

## GL120 Folk Arts Survey of Waukegan & Zion, Illinois

### Trini Esparza & El Conjunto Fortuna

Waukegan, Illinois

May 16, 1987

- Gran Baile en celebracion del Aniversario "Conjunto Fortuna" de Waukegan, Amenizando Mano a Mano "Tropical del Valle," Acompañado del Conjunto Fortuna Maria Elena Zires; J-M Club, 708 Greenwood Ave., 7:30 en adelante

#### 3) El Conjunto Fortuna and Tropical del Valle - Tape #s 87-2 to 87-3

(recorded at the Gran Baile at J-M Club)

El Conjunto Fortuna...

Trini Esparza, Jr. - bajo sexto & vocal, director

Mingo Lopez - acordeon & vocal

Tavo Alaniz - bass (electric) & vocal

Jorge Lopez - bateria (drums) & vocal

Tropical Del Valle...

Tomas Pena - Organo & Acordion

Grabiel Saucedo - vocalista (& percussion)

Omar Vela - Saxofon

Dionicio Pena - bateria (drums)

David Guadarrama - guitarra (electric)

Hugh Pena - bajo (electric bass)

El Conjunto Fortuna rented the J-M Club for a dance to celebrate their second anniversary. The sound system on stage belonged to Tropical Del Valle, a more established band. El Conjunto played the first set, a little over an hour, and then turned the stage over to El Tropical for the second set. The third set [not recorded] was El Conjunto again, joined by vocalist Maria Elena Zires. Presumably, El Tropical played a second set for the fourth hour.

Around two hundred people were in attendance. The dance floor measured about 30 x 40 feet. Once the evening got started, there were about forty couples on the floor for each dance. The music was predominantly polkas (rancheras) and cumbias. The former were the more numerous, especially when Ms. Zires was performing, while the latter attracted more dancers. One vals (waltz) and one huapango were performed.

Mexicans dance the polkas (a ranchera is a song with lyrics to which people dance the polka) as basically a one-step with a variety of turns executed by the couple, more akin to the foxtrot than to the Polish polka. Common variations involve the couple dancing forward side-by-side, sometimes with a backstep every four beats. In a fancier variation, the man leads the woman around him in a clockwise direction, sometimes changing hands so that she may always face forward, sometimes turning her under his arm instead of changing his hands. The cumbia is also danced predominantly by couples progressing forward side-by-side. Often the dancers switch places every measure, following the insistent slow-quick-quick of the bass. The fancier dancers also continually change their orientation while maintaining the counter-clockwise line of direction around the floor.

As I was leaving, I encountered Trini Esparza's wife. She wanted to make sure I had enjoyed myself, and wanted to know what I thought. I was surprised that my presence had even been noted, but it became apparent to me that Trini had told his wife who I was and what I was doing there. She wanted me to leave with a good impression. I said I had enjoyed myself, but wished that I had been able to dance. She said she'd teach me how to polka. We danced one dance simply but successfully. We waited for a cumbia, but with the featured vocalist, rancheras were featured. Mrs. Esparza told me that people in Waukegan didn't really appreciate Mexican music. But when the band went to Milwaukee or Detroit, they were well received by Mexicans and Poles alike, because the music is all basically the same. And in Waukegan, there is some kind of split in the Mexican community over the appropriateness of Tex-Mex music. [Does it involve different generations of immigrants? or a debate between cultural purists and adaptors? or between moderns and 'hillbillies'?] Mrs. Esparza with her daughter and her boyfriend had been sitting at the door taking tickets all night. She was upset because Trini's uncle had held his dance the night before just to cut down on the attendance at this Gran Baile [jealousy? family feud?] She hoped that Trini could stick with his music long enough to fulfill his potential and make something with it, but it would take a lot of concentrated work.