

Centala Interview Transcript (44:52)

CC. We are now at the Alpena County Library, working on the Oral History Program, I'm Carole Cadarette, and I'm here with Kirstine Furtaw, and we have with us today Lois Jerome Centala,

LC. That's right.

CC. Who's going to talk about her own father, who had his own band here in the Alpena area. Lois, thank you for coming to talk about your Dad.

LC. Well, I appreciate it – I've been very proud of my father all my life, and, and the music of the 30s and 40s - the Big Bands, have always been something that I've really enjoyed and I still love that music, but I was very inquisitive as we were - as I was growing up, and I would ask my Dad all kinda things, so I got very close to him, but, as I said, his story is kinda unique to start with. Um, he was born in Syracuse, New York, and he was a self-taught trumpet player. He just learned to play trumpet by himself, and he always played what they call a 'sweet horn', and his big pride, he was telling me, and Carole - you probably understand this, I'm not a musician - I don't, but he could hit C above high C. And he always told me that, especially on the song "Stardust", he would climb to hit that, you know. And as I say, I'm not a musician, but it's funny, now, when I go to concerts, and I hear the, the brass section, and I hear a trumpet player, I can pick that out, that they're climbing. You know. I don't know, but it's just being I was so close to my Dad, I guess. But anyway, um, when he was in New York, (cough) – excuse me - he belonged to a musician's union. And that was the era when the Big Bands toured and especially in New York, and they would just bring their core musicians with them, and um, they would pick up, if they needed a couple trumpets or a couple of saxes, at the union. And so he got, since he was such a good trumpet player, he got jobs right and left with the union. And um, I can remember, I wrote down here some of the big bands that he played with, and I remember um, Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw, Benny Berrigan, Tommy Dorsey, Freddie Martin, Big Spiderback, just to name a few, and I think with him playing with these, he said this is where he picked up a lot of his um, I don't wanna say talent but what would it be? The knowhow, you know, how to, how to really pro- progress so well, you know.

CC. I think the actual jargon is "chops".

LC. Oh, yeah, he had great chops, the, yeah. But he

CC. They learn – no, they learn how to, the technique

LC. With technique, playing with these musicians, so . . . that helped him tremendously. In 1931, um, at uh, Fireside Inn at Grand Lake, um, they used to bring in bands for the summer season – it was a big thing, I guess, they had people staying there, and, you know, the richer

people and this sort of thing, and in 1931 there was a group called “The Seven New Yorkers”, and they came to play the summer, and he, of course, was one of them. And uh, my mother, who was 18 years old at that time, um, they would go out there to listen to musicians, and of course, he was a good-looking little Italian, you know, so she and her girlfriends were – they call ‘em groupies now, but I suppose at that time that’s what they kinda were. And, uh, her girlfriend’s parents owned a grocery store, so uh, they used to bring food out to those guys, so they went on picnics all the time and they got to know the guys very well, and so they took care of the starving musicians more or less and um, so, to make a long story short, they came there in, I think it was May, and they left in September. And of The Seven New Yorkers, six went back. My father stayed. He and my mother ran away and got married – they ran away to Harrisville (laughs) they eloped and got married.

CC. What year was that, Lois?

LC. That would’ve been . . . thirty . . . one. 1931. And um, so, they came back, and, and my Dad was 24 years old - he knew nothing but music. So he got a job playing with Sid Pugh’s band at that point, and um, so, when I was three – I was born the next year – I was born in August ’32 and um, I was 3 months old, and I mean, he just couldn’t handle it. You know, he was a stranger here, nobody, you know, didn’t have friends, this and that, so they went back to New York and stayed with his parents. And uh, my mother again, 18 years old, she was frantic – especially when his sister said, “Oh, the lovely bébé, oh, we gotta pierce her ears ‘cause little Italian bébés need their ears pierced”, you know, and my mother panicked, so she wrote to Sid Pugh, and she said, “can you, will you give Bill a job if we come back home?” And at that time my father didn’t even know she’d written a letter a year later, so, Sid said “sure, come on back”, so that’s how he came back to Alpena then. And uh, so that would’ve been in, uh, ’32. And it’s funny, as I say, he was a cute Italian now, but I think for a long time, and this is what we were talking about a little while ago, I think he was the only Italian in Alpena until Tony Monino came here, and Tony came here I think like, in the late ‘60s, ‘70s.

CC. Oh, yeah.

LC. Yeah, so, it wasn’t a very traditional, all-around town, you know, and um, so that went well for them, and he played then with uh – not only Sid, but with Dolly Gray’s band and all this sort of thing. And then – ‘scuse me - he got a steady job at the Owl Caflé – Owl Ca – Owl Café, and he formed his own band. And he played, um, 6 – he didn’t play Sundays, might not have played Mondays but he –

CC. Five nights a week.

LC. Every other night, at least five nights a week. You know, and I think back now, I mean, how could he afford – I mean, I don’t know what kinda money he was making, but, I mean, that was his whole life, and he didn’t have any other kind of job. But um, I know the one thing that

he - he brought in musicians from other places, too. I don't know if it was booking agents or what he did, but I do remember, 'cause I was just a little girl at the time and he used to audition singers (inaudible), and I remember the pictures, he took all these girls and they were all trying to make it, too. Especially this one, Audrey Leraine, I've got a picture of her - ah, she was just beautiful. And so he brought her here, or she came here, and she sang with him for quite a while. And, uh, he also had men from, well, Stubby Martin, who played with him for years came from, uh, Benton Harbor, and he made his home here. And again, I - I go back to it, how could they afford that? That's all they did, you know - the income - and, and he started to have a family (clears throat) excuse me, girls, I'm sorry! But, um, it was, it was just always interesting, and I told you about Marion Hutton and, and the other ones that would come after their dance jobs and play with him. So, um, let's see . . .

CC. Did your Dad - did your Dad span - did - was it the Bill Jerome Band or was it -?

LC. Yeah, mm hm.

CC. Ok.

LC. It was - it was his own band. He formed his own band.

KF. And that was the name of it? Bill Jerome

LC. Bill Jerome and his band, yeah.

KF. Ok.

LC. Yeah.

CC. And how many total was in the band, Lois?

LC. Uh, five, I think. Five. And, and they changed off. You know, I, I remember, 'cause he was friends with - that was the only friends he had, too, was the, the guys in the band, the ones that stayed here, and then some of the guys from Alpena played with him, too, at the time, like Howard Pake (sp?) played drums for a while with him at the Owl and um, and um, and then later years Joe Emerson played with him, and you know, but as he started out, it was pretty much the same group for a quite a while. And uh, it wasn't until my little sister was born in the 40s that he needed more income - I'm sure that was it - and so he started getting other jobs, and, and uh, but he never laid that horn down, he still played just about every night at the, uh - and it was, it was hard for us kids at home because he played 'till 2:00 in the morning, and so he slept all day

CC. Mm hm.

LC. and then my mother was at us all day, “be quiet, you can’t disturb Dad”, you know, so it was kind of, um, interesting. But, um, through there then we – I can always remember him saying that um, he was going to lay down, that he was gonna, he was always gonna retire, he was always gonna retire. “For the first time one of my kids comes into a dance that I’m playing, that’s it, I’m laying it down.” Well, I went all through high school, I went all through an engagement, and all through my marriage (laugh) and he, he didn’t retire until . . . I think he was uh, 63 years old, he actually laid down the horn, that’s when he was playing with the Harmonerek - Harmonickers, and when they broke up, then he, he quit. But, uh, it was, the music was his life, he loved his music and, and uh, he was very good at it, and he um, was also active in the community with the music, too – he joined City Band, he was part of, intricate member of the City Band, I’ve got a picture of him in City Band uniform, and um, he would play all the shows – the minstrel - they used to have a lot of minstrel shows back in that time and he played all the minstrel shows. He got the musicians for the – it wasn’t anybody’s particular band, Dolly Gray’s band or anything like that, Bill would get Dolly Gray and, you know, Austin Deadman and get the guys to, to form a band for the particular show. But he – he lived his music, I mean it was just something sweet that he really, really enjoyed and, and um, as I say, even after he got a full time job at the, uh – he worked for the Road Commission, and uh, he was parts manager there, but he still played every weekend. He still played every weekend. And, um, the kind of funny part of it there, at the Road Commission, Sid Pugh was the uh, office manager of the Road Commission, and I got a job working at the Road Commission. So, I was workin’ for Sid Pugh, too, who my Dad worked for in ’31, you know? But it was kinda interesting, and I can remember one – I used to ride back and forth with my Dad and I told you I love the, the music of the 40s and all that music, and uh, one time – that’s where I heard all these stories from him, he would talk about things, and one time the radio was playing Deep Purple, and I start singing it, “When the deep purple falls” . . . and he turned to me, he said, “How the Hell do you know that song?” And I said, “Because, I love that song!” You know, so you know, we really got into in-depth conversations, and he didn’t realize that I was really into everything that he did, so that’s when he really told me a lot of different, different things that uh, it, it was just wonderful having him for a father and, and uh, it was really good.

KF. Going back to his beginnings as a musician – you said he was self-taught?

LC. Mm hm.

KF. Um, did he have anybody in his – anybody else in his family that you know of that played?

LC. Uh, his - his younger brother started playing a trumpet, too, after my dad

KF. After he did?

LC. Yeah. But I don’t think anybody else – he didn’t come from a musical family.

KF. Ok.

LC. You know, so.

KF. Did he, um, so you - did he ever talk about how he got into playing music to begin with?

LC. No, not really, just that he liked music and uh, I can't you know, I'm 84 years old, too, I can't . . . (laughter) But I, you know, I probably would remember how he said why he picked the trumpet, but I, I don't remember. All I remember is him telling that he - he got his best education on technique and stuff by playing with these professional musicians when he belonged to - and that went on for, I mean he was 24 when he came here in '31, so this happened - he, he probably started when he was in his teens, and so when they were in the 20s, late 20s, early 30s when they were touring, you know, and uh . . .

CC. Well, I'm sitting over here doing the math, and I'm not real good at it, but are you telling me your Dad laid the - his . . . the music down when he was 63; you talking about the 60s and the 70s, somewhere in there? I mean, the year that he, that he quit, that he just didn't play anymore? (14:50)

LC. Well, when the Harmonizers at the, 'cause the Harmonizers were playing at the, he was member of the Harmonizers, they played at Twin Acres every weekend, and I was married in . . .

KF. It would've been probably been in the 7, it would have been the 7, like the early 70s

CC. The 70s?

LC. I would say the early 70s, late 60s.

KF. Mm hm.

LC. Yeah.

CC. Ok.

LC. Yeah.

CC. Ok.

LC. Yeah. And he died - he died when he was 69, so he hadn't stopped playing much before that.

CC. Ok. But he - when he played here in Alpena, um, as things slowed down, like at the Owl and um,

LC. Yeah, right

CC. Uh . . . he did do – like school dances?

LC. Oh, yeah, yeah, they did a high school

CC. Alpena High, and Central?

LC. High school, not Central, but high school.

CC. The high school, ok.

LC. I don't think Central, but they did high school.

CC. Then I did hear him. I know I heard him.

LC. And, and he uh, and he played with Dolly Gray, too. He played with all the, the guys – but the, you know, all those musicians, they all were kind of forming their own bands, too, at that time,

CC. Yes

LC. . . . in the 30s and 40s

CC. Mm hm.

LC. And uh, so that's why I think he was lucky when he started out, when he, after he married my mother, uh, that Sid gave him a job. And uh, and of course when they went to New York, then that's when he, she remembered Sid Pugh and how she, she must have, I mean they didn't have phones or anything, you know, so she wrote. I remember her telling me she wrote to Sid and she said, she – she just couldn't take it with all those Italians and their traditions and you know, but uh . . .

CC. Yeah. Yeah.

CF. A whole different world for her.

LC. A whole different world for her, 'cause she was just young and yeah, yeah – and her family, too, her family wasn't really happy with the idea that they had eloped to, to uh, Harrisville.
(laughs)

CC. Yeah

LC. But, you know . . .

CC. So you have two siblings, uh

LC. Yes, a brother and a sister.

CC. And, uh, are either one of them musically inclined, Lois? No? Ok.

LC I tried taking piano lessons, and it just didn't work.

CC. But your son is.

LC. Oh, my son, yes – Mike Centala, yes, he's got his own band, and my Grandson, Brian, is a phenomenal musician, he's a great singer, and they perform all over – yeah. They . . .

CC. So it, so it skipped a generation a little bit.

LC. Yes, it skipped us, for sure. (laughs)

CC. Ok, ok.

LC. But, uh they're, they're into it big time, yeah. And they, uh, they play all types of music, you know, and all this sort of thing. But . . .

CC. Your Dad passed in what year? At age 69?

LC. At 69 . . . I don't know.

CC. Do you remember what year it was?

LC. Uuum . . .

KF. Again it would have been in the 70s? Right?

CC. In the 70s, yeah.

LC. 70 . . . Yeah

CC. Ok.

LC. Yeah, around then, I should look that up – I never gave it a thought.

CC. So when you say he laid the trumpet down, did he – did he never pick it up again and never play again? He never played again.

LC. Wouldn't play. After he - after they played their last job at the Twin Acres, not even to . . . because my son, Mike, when he was just a little boy - I've got a picture of him. Ok, so, Mike is -

going back now, Mike is 59 and I've got a picture of him, he's about three years old and I've got a picture of him standing and watching Grandpa just adoringly when my Dad used to clean out his trumpet before he'd go play. You know, and get the – and this picture's so cute, he's just aw, just in adoration

CC. Yeah.

LC. . . . of him doing that. So it all is done, so that was a long time ago.

KF. Mm hm. So you were saying that he, he kept threatening to quit earlier,

LC. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

KF. partly because – did he think that that was a bad life to expose y'all to? I mean, that's what you seem to – you know,

LC. No, I think . . .

KF. you're like, "as soon as my kids come in . . ." (laughs) to the dance hall . . .

LC. Well, either that, or he thought 'there's no way I'm gonna sit here and play to my kids and my kids are gonna dance to my music, you know.

KF. Ok. Ok, mm hm.

LC. But um, no, but that, that didn't stop him; fact is, uh, when Tony and I became engaged, uh, our song was "Body and Soul" - you know, we loved that song, and the whole band knew it, and we went to Twin Acres every ni- every, uh, Saturday night – nothin' else to do in Alpena, and we'd walk in and irrespective of what they were playing, they'd stop, and they'd start playing "Body and Soul". You know, but . . .

CC. What a wonderful memory,

LC. Oh.

CC. Lois.

LC. Fantastic. You betcha.

CC. Yeah.

LC. So, but I uh, yeah, I have a lot of good memories of my dad. (1944)

KF. Mm hm. So when he came back, I'm just going back a little bit, when he came back to town with your mom, when you were just little

LC. I was three months . . . three months old.

KF. Three months old.

LC. Well, probably six months then.

KF. Yeah. Yep. He started to play with Sid Pugh, and that was – how long did he play with him? Was it a while, before he

LC. Oh I imagine it was a while before he uh – ‘cause then he played with Dolly Gray, too, you know, and he’d play with the different bands, you know he was never without work, as my - my mother tells it. But then when he formed his own band, he made a deal with the Owl Café and he played there for a long time.

CF. So, for many years he was playing

LC. Oh, yeah.

KF. . . . in that same, with that same group of people?

LC. No, he’d bring in new musicians, I mean, his original musicians, uh, I remember the one guy was Stubby Martin, he brought in from, um, Battle – er, uh, Benton Harbor, and um, Stubby and his wife, Lillian, moved right here to Alpena, and they must’ve been here for four or five years, because she worked as a waitress at the Owl, and uh, I can remember them.

KF. What did he play, Stubby?

LC. Stubby played sax.

KF. Ok.

LC. And uh,

KF. So he was bringing other people into town

LC. Oh, yeah

KF. For his band, he wasn’t

LC. Oh, for his band, no

KF. Ok, so he wasn’t using local

LC. He wasn't using local musicians all the time. Some would call once in a while, but uh, and then another one that he brought in was, his name was Walt Jackson. I didn't like him too much. He was, um . . .

CC. Full of himself?

LC. Piano player. No, he was a piano player, but I was just young again, you know, he was a big, big dark lookin' guy. He wasn't black, but I mean he was a dark lookin' . . . I don't know

CC. Not very happy camper.

LC. He's on this picture, that's him right there. (laughs) But, uh, but he uh – and then if we listen to this music, there's one he um, the introduced uh, Flint's own Bill Gussie, and I remember that name, now what Bill Gussie played, I don't know, but he never brought another trumpeter. He always brought in uh, either a clarinet or sax. Or, you know, and he had drums and piano, sax . . .

CC. Who played drums for him, do you remember, Lois.

LC. Um, in Alpena, Howard Pake played drums for him quite a while.

KF. I she - was he from here?

LC. He was from here, yeah. And uh, I'm trying to think who else . . .

CC. You said he had a piano player . . .

LC. Oh, yeah, he

CC. Was there a local one?

LC. No, not local one until Joe Emerson would play with him.

CC. Ok

LC. And Eddie Work (?) who played with him for a while, before they all went together as the Harmoners. Joe never went together . . . uh, with other bands. He did with my dad, but I don't think Joe played mu – and there's something very unique about Joe, I don't know if you've interviewed anybody about Joe Emerson. But he was a great piano player, but he couldn't read a word of music. He could not read a word of music.

CC. Could your dad read music?

LC. Oh, yeah. Yeah.

CC. Ok.

KF. He was self-taught, but he learned how to

LC. And like I say, his - his big thrust came when he toured with the – well, (inaudible) he toured with the big bands. But he didn't tour with them, he played because they – they were touring at that time.

CC. Mm hm.

LC. And so he learned a lot from those guys.

KF. Right. He would have had to teach himself to read those charts.

LC. Oh, yeah. And I'm sure, and I'm sure when he was young enough, he asked them questions, you know, 'how do you do this', and 'what do you think about doing this', do I, do you, what do you want me to, you know, should I go up to try to get that note or, and I - I imagine they were all very helpful to him, so that's why he was – 'cause he played a very sweet, clear trumpet. He wasn't, it wasn't like Louis Armstrong to me, Louis Armstrong . . . I didn't like his trumpet, you know. But he was like Harry James or Marie – what's his name – a very sweet trumpet player.

KF. So he um, he played at the Owl Café for a while – quite a long time

LC. Oh, yeah.

KF. But then you mentioned Twin Acres later on – when did that happen and was it the same band? (24:14)

LC. No, not his band.

KF. Ok.

LC. His band was the only – his band played the Owl Café. And I would say probably a good five years

KF. Ok.

LC. . . . that he played straight at the Owl – he didn't play any other bands. And uh . . . but, uh, when the Harmonizers got the job at Twin Acres, he played fer – I don't even know who the leader of the Harmonizers were, tell you the truth, it wasn't Austin Deadman – but it was Austin Deadman, and Eddie Werpil, and my Dad, and Sid Pugh, and, uh, what was the other one . . . I don't know, I've got a picture of him . . .

KF. So he went to the Harmoneers

LC. Harmoneers . . .

KF. And so, at that point he was done with his other band. It disbanded.

LC. Oh, his band, yeah, he was, he was through with that.

KF. Ok.

LC. But he still got bands together for like the shows in town and, and uh, the performances and stuff like that

CC. Red Stocking Review, those kinds of things

LC. Right, those kind of things – it wasn't Red Stocking, but it's uh, 'cause every year they had a big minstrel show and they

CC. Yeah, I think it morphed into, uh, Red Stocking

KF. (background, quiet) Red Stocking Review . . .

LC. Yeah, right, yeah. Yeah.

KF. So, I, uh, ok – ok, so, when he was playing five nights a week with his band for that five years, that's when it was his full-time job.

LC. That was his full-time job

KF. And when your sister came along, he needed to get other work, so is - that's when his band was no . . . you n- he's

LC. Well, no, he still played

KF. He still played?

LC. He still played.

KF. Ooh, so he was playing at night

LC. He was playing at night.

KF. five nights a week and working someplace else?

LC. Mmm hm, mm hm.

KF. Ookay.

LC. He started out working, I think it was at Montgomery Ward's and um, then he needed something more substan . . . then you know, then, he cut back on it a bit, he didn't play all those nights at, uh, in the Owl, he played weekends at the Owl, and this and that but – and probably the business wasn't there, either, at that time, you know.

CC. Yeah, I think, I think that's exactly what happed, the bands that were playing, uh,

LC. Yeah. . .

CC. . . . five nights a week, all of a sudden business wasn't

LC. Right

CC. Working as, you know –

LC. Everybody had different . . .

CC. - the owner wasn't making the money to be able to pay

LC. That's right, to pay them.

CC. To be able to pay the musicians, so they started back in the - the days down.

LC. Right.

CC. So we went from maybe five nights a week down to two.

LC. Two. Yeah.

CC. Friday and . . .

LC. Weekends

CC. . . . a Saturday

LC. or something, yeah, yeah – exactly. I think that's what happened, you know, I can't remember exactly, but

CC. I think it happened everywhere in Alpena that had a band.

KF. What time period would you say – this was, about?

CC. 60s, 70s.

KF. 60s – so, if

CC. Late 50s

LC. Yeah, late 50s.

KF. do you think that had something to do with the shift- shifting of music, too, in terms of what

CC. That and

KF. . . . you know, moving to rock and roll?

CC. That and other entertainment. Television.

KF. Mm hm.

LC. That's right. That's right.

CC. Better radio reception.

LC. Everybody didn't want to go out to dance . . .

CC. Records.

LC. on Wednesday night.

CC. Re- uh, records, yeah.

LC. Even, you know, even when I was dating in that, we used to go out to the Owl just about every night, he didn't have a band every night, but we used to go to the Owl – you went out, you needed someplace to go, but uh . . . yeah, but I - in thinking back now, when you say about he needed the money, you know – how he raised a family, 'cause it wasn't until my sister came along and she was born in '41, I think it was – uh, that he start looking for other work. But my brother and I, you know, we didn't live high off the hog, because he couldn't afford it. I can remember we had such a good life. I can remember we would have Thanksgiving dinner at 2:00 in the morning, when the guys got off of work, and they'd come over to my house, our house – and my mother and and – this is when Miss Martin was still living there – Lillian Martin - and my mother and Lillian would cook a Thanksgiving dinner and, for the whole band, you know, and they came over when they were through, and they'd wake Donny and I up, and we'd get up and eat Thanksgiving dinner. I can remember one time, too, this is when he was working at the Owl, steady, and uh, I went down to the basement one day and uh, he had a piano, a baby grand piano, it was a small, miniature piano, and it was broken. And I says, "What's going on, what are you doing, Daddy?" And he said, "Oh," and he – it wasn't Bud MacDougal, but one of the MacDougals boys had a, a girl – and he said, "This is so-and-so's", and he said, "she broke it,

and they want me to fix it.” And oh, I fell in love with it, it was every – I’d go down there and watch him fix this piano, put the keys back, and he painted it an ivory color, and I was so envious of this little girl . . . Guess who got that for Christmas.

CC. Ooh, the story was – that’s why he made it.

LC. It was for me.

CC. Oh, wow.

LC. They probably couldn’t afford to go out and get anything else and – I got – I was happy!

KF. That’s a beautiful story.

LC. And I – I, the fact is, I’ve always been – Carole knows me, I’m, I’m into show biz and all, I love to do, I was in Red Stocking and all that stuff, and I used to take that piano and I put on shows in the neighborhood. I remember Donna Dorr was one of the little girls and she was really cute, and I put her – I shouldn’t be telling you all this stuff, should I – but I put her in a high chair, little high chair, and she had really curly hair, and I had my piano there, and I’m playing it, (beating time on the table & singing) “Little curly hair, in a high chair, what will be your menu for today” and all the women in the neighborhood would come and watch my shows. (laughing)

CC. Well now, see?

KF. I love that! You said you weren’t music - musically inclined, but you were performing!

LC. I was a performer for sure! (laughing)

KF. Yeah, yeah.

LC. Yeah, oh yeah.

CC. Well, talent manifests itself in many, many ways, and . . . you know, besides I know you’re very outgoing and you’re very active in your community, always have been, but that story right there is pretty precious I would say.

LC. Something I’ll always remember. Yeah. Yeah.

CC. Where’s the piano, Lois?

LC. I don’t know whatever happened to it.

CC. You don’t know whatever happened to it, huh?

LC. No, don't know whatever happened to it. But, I mean, I was one happy girl Christmas morning, I'll tell ya, you know?

CC. I'm sure you were. Yeah.

LC. Yeah. So – but I reflect on that stuff now, and I think, God, you know, they, they didn't – and I think probably a lot of 'em, I mean, I'm thinking about like Sid Pugh and that, they were probably in the same boat, you know, when that was their, their total income, just the music.

CC. Yep.

KF. But how amazing that they could support themselves at all . . . you know, as a professional musician in Alpena at that time.

LC. Right, but again, like Carole says, it was a different time, when people wanted to go out at night and dance and listen to the music and, you know, just . . .

CC. And they had a great choice of music

LC. A good choice of music, right

CC. I mean, at one place was having big band, some was doin' lounge and, and jazz

LC. Right, right.

CC. And some was doin' country, and somebody else was doin' polkas, and then you had the hoedowns goin' on out in outlying counties where my mother used to go and dance on Satur –

LC. Sure, oh yeah,

CC. You know,

LC. It's a different world. It's a different world.

CC. It's a different world than it is today.

LC. And I, I just feel grateful that I incorporated myself into it. I mean, uh, now my brother and sister, they - I don't think that they could care less, you know. But, uh . . . yeah, it uh, yeah, it's just been a great life.

KF. So your dad played primarily big band music - type music

LC. Yeah, that's the kind of – yeah.

KF. Did he ever venture into any other um, styles of music?

LC. Uuum, no, I remember, uh, reading about, uh, Doug Pugh, when he wrote about his father, when they went to Posen to try to, and he said (laughing) “Now’s the time to lay down the horn, when” – you know. But so, no, he never um ventured into uh, other than – I mean, he played uh, ballads, and and uh, I mean, “Stardust” – oh, my god. He did such a beautiful . . .

CC. “Deep Purple” is gorgeous, too.

LC. Yeah

CC. That’s a big band

LC. That’s a big band

CC. But what you were listening to was a remake of what the way the big bands did it.

LC. Oh, yeah, right, right, yeah - but um, but in, in, in when he played “Stardust”, that’s when he used to reach C above high C, and then, ‘cause that – he’s the one that told me. I said, “Well, how do you do that? How come, how can you get so high?” And he said, “Well, I have to build for it. I build for it. It’s all in the tongue.” I mean, I think he said it was in the tongue. I don’t know. But uh, but I asked questions. I was always interested, where Don wasn’t that interested, or Patty never, Patty was just out – so he played dances for her, too, and she’s nine years younger than I am.

CC. Yup.

LC. But he played dances for her

CC. He would’ve played ‘em for me, too, Lois.

LC. Oh, I’m sure he would, oh yeah. Sure.

CC. ‘Cause I went to every dance at high school,

LC. Well, he played ‘em there

CC. and he was playin’ with Dolly Gray.

LC. Dolly Gray, yeah, he played with Dolly Gray then, and Dolly had all the dances, yeah. So it was a great world.

KF. How do you spell – how do you spell Dolly Gray? I haven’t come across that.

CC. D-O-L-L-Y

KF. Mm hm

CC. Is it G-R-E?

LC. G-R-A-Y

CC. A-Y?

KF. G-R-A-Y?

LC. Dolly Gray.

KF. Ok.

LC. I don't even remember what his real name is.

KF. Ok, and so he had a – he – so it was Dolly Gray, Sid Pugh, your dad had a band at that time?

LC. Yeah. Um, I'm trying to think of anybody else that -

CC. Emerson played with, with Dolly Gray.

LC. Yeah, Emerson played with – yeah.

CC. Yeah, he was the piano player

LC. Yep

CC. I remember that.

LC. Joe.

CC. 'Cause I was always taken with piano, so I remember that.

LC. Yeah. I always thought it was phenomenal that he . . .

CC. Yup.

LC. couldn't read a word of music, but he faked it, man – and my dad li- enjoyed playing with him. They became real good friends, my Dad, but he could just pick it up, you know? Sometimes, as I say, the music's in you, and I guess so. You know, it's a wonderful thing, it's a . . . but, uh . . .

KF. So how long did he play with the Harmoneers? Do you know?

LC. Oh, my gosh . . . again, you know, that's when we were engaged, and before that . . . probably I'm gonna say . . . they were probably together, I'm gonna . . . maybe someone else could tell ya, I'm gonna say they were together at least five or six years. And they played on, at Twin Acres just on the weekends.

CC. Mm hm

KF. Ok.

LC. But they were all getting older, too, you know, and that's when Eddie Worpel (?sp) came in, uh, to the group because he was kind of a, a newcomer in town, you know, and uh . . .

KF. What did he play?

LC. Piano.

KF. Yeah.

LC. But these guys were all great musicians . . .

KF. Mm hm

LC. I mean . . . oh, yeah.

KF. Mm hm . . . So did, um . . . he, did he continue playing after he stopped with the Harmonizers? Did he -?

LC. My Dad?

KF. Yeah.

LC. No.

KF. No. That was - that was when he stopped

LC. When they – when they

KF. When they were done, you knew he was done.

LC. When they were done, he was done.

CC. Lois, did you believe the night it was – were you there their last, their last gig? Were you there the night they played?

LC. I'm sure . . . I can't remember, but I'm sure I was.

CC. If you go back in your memory, did you believe that was gonna be it, that was the last time you'd hear your Dad play?

LC. No.

CC. Wow.

LC. Yeah. Well, that's on this recording, if Mary picked it up right, I hope to God she picked it up right

CC. Ok

LC. Uh, 'cause I said, just pick up the music, 'cause it - the other is, you know, with with the personal stuff.

CC. Mm hm.

LC. And uh, he plays a beautiful rendition on this of "Memories of You".

CC. Ok.

LC. Beautiful. And that it comes out pretty clear on my recordings, so I'm anxious to hear - I haven't had a chance to play this, so I don't know what it's like.

CC. Ok.

LC. But, um . . . Lot of good memories.

KF. You said he often got, um, singers from out of town . . .

LC. Oh, yeah, this is when I was young

KF. Yeah?

LC. You know he . . . um, I don't know, Carole probably knows more about this than I do, but they have booking agents, don't they?

CC. Well, yeah, Portfield(?), just like for any other

LC. And these, and he, and all these pictures these girls that we all, you know,

CC. Oh . . .

LC. . . . and pictures and, and uh, but I remember this one, Audrey Lorraine, and she's the one that he hired, and uh, she was with them quite a while.

KF. She moved here, and stayed for a while.

LC. She stayed for a while, yeah.

KF. Ok.

LC. I've got a picture of her, too . . .

KF. Ok.

LC. One of them that I dug out, I'll show you later. But, um, of course I thought oh, she's so pretty! You know, and of course she wore the long dresses, and you know, this was at the Owl Café.

KF. Mm hm

LC. She was dressed with the long dresses and her hair was always up, blonde, bleached I'm sure, but . . . fact, this is how stupid I am, I went on the internet, I thought, I wonder if there's a way I could trace back and see if – so I, I did a search to see if Audrey Lorraine, singer during the thirties and forties or something like that, but I couldn't get anything.

CC. Couldn't find anything . . .

LC. But I'm not too good at computer stuff, but I thought it'd be kinda interesting to find out if she ever did turn into anything, or, you know, 'cause a lot of these girls that probably answered his – they went on to sing with the big bands, you know.

KF. Right.

LC. I mean, look at the one that was here in Alpena that sang with Harry James for a long time, you know.

CC. Mm hm.

KF. Do - do you know, remember who that was?

LC. Uh, no – she had the dance studio, what was her – Jenna.

CC. Jenna. That's right.

LC. Yeah, yeah, she sang with Harry James.

KF. She had a dance studio?

LC. In Alpena. Mm hm.

KF. She did?

LC. Mm hm.

KF. And she went on to sing with big bands after that?

LC. Oh, no, this was

CC. This was first

LC. This was first, she was a big band singer in – in the forties, yeah. (38:38)

KF. Oh.

LC. Sang with Harry James.

KF. Oh, oh – oh, with Harry James, ok, sorry.

LC. Yeah, we've got recordings of her, some of the songs that she sang

KF. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Ok, gotcha.

LC. But she ended up in Alpena teaching dance (laughs)

KF. & CC. (Inaudible)

CC. . . . down the street

LC. Yeah, yeah.

CC. Yeah

LC. So Alpena's had a lotta interesting people come.

KF. Mm hm.

CC. We - we sure have. A lot of people that came through and stayed, and

LC. Right

CC. got married, and had a family, and played music and. . .

LC. Right. Yeah, and did other things, yeah.

KF. Mm hm. And your Dad brought some other people, you know, like you were saying, brought some other people in,

LC. Yeah

KF. You know, who had these talents, and that just helps, you know, enrich the music of the area

LC. Oh, yeah

KF. With him and with the other people that he brought in, so . . .

LC. Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

CC. 'Cause I can almost bet when you talk about this beautiful lady that he hired, she was probably the only one that was dressed to the nines – you know? I mean, they had singers, there was guy singers and all that,

LC. Sure

CC. . . . but when you bring someone in that's, you know,

LC. Oh, that would draw the crowds

CC. Aaah, a beautiful lookin' gal with, and dressed for the occasion

LC. Oh, yeah, and she was

CC. That must have, uh, turned some

LC. Oh, yeah.

CC. . . . ladies' heads, too.

LC. Oh, yeah.

CC. Gotta get my act together here. (laughs)

LC. Yeah, I can't find that . . .

KF. So with the Harmonizers, did they have a – did they have a singer?

LC. Mm m.

KF. No?

LC. Guys, uh . . . who sang?

CC. Well, did your Dad sing?

LC. No.

CC. No.

LC. I mean, he would sing, but he wasn't primarily a singer. He just played the horn.

CC. Ok.

LC. I don't even think he knew how to play piano.

CC. Really

LC. Mm hm.

CC. Mm.

LC. He might have, you know, but I never saw him play piano.

CC. Ok.

LC. You know, it just, uh . . . but, uh . . .

KF. So he, he didn't, he didn't ever have a teacher or anything, he was completely just on his own

LC. He developed it himself, and like I say, I know I repeated this, but I think it was his experience of playing with those big bands, with their, they had their core group, they had the main trumpet player, and then if they needed another trumpet player, they'd bring him in, and if he was that interested to learn how to play, I'm sure he'd just talk the ear off of that guy. You know, I don't know this for sure, but I would imagine just knowing him, he wanted to know everything, you know - how can I, how can I sweeten up what I'm playing instead of, I can't reach this note, you know, and how can I do that? And I'm sure they were all willing to help. So.

KF. And, and your, your son, that you have that picture of him watching his grandpa play, does he remember hearing – hearing him play at all?

LC. Oh, Mike?

KF. Yeah

LC. Yeah, he remembers hearing Grandpa, yeah.

KF. Ok. Ok.

LC. But he was getting ready to go play at the Owl . . . ok, so like I say, Mike is 59 now, and he's about three years old in that picture, so that would've been . . . wow, a lot of years ago. (laughs)

CC. But what I think she's asking, um, er, did Mike get to hear his Grandfather play – did he, was he old enough to remember his grandfather?

LC. Um . . . I think as he got older, yeah, I think that, uh, we probably had taken him someplace that he – sure, I hope he did.

CC. Ok.

LC. But uh . . . you know, I can't remember . . . time just flies away (laughs) . . . but, uh . . .

CC. Well, I think you've given us really a wonderful background of your father and his music, and where he played here in Alpena

LC. I hope so

CC. And how he enriched the area by, uh, teaming up with like musicians, uh, whether it was his own band, or whether he was uh, sitting in . . .

LC. Oh, yeah.

CC. . . . as a member of another band

LC. All the other ones, yup.

CC. And all the folks he brought to Alpena, uh, that went away from here with, with - with good memories

LC. Right.

CC. And they certainly left good memories with you, Lois.

LC. Oh, yeah, yeah, so, but I was just curious enough to want to know everything that was going on, you know, and so it made it – made it really nice for it, for me.

CC. I think of all the interviews that we've done, (ahem) I'd like to add before we close, that um, when you do an interview like this and you talk about uh, your father, your mother, who, whatever it might be that, that – and you're talking about them and they've already passed, um – I haven't had that opportunity, you're the first one for me to be able to sit across the table

LC. Ah

CC. And talk to about somebody that is already – their, their, their father is passed. But – the reader and the listener to this interview will not be able to understand what I see when I see you talk about him.

LC. Oh, thank you.

CC. And talk about what he did.

LC. Thank you.

CC. So, I wish there was a way, over the internet, and over the web that we could show that but from me to you, Lois – thank you for coming in and I see the love that you had – this is why you stayed in this community. You've been a community leader

LC. That's right

CC. And your father was in his own way. And your mother – I'm assuming she was a stay-at-home mom

LC. Yup. Yup.

CC. One of the most important jobs in the world, and she made

LC. Exactly

CC. things work when – like you said, you don't know how she did it.

LC. That's right, yup. Right, well, thank you

CC. So, with that – unless Kirstine has any more to ask,

LC. (laughs)

CC. we'll close the interview

LC. Well, I thank you.

CC. with a great big thank you.

LC. Well, I thank you for the chance to come and - and express myself and how I feel.

CC. Thank you

LC. Thank you very much.