

TAPE INDEX

1. Announcement.
2. Dad played violin, mother played button accordion. Dad born in Sanuk (sp?), Poland, 1896, died in 1980; mother born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1906, still living. Dad was a good violin and trombone player, mother played an old Hohner button box when she was young. Dad was Roman Filipczak, mother Frances.
3. Oldest brother, Frank, still active playing trombone. Joe tried, gave it up. John, youngest, plays trumpet and concertina.
4. Doesn't know what part of Poland dad came from. Mother born in Milwaukee but Polish. J never saw his parents play.
5. Went to Cretin High School in St. Paul, decided he wanted to be in the band. There was a trumpet in the house, brother's, but after freshman year the band director told him he didn't want him in the band because he wasn't contributing. John practiced all that summer and was accepted into the band. Later that band, challenged senior cornet player and beat him out, then kept seat as first trumpet player in band.
6. Played a few years in drum and bugle corps, including Schmidt Indians sponsored by Schmidt Brewery in St. Paul, from 1959-1963.
7. Meantime started playing Polka music. School friend's dad had a polka band that played at the Polish American Club. Andrew Walkoz, died ca. 1986, John was friend with his son, also John. J had been playing along with Faribault polka radio station. Played first job in 1957, played with Walkoz for two and a half years, weddings, anniversaries, some ballrooms.
8. Winter of 1959 started with the five piece Jolly Brothers doing Polish music. The group didn't have a vocalist, so John played and did Polish vocals. With them until 1964 when went into service. Got married after service, raised family and got out of playing, but has returned in last ten years.
9. With Jolly Brothers, played various battles of bands: with Elmer Scheid at the Prom Ballroom, with Earl Schmidt and Jerry Schuft at Waconia Ballroom. Toured with Marion Lush. Played Schlieff's Little City, Falls Ballroom, Marigold Ballroom, Starlight Ballroom in Stevens Point with Marion Lush. John also sat in with Marion Lush and with other Polish Chicago heroes, Little Richard, Li'l Wally (the "granddaddy of Polish Polka music as we know it today"). Played with Little Richard at defunct Sokol's in Twin Cities on 22nd and University, and at Stevens Point. Fun playing with a different band, and a challenge.
10. Jolly Brothers were Joe, Gene, and Fred Tomaszewski. Joe quit the band, months later formed the Northeasterners Polka Band: Joe on accordion, John Filipczak on trumpet, Tom Mrozinski on clarinet and sax, Fred Benz drums, Bob Jackson bass. Playing honky style. Work too much for J and he dropped out, but Joe kept on. Roughly 1965-1967. Joe changed band to Polish Show Band, Jolly Brothers were still going until about 1972.
11. Joe Tomaszewski was in a terrible head on crash coming back from a New Year's Eve gig about 1975 or 1976, had to stop playing.

12. Tom Mrozinski, Bill Czerniak, Joe Glowacki and the Nordeast Five all started going in the 1970s. Glowacki had played with Jolly Brothers.

13. Also going 1957 or so, in the same vein as Jolly Brothers, was Frank Pastuszak and the Polka Pals, four piece band: concertina, clarinet and sax, trumpet, and drummer.

14. Jolly Brothers and Frank Pastuszak were kind of the pioneers of Polish Polka music in Minnesota. Frank did the honky style first, but was soon passed by Jolly Brothers. "After the records come out, we were playing 15-16 jobs in a row during the week, and it was kind of tough." J was on Jolly Brothers' first two albums, Polka Special and Come Dance With Me. John did a lot of writing and arranging for the band, including the title tune of the second LP.

15. From Jolly Brothers and Pastuszak came many other bands. Jolly Jokers had Louie Besany (sp?) on trumpet, with Frank Pastuszak, then went to Jolly Brothers after J quit. Harold Hanson played sax with Frank, accordionist was Joe Glowacki, who then started his own band.

16. Andrew Walkoz's band was more in the German and Czech vein as far as repertoire, although he had his own style: concertina, saxophone, clarinet, drummer, and trumpet when J joined. Not really New Ulm style, but not Polish.

17. When J joined Jolly Brothers, started playing the new honky style: "Seven Days, Seven Nights Without You," by Little Wally, "I'm In Love With You Polka." Stuff by Wally, Marion Lush, Eddie Zima.

18. J listened to Frank Wojnarowski, Ray Budzilec (sp?), and some eastern bands, learned their tunes but not in their style. There were Vitak-Elsnic books for eastern style Polish, but not for honky style.

19. Jolly Brothers used theme song of Chicago's Stan Wolowic and the Polka Chips, "Polka To The Music," as their theme. Did waltz, "Tell Me You're Mine Tonight," as their closing waltz, learned from a record.

20. All the musicians were excellent. Dave Keil, sax, was a great sight reader, but couldn't play without written notes.

21. Jolly Brothers dominated Minnesota and played east coast until they broke up in 1972.

22. J born June 26, 1941.

23. The Chesney Brothers were around for years and years. Parents had their records. They used to play for ponchke (sp?) dances, and were very popular, had to be booked a year in advance.

24. Besides Andy Walkoz, J played early on with Pete Mrozinski, father of Tom Mrozinski who started Mrozinski Brothers. Pete played concertina, and he still plays, in his 80s. Pete played pretty much the same "book" as Walkoz and used some of the same musicians.

25. The Chesney Brothers played more of the authentic old country style. No

drummer, sometimes a clarinet player, and eventually a guitar and banjo, but the core was concertina, violin, and bowed standup bass. No amplifiers. Might have a vocal mike

26. When J started out there was no amplification. People played soft and listened for each other. Got a good sense of dynamics that way.

27. "To me honky style is a Dixieland style polka. The trumpet is the drive in the lead, clarinet player plays around the melody--up and above and below--and the concertina just tries to hold it all together, then you've got your bass and your drums for rhythm . . . Once you know the tune, it's kind of there as a reference point, and you just play your gut feeling, which makes it interesting and, I think, a lot more lively than anything in the German style where everything is regimented, and written, and almost note-for-note."

28. On honky style versus push or dyno or Chicago style. [Craig Ebel chimes in.] Always someone bellow-shaking whether on accordion or concertina, trumpets are there "very brassy," the bass and the drums are working together, with arranged accents. The music keeps pushing itself.

29. On bellow-shaking with concertina. Different from accordion, either use 3-4 fingers on a chord real fast; done with the fingers not with the bellows because the concertina, unlike the piano accordion, is diatonic.

30. On getting together J's current band, the Classics. Marv Welinski, trumpet, since 1983; Stan Stukel, bass, since 1983; Craig Ebel is third drummer; Gary Jasicki, clarinet, of Weyerhaeuser, WI, who also leads a band, Polka Joy. Gary important on honky style with clarinet and sax. Has played with Jolly Jokers, with Father Kapoun, and with J.

31. On name: from Tom Mrozinski. Originally called group the Vagabonds because they played from place-to-place, suggested something more classy: "Polish Classics." J figured "Polish" designation would narrow their job possibilities, since the group does some rock, country, and modern, so just tried John Filipczak and the Classics. (Their are other groups called simply "The Classics.")

32. On J being known as "The Polish Pavarotti." An idea of Tom Mrozinski, 1986. Some of J's friends had given him a Polish Pavarotti T-Shirt. J was going to play with the Mrozinskis at Polish Fest in Milwaukee, for a gimmick was carried up by six guys, wearing a turban, with two more guys carrying a big gong. Ed Blazonczyk, who won the grammy that year, had just finished his set. The announcer was tipped off with a script and told Eddie that a surprise was coming to him from the far eastern regions of Poland. Tom and Eddie were known for pulling tricks on one another. They reprised the Polish Pavarotti act a few years in a row in Milwaukee and Chicago. John would play and sing with the Mrozinskis.

33. People have written to John since then inquiring if he had any records out.

34. J doesn't work the Pavarotti bit into his current act that often, but has done it a few times: New Year's Eve at the Polish-American Club, and at a bigger festival at Minnesota's Belrae Ballroom. Tom wanted John to fly down

with his trumpet on a cable as "Polka Man" at Frankemauth, Michigan. John didn't like this idea much, and it never came off. Tom Mrozinski believed in showmanship to get attention.

35. Co-worker of John's wife worked up a Pavarotti caricature. They use it on their business cards.

36. The Classics first recording will be all new tunes, all new vocals, no remakes. This departs from the standard approach of a few new ones and a lot of familiar ones.

37. Stan Stukel comes in and is introduced to Leary. Stan has a classified job for Honeywell. Stan has played with Clyde McCoy and with the US Air Force Band.

38. John grew up speaking Polish and still talks it when he goes home to see his mother.

39. John has been a machinery mover, aka a millwright, for fifteen years. Currently works for John Roberts Printing in Coon Rapids as a maintenance man.

40. Wife Myrna is behind everything John wants to do in music and he appreciates her support.

[End of Session]

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