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DOWN HOME DAIRYLAND RADIO PROGRAMS

Polka Stars
 Jim Weisbrod & Gene Shulfler
 Stevens Point, WI
 Recorded at Red Barn Polka Festival
 Evansville, WI
 May 1, 1988

Recorded by Jim Leary & Richard March
 Ampex 632 tape
 Nagra 4-L recorder

1. Announcement.

[Jim Weisbrod speaks first]

2. Jim born Stevens Point, 1933, lived there all his life. Started trumpet in high school band as high school freshman. Floated into a polka band, the Melody Aces, because there was a little money in it. Led by Ben Zablewski (sp?).

* 3. J & Gene in same high school band together. Both played with Benny Gagas from mid-1950s til 1962, then formed Polka Stars.

* 4. Polka Stars: J & Gene, trumpets; Ernie Wasiliewski on tuba, Dave Wasiliewski on drums, Dave Wanta on concertina. Play a cross between Polish and mostly Dutchman style.

5. In Stevens Point equal interest in both Polish and Dutchman style. Polka Stars instrumentation essentially Dutchmen. Use different beat, snappier, in Polish style; and Dave Wanta used to play Polish style with Norm Dombrowski.

6. Bennie Gagas was a 7 piece Dutchman style band.

* 7. Preference for Dutchman style more by area than ethnicity. Bevent, Hatley, lot of ~~Dutchman~~ preference as in Chicago, just as in Milwaukee Slovenian so popular. *Rowe*

8. Years ago Dutchman style the style for working bands in Stevens Point area, but Lil Wally and later Blazonczyk influenced younger people.

9. Polka Stars name drawn out of a hat.

10. Jim a salesman for Gerber Products, Gene a mechanic, Dave Wanta a mason, the Wasiliewskis both work for Kopps.

11. Band's trumpet harmony has a brassy sound, probably our trademark.

12. Don't regard vocal style as special, just get up there and do it. Gene sings lead, Jim just follows along.

13. Certain country numbers fit their instrumentation. Sometimes they hear other polka bands do the country song, sometimes they make the adaptation themselves. Sometimes the keys are important.

[Gene Shulfler speaking now]

14. Born in 1930, Stevens Point area. Started playing in a high school band. Playing with Jim for many years.

15. Playing with the band can be a rough life. Group plays throughout Wisconsin and in Minnesota. In Milwaukee play Nightengale, Veteran's Park, assorted weddings.

16. About Benny Gagas. In the music business for many years. Played sax and clarinet.

17. Gene a mechanic, runs a repair shop. He's Polish, Jim Polish and German, other band members are Polish.

18. Years ago used to play tent weddings when with Benny Gagas, from one until one, sitting on a hayrack. Drinks were "harsh," moonshine. "At the time you didn't know anything else."

19. Gene and Jim recorded the Stevens Point Polka with Benny Gagas.

20. J thinks Dutchman and Polish styles have both become more upbeat, snappier in recent years. Attributes bouncy bass horn work to Loeffelmacher and others. Bernie Roberts also had a prominent bass horn. Polka Stars used to play a lot of Bernie Roberts back in the early 1960s.

21. Gene has daughters and a son who have a fine band in the Stevens Point area, the Smoky Express. Guitars, concertina, trumpets, drums: rock, country rock, country, and old time. Gene sometimes plays with them.

[session ends]