CK: Wow.

RK: I worked in engineering at Besser's, and I worked engineering at the cement plant and then I went into business on my own- I was in the insurance business.

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: Oh yeah, I always worked a full-time job- and a half.

CC: Okay, let's ah, let's talk about, um, other than the names that's already come out, um, um, like with the Alpomes, and your family, is there any other ones that ya can think of that ya played on the side- in jam sessions or whatever?

RK: Carol, Hop and Martha- you know I sat in with them whenever they needed, if I was free, they'd have me come in and either play banjo, or play accordion-

CC:-Okay.

RK:- we played for ah, po, ah, Polish Festival one time in Gaylord- Carol, Hop, me and Martha and I don't remember if Roy was there on the banjo or not; but I went and played for that. Yeah, and we used to play ah, in Gaylord, for the, they used to have, ah what do they call them- polka playoffs, you know; but they weren't really- we played there.

CC: Yeah, yeah.

RK: Like The Suchey Brothers would be one stand and we'd be on the other. When they first started out- when, when Judy first started playing. And they were all young kids then, younger than us, you know. So we'd, we'd start out and then we'd go to the, ah, "Tick-Tock Polka", and we'd be playin' and then they'd take over and then we'd take an hour break. And we'd switch off an hour later- for three hours. We'd give 'em six hours of music-

CC: Okay.

RK: -between the two bands.

CC: They always had that Oktoberfest over in Gaylord- did you play that?

RK: We, I guess I played all the festivals- I don't remember now.

CC: Okay.

RK: I can't tell you all of them, but I played, you know, different Polish Festivals, I played in Colorado, I sat in with a band there and played, ah, when I went to visit Colorado, I sat in with a, I've pictures of it. I didn't bring them. Where I sat in and played with that band there. But I've sat in with Polka Bands all over.

CC: Okay.

RK: Because- and then I taught accordion, you know, for three years. I had an accordion school.

CC: Okay.

RK: '57, '58 and '59.

CC: All right.

RK: I taught accordion, and that (clears throat) my students, ah, and I, I taught a little bit on guitar, because I knew, read music, so. Roy Domrose-

CC: Mmhuh.

RK:- remember him? I taught him in guitar.

CC: Okay.

RK: His mother used to bring him, he was about ten, eleven, approximately. Claire, she'd bring him up. Oh there's, I don't know, just music's half of my life.

CC: You played on stage, ah, at Maplewood, a few weeks ago- was that Roy that you played with or was that a different; because he, you both played accordion? A couple weeks ago- which Domrose was that? Gene is his name?

RK: Gene.

CC: Okay.

RK: Yeah, Gene Domrose.

CC: Okay.

RK: Yeah.

CC: All righty.

RK: He was a music teacher.

CC: All righty.

CK: Did-

RK: I taught his brother Dale on the accordion too.

CC: Okay.

CK: Did you teach lessons out of your home or was it-

RK: Yeah. I had a room set up in my home, I had a studio set up. I had a four bedroom house at the time and I had one room where I did my teaching.

CC: We talked about, ah, children, you had five, how many of them ended up playing music?

RK: Well, Richard played for four years with Frank, ah, Lynn played ah, accordion and ah, Tina played little bit on five- string and Pam played accordion and Rosie played on banjo.

CC: Okay. Did they continue it at all?

RK: No.

CC: Are they still playing?

RK: No-

CC: No?

RK -none of them. Only one that really played out was Richard.

CC: Okay, and he was playing drums.

RK: Yeah, he played drums with-

CC: Okay.

RK:- The Versatones.

CC: All righty.

RK: He played drums in the Alpena High School Band too.

CC: K. K, what would you consider your style of music, if you had to say a style. What style? Ah, ah you started country, you played country you said.

RK: Yeah, well I started with just mostly, not really country, really the polkas, the old polkas, and the waltzes.

CC: Okay.

RK: I played polkas that my dad and the family brought over from the old country. And sang it- I sing German too- I speak fluent German.

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: And ah, so I sang a lot of the German songs, you know.

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: And, I played those and when I, ah, when I really went to country was with the Woodchoppers

CC: Okay.

RK: Because there, that's that was popular in that area (clears throat) and so whatever was popular, and ah, we played. In fact I had an opportunity to, and didn't take it to play with Elvis Presley when he was startin' out.

CC:Yeah.

RK: They had a show in Angola, Indiana. And it was two shows to go to, to set in with bands- and one was a country western group and this was rock and roll group. And I asked the rest of the guys, " You guys, says, well where do we go, which one?" They said, "Oh, let's go to the country one, we don't want that other one – that's rock and roll."

CC: Wow, okay.

RK: Otherwise we'd a probably sat in with Elvis.

CC: Okay, oof, how cool would that have been?

RK: I wish we would have done it-

CC: (laughs) Yeah, I can only imagine. Um, ya, do ya think you're, the music has evolved over the years for you, ah...?

RK: Not, I still play the, the, the music that I like. Ah, (clears throat) I play the '50's and '60's, some of the rock and roll. I don't play at your place there because it, it just, I play the stuff I think they want me to play. I played obereks, mazurkas-

CC: Okay.

RK: polkas. I probably play ah, seventy-five, eighty polkas off memory. Different polkas- the way they- most of them were written. That's why some of the songs I don't play because they go in two, three, different keys and parts and the guys don't play them, you know...

CC: Yeah.

RK: Like "The Rain, Rain Polka", you know. And then, anyways, ah, so I kind of stick to stuff that I know what it'll be- blend and sound good.

CC: Okay. Um-

RK: You hear some of the times when I'm playin' by myself, I play songs that-

CC: Yeah. That, that nobody else could follow- because they don't know them.

RK: They don't know 'em.

CC: I, I'd like, I'd, I'd like to try some time though.

RK: (Laughs)

CC: (Laughs heartily) Ahh...so, over the years Richard, um, back then you had a lot... has, has places to play become more or less?

RK: Well see, I ne, I never really played bars much I did-

CC: Okay.

RK: -probably more, with this group here, we, we did, we, I don't say bars, we played at the Elks, the Moose, the Eagles, ah and we played, this was a fac -

CC: Ya played clubs.

RK: Clubs. We played the clubs, we played factory picnics, that was our big thing- in the summertime, this was in South Bend, Indiana, where this was taken. And we played, they'd hire us and one'd hear a other and they'd say, "Well there's a band we can get to entertain 'em."

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: So we were outside entertaining the people all around us- at a big picnic, you know.

CC: UAW?

RK: Yeah.

CC: Like the- those kind of picnics?

RK: Oh, yeah- I played at the UAW.

CC: Did ya?

RK: Yeah.

CC: M'kay.

RK: Yep, in Onaway.

CC: Up in Onaway.

RK: Yeah, I played at that too. We played a lot of jobs like that, you know.

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: People'd hire us. We played in um, Mt. Morris-

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: Every year for about seven years, where they gave away a car. We played there three nights a week. We played- ah not three nights a week, we played ah, at the Tick Tock Bar on Friday, we played for the K of C big dance giveaway- then Sunday we'd go play for four hours and then we'd hurry on home so we get some sleep and go to work the next day.

CC: M'kay.

RK: We played, we played that job, ah, six or seven years in a row at Mt. Morris.

CC: How 'bout Frankenmuth? Did ya play at Frankenmuth?

RK: No, never did play Frankenmuth.

CC: Never did play Frankenmuth, wow?

RK: Just-we were always busy- booked.

CC: Okay, okay.

RK: I went there sometimes; but never played Frankenmuth. Played Oscoda Air Base-

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: - there again we had to play like ah, New York, New York, pum, pum, dah de dah, you know?

CC: Yeah, yeah.

RK: Played all, we played there-

CC: Yeah-

RK: Fortunately, the band we had, we were versatile.

CC: Yeah.

CK: Do you have any recordings of the Woodchoppers anywhere? Can you think of any place ?

RK: No, I wish I did (laughs)

CC: Yeah

CK: Yeah.

CC: Yeah.

RK: Yeah, we was- the Woodchoppers was for three years; but we were a busy group.

CK: Sounds like it!

RK: Oh we were.

CK: All over the place.

CC: Well, I, I think you'd agree, Richard, recording back in those days was a pretty hard thing to do.

RK: Yeah.

CC: It was very, very hard to do, ah-you know, you were doing reel to reel and-

RK: Wire to wire.

CC: And wire to wire-

RK: The first one was a wire recorder.

CC: Oh dear. Well that goes back even further than me so-

RK: Fifties.

CC: How 'bout um- the, the, back then compared to now, ah, the pay-did you get paid pretty well back in those days?

RK: Well, yeah, you know, the, they wanted, musician's union come up and said "Oh we're gonna get you, we can get you more money to do this." And I said, "Well, what can *you* get us?" And they'd tell me and I'd say, "Well, we're getting twice that now, why would I want to join you" Ah, we ah, we probably charged more than most bands around, but that's why we didn't play bars- one thing, they couldn't pay us.

CC: Yeah.

RK: The only one that ever, ever did pay us the same as the weddings was Al Krawczak, when he had the Hideaway...

CC: Yeah.

RK: For about three summers in a row, on Friday nights, he wanted us up there. And I told him, Al was a friend of mine, and he says ah, I says, "Al, you can't afford to have us there. And he says, "Let me decide that. You tell me what you want..." And, and he did, he paid us the same as we got at a wedding.

CC: Okay, okay.

RK: You know, I know he didn't make any money at it, but we had full houses every Friday night. We did it- and just summer, just three months in the summertime- tourist season.

CC: Okay.

CK: Now what band was this?

RK: The Alpomes.

CC: The Alpomes.

CK: The Alpomes, okay.

CC: Yeah.

CK: K.

RK: I'd say that was probably the, the most popular band. I played sixteen years with a group in ah, Florida, and that was The Music Makers, and ah, yes. Basically, there was only four of us, though sometimes we played five, and we played as many as seven sometimes. We had family members come in and we played for picnics, like we had ah, one time we played for a, a, ah, motorhome deal. And all the motorhomes were \$250,000 and more- a million-

CC: Mmhuh

RK: -up to a million dollar motorhomes. And they was, they was, about, a, 250 strong. And what we had this, we had ah, ah big tent in a building and we had seven guys up there playing, you know? And they was just playing music, cuz there was no dancing. They we're lined up-and we put a show on. We did that too, we had ah, with these two guys here they, they really, really did, with ah, Carl and Frank and they jokes and back and forth with the music and stuff. We entertained the people.

CC: Mmhuh.

RN: We were just strictly entertaining.

CK: Mmhuh.

RK: I did quite a bit of just entertaining with ah, that years ago. And I'd, and I even sometimes I, I went out and like I did at your mom's, I take accordion and played around the tables and around and played for people. And, just having fun. I had fun, I don't know...

CK: Oh, I think people in the audience love that.

CC: They do. They do. Ah...

CK: They feel like they're part of something.

CC: Yep, for sure. And Richard plays lot of songs they can sing along to, so that always...

RK: Oh, I do singalongs.

CC: Yeah,

RK: I do- I go to nursing homes and I do that. I just did at Turning Brook- last month I did a singalong.

CC: Last week-

RK: What- ?

CC: I did one last week. That's what we do. That's our pay now today, isn't it Richard?

RK: Yep.

CC: That's our pay, yeah.

RK: I played Sunday and I sat in and played and I had fun doin' it; but I played banjo-

CC: Yeah.

RK: - all night. Tenor banjo.

CC: Yeah, from our vantage point, you were behind a tree. I couldn't see you very well.

RK: Oh, could you hear me?

CC: I could! Yeah, but I couldn't, I couldn't see-

CK: You were tucked away.

CC: You were tucked away. I think we did touch on this, ah, somewhat, I think it's pretty obvious your family was- your father and your relatives were your influences- but were there any other ones?

RK: Oh, I don't really recall. Probably was. I remember ah, fiddle tunes, when I'd, I'd pick up the fiddle and play some of the old songs. Ah, Mr. King. You wouldn't remember him, he was back in the early '40's. He played classical-

CC: Peewee King. King, no?

RK: Mr. King.

CC: Mr. King?

RK: Right here from Alpena.

CC: From here, no, no.

RK: Yeah, and he'd, he used to come to the house and set in the 40's and play fiddle; and dad played fiddle too; but he was ten times the fiddle player my dad was. Dad just played all the other songs, he's basically more accordion player, but ah, he would play the fiddle, and I'd sit there and listen to him. I just enjoyed that. He played all the old rags and you name it, he played 'em- and he was good. But yeah, I, I, I guess listening to other music, you know when I was growing up...

CC: Yeah.

RK:- cuz always around, I was always around music, cuz my dad played music-

CC: Yeah.

RK: -when I was growing up. And so, I don't know, and then through high-school and stuff, ah, that's where I made my money to go to high school. I'd play two, three times a week, that's why ah, the music teacher wouldn't put me in senior band- I played, I played eh, what do you call it, second band?

CC: Mmhuh.

RK : He says-"You'll never be there," he says, "You're playing every weekend. You can't go to high school now..." because I was playing Fridays and Saturdays.

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: And ah, Richard wouldn't put me in the, wouldn't put me in the senior band, he says, "You won't be there." He says, "I'm not gonna do it." He didn't.

CC: Wow.

RK: So I played in intermediate band; I played all the saxophones. I played first chair, for e flat alto, b flat tenor, ah, soprano, I played soprano...

CC: I never heard you play sax-ever.

RK: You didn't?

CC: No.

RK: I used to.

CC: No, I've heard you play the banjo and I've heard you play the accordion.

RK: Yeah, I played sax.

CC: Speaking of accordions, how has the accordion evolved for you over the years?

RK: Ah, well the electronic accordion's, I bought first a cordovox in-'69.

CC: Okay.

RK: And I played it for nineteen years, I think it was, and then I bought the Elkovox , and I played it fifteen years, then I bought another Elkovox, ah, and those were, because it I did away with the bass man.

CC: Okay.

RK: That's one of the things that I did.

CC: That's, that's the thing that ya need to explain. What, what did that do for ya, going, going from one to the other?

RK: Well, because it eliminates the amount of musicians you need.

CC: Okay.

RK: We could do everything we wanted with four.

CC: Okay.

RK: And then don't forget, I played five years as a single at Cedar Grove Tavern-

CC: Okay.

RK: - every Sunday- for five years.

CK: Solo?

RK: Five years every Sunday at the Cedar Grove.

CC: Cedar Grove.

CK: Solo?

CC: Solo.

RK: Solo.

CC: Yeah.

RK: I had an electronic drummer and I had a Cordovox. My Cordovox gave me my electric string bass, it gave me a full organ, it gave me my accordion and I had my drummer, so I had the same as a four piece band all by myself.

CC: Mmhuh.

CK: What time period was this?

RK: 1969 to 1974.

CC: Yep.

RK: I played at Cedar Grove every Sunday- two hundred and fifty times.

CC: Now- going back though to the Elkavox- did that do the same thing or did it, did you move that up when you went to-

RK: About the same thing.

CC: About the same thing?

RK: Yeah...I think the Chordovox probably had better sound on it than the Elkavox

CC: Okay.

RK: The old one; but I had breakdowns.

CC: Yeah, I was gonna say, that's all electronic, so did it give you a, a lot of breakdowns?

RK: Not that many.

CC: Ok. Who fixed 'em?

RK: Ah, somebody in town fixed a, I don't remember now; but when I was in Florida, I had a, in, in Clearwater, there's a guy that fixed it whenever it broke down.

CC: Cuz that is a problem today.

RK: Oh, yes.

CC: As we speak, trying to get these electronics and those fixed...

RK: Yeah. The Elkovox, Norm's got trouble with that one he's got right now, yeah the reed – I could fix it but I don't want to get into it and do it.-

CC: Bob Bartlomiej...

RK: -Cuz I've taken reeds out and replaced them.

CC: Bob Bartlomiej has problems. He took his to Detroit two or three times.

RK: Yeah.

CC: So, ah, then you went from the Chordovox to what? Where are you now?

RK: Elkovox.

CC: You're back to the Elkovox?

RK: Oh no, no, now I am on, I'm back to an accordion I bought in 1965.

CC: Okay. Straight up accordion?

RK: It's a stereo.

CC: A stereo accordion.

RK: A stereo electronic accordion.

CC: Okay.

RK: I played it there in the bar.

CC: Yeah, I know.

RK: Yeah.

CC: It's a different sound to it.

RK: Oh yeah. Boy, it's a good sound. It's a good sounding accordion.

CC: Yep.

RK: I don't know if this (fades off) ...This is the little accordion I picked up and I, I; because it was light. This one is only about twenty pounds. The other ones weighed about thirty pounds- thirty-three pounds. That's just a small accordion- you can have that too if you want it. Here's an article that Corny put in the paper, some (inaudible). Here's my first wife, here, and there...

CC: That's Mary Lou.

RK: That's Mary Lou. And this was our group, we always, our group always dressed up. We were, the girls when those, these boots you know, they wore the boots, and they, we *always* was dressed up.

CC: Depending on the gig you played- I remember-

RK: Yeah.

CC:- you were dressed for.

RK: We dressed for the gigs where we were playing.

CC: Yep. Yep.

CK: Those are...

RK: We wouldn't think of going on the stage like some of these fans go out and advertise what they do.

CC: Yeah, for sure. Let's talk a little bit about ah, some of the honors that's been given to you Richard. I know you are in the Michigan ah, Polka Hall of Fame.

RK: Here's a letter that introduced me as, or told me that I was.

CC: Michigan State Polka Music Hall of Fame. That was, ah, in 2007.

RK: Correct.

CC: And I do believe there was a busload of folk went down there, weren't there?

RK: There's some, yeah there were a bunch from here, come down.

CC: Okay, and I think WATZ had a bit to do with getting those folks down there. I know Don Parteka was really proud, really proud.

RK: Yeah, I don't know if they that's the ones that came down for when I was, cuz Harold was voted in there too, and Norm later on. Just last year, year before, Norm was voted in. Norm Seiss.

CC: So we have, from this area, in the Michigan State Polka Music Hall of Fame, we have you, we have Norm, and we have ah, Mr. Hopp.

RK: Yep, Harold Hopp. Mmhuh.

CC: Okay. Don Parteka went in as broadcast, ah-

RK: Right.

CC: - announcer. Okay.

RK: You can keep this.

CC: That's what I remember. Um, and so um, we talked a little bit about, music today, music yesterday-

RK: Yeah, I think that this new country music is terrible. It's just a bunch of noise.

CC: Well, this question was asked of me. So let's ask it to you. Let's think about the polka music- do you think there's been much change in, in those?

RK: Well, there, there has been some change because, they've- 'bout ten, twelve years ago, they started out using the second accordion different than I did. Ted Kapala and I played the accordion; but I'm talking about in the '50's with two regular accordions...

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: Well he played country music and stuff; but he didn't have the, the stuttering accordion. They've eliminated the guitars by using the accordion for to get the rhythm in there- with that accordion, that accordion bass.

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: And that's why they- you don't hear very many guitars at all in, in, ah, the polka bands.

CC: Okay.

RK: Either that, or they'll use a banjo, cuz the banjo gives that, that beat they want.

CC: Okay.

RK: Some of the bigger bands and ah, and I guess from that's why when I played the- I, I, like a banjo backin' me up, rather than the guitar-

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: -really, you know, but, I want a bass; but my accordion don't have the bass, see?

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: So I like a bass, just give me the drums and a bass and my accordion, and I'm fine.

CC: Okay.

RK: You know- you and I've played together many times.

CC: We have, yeah I've played bass for ya.

RK: Oh yeah.

CC: Yeah, so, wow, um, anything else you'd like to share with us from your career, which has been very long- and you're still going.

RK: I figured I played about 68 years, because I had four years in there I didn't play.

CC: K.

RK: And ah, I played about forty years around the Michigan area here, about sixteen years in Florida, and Michigan and Indiana I played three years and I'm back here now, ah, and I still once in a while, sit in and play.

CC: Mmhuh. Mmhuh.

RK: That's about it. And I figure all total I played, just figuring about seven thousand gigs- so that's a lot of music.

CK: That is a lot of music-

CC: It is a lot,

CK: -Mr. Kosloski, that's

CC: it would you agree Dick, that it isn't, it isn't the playin'- we love that, it's the movin' the stuff.

RK: I guess.

CC: It- you know, it's the moving all the things and getting it set up

RK: Oh yeah, that's the work.

CC: and, you know-

RK: Just playin' the music-

CC: -I mean, we love playing the stuff in between, but

CK: You don't have roadies.

CC: No, we don't have roadies. Well I do, I do on occasion and I must say that, but, ah, Dick carries his own equipment. How heavy is the accordion you use now?

RK: Thirty-three pounds. Oh this one here, I think's about that. This, this here is my grandson, and that's my wife, that's Ruby, a cousin, and a cousin, this is a guy who played sax and clarinet for me- he's got an electric clarinet- eflat alto, and he played with me for seven years in Florida.

CC: Okay.

RK: Fantastic, he was played in the, ah, Navy Band, too.

CC: Okay.

RK: He's a retired Navy veteran; but from the Navy Band, and he played all over the country, all over the world. He-

CC: So if you, i, is any of these people still with us? I know, I know your wife isn't and I know-

RK: Ah, no he's passed away. He's still livin'. And he's livin'. That's all.

CC: Okay. I would say you're one of the last standing ones out there, as far as still playing music.

RK: Yeah, there's, well, Stan.

CC: You're here.

RK: Stan and I.

CC: You and Stan and, and, Norm.

RK: Yeah Norm-

CC : and Norm-

RK: Norm's six years younger.

CC: Yeah, is he six years younger 'n you?

RK: Yeah, he was born in thirty-six.

CC: I think Stan is, yeah ,prob- yeah he is the oldest in the area- he's eighty-eight. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us from-

RK: Oh, just that I've played lots of music.

CC: Okay.

CK: I've got some questions.

CC: Good.

CK: One, is going back to high school, cuz I'm trying to imagine what the music department at the high school was like, what year are we talkin' about?

RK: Well, I went to high school from 44 to 48.

CK: Okay, this Alpena High School?

RK: Alpena High School.

CK: And, at that time it was located on....

RK: Second Avenue.

CK: Second Avenue, okay. And they had a full music program there?

RK: Yeah, and I, I played, ah, I played saxophone. First I started at e flat alto, then I played first chair, and then I went to second semester, and I, then he put me on I think about a b flat tenor.

CK: Who was the in-, teacher?

RK: Richards. And ah, oh I don't know all of them, and then I, I, then he promoted somebody who was below me into the senior band, and I says, "Well, how come I didn't get put in Senior band?" He says, "Cuz you'll never be there." He says, "You're playing Friday and Saturday nights, He says, "And these bus trips," he says, "you won't go, he says, "it's my option."

CK: Was he right?

RK: True. So I says, "Okay," but I stayed in the band anyway. I stayed in the band, I stayed in intermediate band. And I played all the saxes, I played the C melody, the e flat alto, b flat and the b flat ah, tenor, and ah, it was good, because then later on when I was about twenty-six, when our band, we felt we had they said, "If we had a horn in the band," Ruby says (?). I says "Well I play saxophone." So I picked up a C melody saxophone and, ah, started playing that. I played obereks and polkas. And I played, ah, maybe "Chapel in the Moonlight." I played some of those, some of those songs. You never heard me play sax, but, yeah, I, I about 25% of the time, I was on saxophone.

CC: Okay.

RK: In fact when I had the (?) accordion, I had the sax on all the time, and I switched it from sax to accordion, back and forth.

CC: Ok.

RK: But it made it difficult ah, when I, ah, in fact one of these pictures I thought showed the accor- , ah, the saxophone laying there. Where was?, that wouldn't of been that one. Oh, I guess maybe I didn't bring that one. No. And here I wasn't playin' sax. 'Cuz ah, this was in '53... It says '54...Oh '54, wow, whatever it was.

CK: What got you interested in sax, 'cuz prior to that you were playing drums, banjo, ah, accordion...

RK: Well, I used to play drums, because my dad, my cousin, and I played...like one wedding we played in Posen, we played for eighteen hours. We played from eight o'clock in the morning until the night and then they went got someone else to play. Ah, so, we ah, we played ah, dad 'n I'd switch off. Bobby'd take a break and they, we just kept the music going. One of us would take a break, and dad and I would switch off banjo and accordion and Bobby would come in and play accordion and give- or play, ah, he played accordion some too; but he played drums, so we kept the music going for eighteen hours.

CK: Oh my...

RK: They had a, a garage built in the back just for the dancing, and the regular garage, they had a thirty gallon keg of moonshine. And ah, I don't know how much beer they went through, and the farmers would go home, do their chores, come back. And, and ah, so they just kept dancing they was just about two miles out of Posen.

CK: I was just gonna ask, if it was Alpena, Posen, where it was.

RK: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It was ah, 1944-we did that.

CK: So when you, you went to school in Alpena. How did you- were you living in Posen then? How did you-

RK: No, no, no – I lived here in Alpena

CK: Oh, okay. So, back to the, again, the horn, the clarinet, the saxophone- so was, was there anybody playing it at the time that made you think, "I want to learn how to play that." Or, did your teacher say why don't you play sax or how was it that you picked it up? Do you recall?

RK: The saxophone? My dad played saxophone.

CK: Oh, ok.

RK: He says, "Take saxophone, that's probably the most practical instrument to play in the band. So I says, "Okay" and so I took saxophone, that was in 1944.

CK: That came in handy later on-

RK: Ohhh- well I played it, yeah- twenty-five years I played sax.

CK: Yep. Yep. Okay, I've got another question; because earlier you were talking about going into the Air Force and you said that you took your accordion with you.

RK: Well what I did is ah, I took my basic training in San Antonio, Texas and I got there and in the evenings we had nothing to do so I called my wife, and I says and I asked my first sergeant or the, my sergeant at the barracks, I says, ah "Can I ah, have my wife send an accordion down here?" He says "Sure," he says "at nights when you're..." and another guy had a guitar, so he says," but the accordion and the guitar stays in my room." He says, " When you're not playing it, it's got to be in my room." So we did that, so when evenings would come, we'd sing songs, you know, a whole bunch of guys would get around, and we had an accordion and guitar. And so, you know, I had that through basic training, and then when I got out of basic training, ah, they shipped me to Alabama, oh I went first to Wichita Falls. And there I didn't play that much, once in a while at a party, a house party or something, we'd get together, some guys and I'd play; but didn't play much until I got out of the service in 1953. Then, then I got home and I wasn't gonna play and then we got up and ah, my dad volunteered, he says, "My boys can play." So it was for a 4H Dance. So we played that 4H dance and right back to playing.

CC: Yep, yep.

CK: I would think having it in the service probably brought a lot of just joy and relief to the other enlistees.

RK: Oh, yeah. Quite popular. (Sings) " I'd walk a mile, for a smile." Remember Ferlin... "Mama and daddy, I want them," –

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: -songs like that, all kinds would love to sing that song some of the other ones that we did, back in, you know-

CK: Mmhuh.

RK: Lefty Frizell

CC: Yep,

RK: Yep, we did some of his music.

CC: Yep.

RK: So music's been a, a part of my life, I guess.

CK: Sounds like a life force. And with your family- you were-before we turned the recorder on, you were talking about extensive your family is, and how –

RK: Oh, yeah.

CK: -everyone plays music.

RK: In my dad's family there was seven and six out of seven played music. And my ah, Uncle Frank had the, played at the German ah, Hall in Lansing, he had a 13 -piece band.

CK: Oh! Oh.

RK: Frank Kosloski. And ah, and my dad played in it too. Then he played bass sax for him and then, ah, drums. And Carl, ah, that's this one here, he died a couple of years ago, ah he played, he's, he couldn't read music, but let me tell you, he's the best guitar player I ever played with- in rhythm-

CC: Mmhuh.

RK:- he didn't do much pickin', but rhythm-

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: if he heard a chord, he knew exactly what it was.

CC: Mmhuh.

RK: He had ear perfect.

CC: Yeah.

RK: It didn't matter-he could hit any cord. And I played with ah, Little, Little Jimmy, Little Jimmy the Wrangler, I played him. He played in ah, Tennessee too, In Nashville. And when Jimmy and I played, he, I could go in a room and hit a piano and he'd tell me what note it was, if I hit a chord, minor, seventh, no matter what it was. He had a perfect ear, you know? There's only- And Ruby would write down, so we'd hear a song and we're gonna play it, she'd write down with the do re mi's line- she'd write it down and then we'd get together and she'd play it. She could do that, she had, she had a perfect ear. Ah, not as good as Jimmy, or, or really as, as Carl did, but you know, just because they didn't, couldn't read music, didn't mean he didn't know the chords in the song.

CC: Mmhuh, yeah.

RK: And, and when I played with him, I played with him 16 years, boy, if you didn't hit the chord that he wanted when he was singin', he'd- when we'd practice ,you know, he'd tell ya- this is what I want to hear, this is what I want, or the background and stuff. And, and that's when we played like a, we had to buy the music and I played off the music and then we'd learn- like "New York, New York" with the introduction, we played it just like, like the music was- "Bum, bum bah, da, dah," you know to start it out and played that and ah... and, but, another generation's, that's Jimmy Kosloski, he's a, his son, and then, then we got two three generations play. Like here, there's two, thr - three generations playing right there.

CK: That's great.

RK: My son was back there. That's my uncle, that's my cousins, that's Richard, there's two Richard Kosloski's in there, and, so it just all run in the family.

CC: So and have we got another generation comin' up or not? Richard?

RK: Ah, Jaske still plays. I don't, I don't, well right now Becca I guess is playin' -that's Lynn's granddaughter- is playing music and singing. She's on a stage, they do dancing, they do this -

CC: Yeah

RK: -clobbers or clopping or whatever they do...

CK and CC: Clogging.

RK: Clogging?

CC: Yeah, yeah.

RK: Ok, they, but she's down in Arkansas; but she's getting' married this year.

CC: Okay, so-

RK: And she just graduated from college. I have granddaughters, I have over thirty great- grandkids- a bunch.

CC: Yeah.

RK: So I don't know which ones play anymore.

CC: Well that would be nice to know- I'm sure grandpa, great-grandpa would like to know that somebody's carrying it on.

RK: Now, this is an article by Corny Haskie, he wrote for the news, this was in the Advance, I think..

CK: Presque Isle Advance, I'm going to take a photo of that.

RK: Oh.

CK: Yes.

RK: Sure

CC: Everything she so that you can have them back.

RK: Sure

CK: The last thing I wanted to ask you- you were with um, the, the Musicmakers in Florida, and then you were in Alpena. What brought you back here?

RK: Well, I worked for a company, I had a store. I sold the store and went and worked for a company, The Kroger Company- on the road. And ah, I worked for them for about, I don't know,- six, seven , eight months- and the said.

We're making a district change. They said, ah, I was in advertising, they said, "You're gonna have to move."

I said, "I'm not moving."

They said, "If you want to stay with the company, you've got to move, and we'll give you a new territory."

Well, I was either going to have to move to Ohio or somewhere in there, and I says, "No, no, lay me off." So then I had sold my store and I was doing construction work with my dad and them- the corporation. Anyway, so I told Mary Lou, I says "Let's go back to Alpena." And I came to Alpena, and I went to work for Besser Company in the engineering department. I was a draftsman, that's what I was, I

worked in engineering for- I did architectural drafting, while I was in Sturgis, then mechanical drafting, .maintenance engineer at Huron Portland Cement. So ah, I got a college level GED while I was in the Air Force.

CC: Mmhuh.

CK: Well, we're glad you came back.

CC: Thank you, Richard- appreciate it very, very much.