

GL121 Folk Arts Survey of Waukegan & Zion, Illinois

Warren Lauer

Wildwood, Illinois

June 17, 1987

June 11

4) Warren Lauer (phone interview)

Mr. Lauer is an accordion player who worked regularly with Don Adams. He used to play for square dances with Bob May, a fiddler and guitarist who is now deceased. Mr. Lauer named two fiddlers in the area who are still playing: Palmer Hagan of Round Lake (he used to play with the Golden Tones), and Virgil Harrison, also of Round Lake, a bluegrass and contest fiddler.

Mr. Lauer remembers square dances as the "good old days." That was the time when the WLS National Barn Dance was popular. Many of the WLS performers made personal appearances out around Gurnee and Wadsworth. He remembers seeing Pat Butrum who played the comic role of the "big, stumbling clodhopper." But "that was just his act." He was actually good-looking and intelligent.

We agreed that I would call him next week so we could set up a time to get together.

June 17

4) Warren Lauer (Tape #s 87-10 to -11)

Mr. Lauer learned to play the harmonica when he was about seven years old. He used to wear a harmonica out rather quickly. Each year he received a new harmonica as his birthday present. When he reached his teens, he convinced his parents to get him an accordion. He took lessons in Waukegan. It wasn't too long before he was playing for square dances at school houses in northeastern Lake County. He played with several dance bands over the next twenty to thirty years. He worked frequently with Don Adams, the square dance caller from Wadsworth. He doesn't play much in public anymore, though he will play for a golden wedding anniversary now and then for couples for whose weddings and silver wedding anniversaries he played for years ago.

Mr. Lauer has strong feelings for an older rural way of life that he feels has disappeared. He believes that people used to be more friendly and honest in the past. Two symbols for him of this old way of life are 1) the music of the WLS National Barn Dance (which he discusses in length on the tapes), and 2) a photo of a barn and farmstead that hangs in his living room. This photo has no personal connections to Mr. Lauer, but for him it represents his past and a common way of life that he feels is endangered in the 1980s.