Announcement: Location in the University of Washington district in office of Stan Boreson Enterprises.

[Originally from Everett, Washington]
My parents are both Norwegian from Norway. My mother [Ophelia “Tillie” Boreson] was born in Trondheim and my dad [Sophus Boreson] was born about a year after his parents arrived from Stavanger. And the two of them met in Stanwood and got married and moved to Everett. And that’s where I grew up. My dad worked for the Sound View Pulp and Paper Company in Everett. My mother was a housewife most of the time. My mother took me downtown, to downtown Everett. She had an old guitar. And I was 12 years old and she thought that I should learn to play the guitar. We got down there to the Buell Music Company which was underneath Brunette Jewelry Store, and Mel Odegard was the guitar teacher. He said, “Now I’ll teach you some chords and then you can sing the melody.” I was 12 and very bashful so I said, “No way am I going to sing.” He said, “Well, I also teach the accordion. So if you trade in the guitar for an accordion, then you can play the melody on one side and the chord on the other side. And you don’t have to sing.” So I said, “That’s what I want to do. So that’s how come I became an accordion player.”

[How did you become a professional entertainer?]
I started playing for dances when I was sixteen years old, with different orchestras. Ellerbee Brothers was one of them, and then Wally Burt’s Band. And then the war [WWII] came along and I joined the USO and went to Italy as an accompanist for different acts. And I was the accompanist for Arthur Tracy, he was The Street Singer. His big hit, back in the ’30s, was “Martha, Rambling Rose of the Wildwood.” His gimmick was that he would stroll the streets of New York, playing his accordion, and singing for people to throw money out the windows. He made $3,000,000 before income tax as The Street Singer. But he didn’t play the accordion. He had an accordion with no reeds in it, so I would stand behind the curtain and play the accordion and he would be out in front pretending like he played the accordion. Then later on I went with the Hoosier Hot Shots, and Allan Jones–remember him–and Irene Hervey. And so on. So that’s what I did during the war, because the service did not accept me. So I joined the USO and toured twenty-five countries, including North Africa and over as far as Karachi, India, before the war was over and I came home.

[Playing for dances in Everett—what kind of music?]
Playing the same songs now. We didn’t go for rock ‘n’ roll. We played schottisches, polkas, Swedish waltzes, fox trots, plain good old waltzes. My mother loved to sing and knew every song that she knew when she grew up. In the ’30s and ’40s I started learning different popular tunes. So that’s the kind of music we played. [Lot of Scandinavian music in the Everett area?] Oh yes, lot of Scandinavian music. In fact I had a favorite singer from Sweden. His name was Harry Brandelius. Every time he’d come out with a new record–78s in those days—I’d make sure that I got that record. And I knew a lot of his music and played it. And one of the big thrills of
my life was—he came over here on a tour—and I got to play with him in a show that he did in Seattle. Now he’s gone, gone for years. But he was a great singer. Harry Brandelius.

[What about other people prominent in Scandinavian music in the States?]
Most of the orchestras had to play at least one schottische a night and one Swedish waltz a night and a polka or two. It was part of the routine, because everybody loved to do those dances, along with all the other dances too like the three-step. We had to have quite a repertoire because that’s what people enjoyed when they went out to dance. And Harry [Stan’s accordionist cousin, Harry Lindbeck] is still playing that stuff all the time when he goes to dances. [Jens mentions the Hugo Helmer music store in Mount Vernon and also Hugo Helmer’s Accordion Band.] And he [Harry Lindbeck] was in the original Hugo Helmer Band. They used to be in all the parades and everything. [I think he—Hugo—plays 3-4 times a week.] Yes, it’s amazing. That keeps him going. If it wasn’t for that—he’s so crippled up—that keeps him very active. He says he’s playing more now than he did years ago, which is wonderful.

[Your solo career?]
I was at the University of Washington when television came to Seattle. And Lee Shulman, who was just out of college himself, Mrs. Bullit [Dorothy Stimson Bullitt] had him come to Seattle as the program director for her television station, which started out as KRSC. And then she got the call letters changed to KING. He came out to the University of Washington. I belonged to a little club called Club Encore. And it was kids that were working their way through college as singers, dancers, musicians, you know, whatever, instrumentalists. And he interviewed a lot of us. He was up here to develop shows because, for five years, KING was the only television station in Seattle. So he interviewed a lot of us and chose about ten of us to put on an hour show. After that show was over, he asked Art Barduhn, a pianist, and me on the accordion if we’d like our own 15 minute show once a week. I think it was on a Thursday night, 15 minutes. About 1949, when television first came to Seattle. But our 15 minute show never went 15 minutes. All they were going to do was turn on a movie when we were through. So if it went 17 or 21 or 28 or whatever, that’s what it was. He’d just signal us through the window—give us a stretch and do another number. If I had something else I could do, I did it. If Art did, he did it. Then pretty soon they expanded it to 30 minutes and Art got to use his trio with a bass and guitar. And then his piano. And then we had guests once a week. Like Eddie Peabody was very popular here. When he’d come to town, we’d always get him on our show. And then there were a lot of wonderful girl singers here in town and we could use them as guests. Naomi was a good singer, she sang with the Frank Chidester [?] Trio. And different gals around town.

I’ll tell you how loose it was in those days. Gloria Swanson came to Seattle to plug her comeback movie, Sunset Boulevard, and we had her on that week. She was so fascinating, talking about the old days of Hollywood when she was the star, so our 30 minute show went an hour and ten minutes because Tom Dargan was our announcer and he just kept asking her interesting questions about the old days of Hollywood when she was the queen bee. She was so regular and down-to-earth and fun, that we just let her talk. And it was fascinating. [Sponsors?] Our first big sponsor was an oil company, Clipper Oil Company. When television first came to Seattle, radio was still king. Lee Shulman would come into the studio and he’d be all excited because he saw a new antenna on somebody’s roof, so he knew that one other person was watching television. We knew that things were getting better when we’d go out for personal
appearances out to the different Clipper Oil gas stations. They’d have us on a flatbed truck. We saw that the crowds were getting bigger and bigger. Towards the end of that sponsorship we’d have 4-500 people around that flatbed truck. So then our next sponsor was People’s National Bank. Then another sponsor was Associated Grocers. We had that show going for about six years, with Art Barduhn and the Trio and me. Then after that they asked me if I wanted to have a children’s show. So they put me on a children’s show that was in the afternoon at 5 o’clock five days a week, and I had that show for about 12 years. It was called King’s Club House. We were lucky, we had the Our Gang comedies with all those great characters, Spanky McFarland and Darla.

[You also played music on it?] Accordion. And I met in the hall one day--Ruth Prinz, she was Wunda Wunda. She was on at noon. She said “I’m on for the potty chair crowd.” I met in the hall one day her organ accompanist, Eliot Brown. And he said, “Stan, your club house needs a theme song. I’m going to write a bunch of giberish words. And if the kids can remember those words, that’ll be their password into the clubhouse meeting every day.” So he wrote:

    Zero-dockus, mucho-crockus, hallabulluzabub,
    That’s the secret password that we use down at the club.
    And zero-dockus, mucho-crockus, hallabulluzafan
    Means now you are a member of King’s TV Club with Stan.

And so I had to sing that song every day to start the program and end the program. [Isn’t that a little tarantella?] Absolutely. Eliot Brown--I said [to him] “That sounds like the Italian tarantella to me.” And he swore it was original, though. [Stan hums two variations.] Derivative. He wouldn’t admit it was a steal.

[Performing as a soloist while the children’s show is going on?] When I got on television, then everybody knows you. So they call you and ask you to perform at different functions. And I started out entertaining children and now I’m doing fiftieth anniversaries. In fact I do a fiftieth anniversary down in Tacoma on Sunday. [For] people who have traveled with us.

[Was your repertoire original by then? How did the Scandihoovian songs come to be?] I was in high school and I had a cousin. She said, ‘You know, I’m going to translate an American song into Norwegian. And I dare you to sing it at a pep assembly or assembly at high school. So she did, she translated out, “Axel Anders’ store band,” “Alexander’s Ragtime Band.” And I sang it there and it got a good reaction. Then, of course, I was taking Norwegian in high school. That’s the only high school I know of that gave a two year accredited course in Norwegian, taught by Walter Ylvisaker. And I signed up for that and I got my language degree then in Norwegian. During those two years we would sit around in the class and we’d translate English songs into Norwegian. We did “Jeg drømmer om en hvit jul tid” [continues to sing this in Norwegian]. “I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas.” And we did a bunch of them. “Oh Johan, oh Johan, elsker du kan.” “Oh Johnny, Oh Johnny [how you can love].” And we had a lot of fun. Well then I started writing parodies. One of the first parodies I wrote, and I still sing it, is a parody on “Walking in a Winter Wonderland,” “Walking in My Winter Underwear.”

    Sleigh bells ring and I’m listening,
    But I’m turning and twisting
    ‘Cause I’m itching up here
And I’m scratching down there,
Valking in my vinter underwear.
And then just from there I started writing these songs. And Doug Setterberg and I—he was over at KOMO and he had a radio show called Scandia Barndance on Saturday nights—and he had to come up with parodies every week. So I was writing parodies. So we got together and we got a contract with Kapp Records out of New York. And that’s when we did:

Catch a pickled herring, put it in a barrel, never let it get away.
[after Perry Como’s “Catch a Falling Star”]

And some of those that I can’t think of. But we came out with quite a number of songs for Kapp Records. And that’s how it started. Then I started recording for a company in New York called Golden Crest. And I made several records.

Of course, Doug Setterberg, while we were making, I think, our third album started to get so hoarse. Like I am today. But anyway it took us several days to do the record because his voice was getting so hoarse. I said, “Boy, Doug, you better check with the doctor.” Well he did, and he had cancer of the larynx and vocal cords. There he was a singer and an announcer at KOMO, lost his voice. So then I had to go back to New York. In fact on the Nuts at Christmas album I did both parts. I sang the melody and then I did the harmony for him. Because by that time they took his vocal cords and larynx out on Monday morning when they had found out on Friday night that he had cancer. They got it that fast. They got the cancer but the bad part was that then you had that hole in your throat. He went fishing with his two boys and caught a cold and it turned into pneumonia and he died of pneumonia after licking the cancer. Isn’t that sad?

Then I recorded myself. I have 12 albums out that I have, and two videos. I’ve converted all of the cassettes now into CDs, except for two and I’m going to do those next. One called, Yust Thinkin’ of Yogi. And these are a lot of songs that Yogi Yorgesson—see after he died, we kept up with his wife, and she sent me a bunch of songs and said, “Why don’t you record them?” So I did. So that’s an album we’ll put on CD.

[About Yogi Yorgesson?]
He got on Capitol Records and he would come out with a new record about every six weeks. And I would anxiously wait for them because that would be some new material I would have. He was from Tacoma. He was an orphan adopted by a family in Tacoma by the name of Stewart. So his given name was Harry Stewart. Well he went to California and became a radio producer. He was the producer of the Lassie dog show on radio. He did that for a few years and then he quit that because he says, “I’m not going to work for a show where the dog makes more money than I do.” So he quit that and then he joined Capitol Records doing the Yogi Yorgesson. His first job, though, when he got to California, was with the old Al Pearce Gang. It was like Allen’s Alley [Fred Allen radio show], with a bunch of characters. Tizzy Lish was the cook, a lady cook. And then he was Yogi Yorgesson the mystic. And he had an upside-down fishbowl that he’d look into and then he would predict these different crazy things that would happen. That’s what he did first. Then he went into producing the Lassie show and then started making records. His first record was not on Capitol, it was on a company called S&J Records. And it was called “Frieda the Clam Digger’s Sweetheart.” And I like to say that he got the inspiration for that up at Camino Island at our summer house. ‘Cause he was up there one day when it was a minus three-and-a-half tide. He saw women out there digging clams and he got inspired and he wrote
“Frieda the Clam Digger’s Sweetheart.”

[When did you start recording?]
About 1946, 1947, in there. ‘Cause I got back from the war in ‘45 and then I was in college. It was about in there. I was making records when I was in college too on the Linden Record label. That was a local record label here in town. [Were you supporting yourself by music and entertainment?] Oh yes, pretty much. I was pretty lucky because I was playing in orchestras and I’d have an income. I paid my way through college. My parents would’ve helped, but I didn’t need their help. [You didn’t have to have a day job?] No. Well, I was in college, that was my full time job. But I started on television when I was a junior in college. I would go down there on Thursdays, but the rest of the time I was in college. But I spent Thursdays at the television station during my junior and senior year. Then after that we were doing a lot of entertaining and playing with Art Bardun and his Trio. We’d gotten well known from the Clipper Oil Company show. So we were playing for dances and entertainment. All kinds of Rotaries and Lions and Kiwanis and whatever, Masonic Lodges, so on.

[Back to the children’s program.]
They asked me, when the evening musical variety show ended, if I would want a children’s show. I thought that sounded like really a lot of fun. We had meetings to decide what kind of show it should be and it was decided, finally, that kids love a club house on the back lot. With trap doors and closets and stuff. So they designed a set that they thought would work. And then we decided kids loved contests, so we had a lot of contests. One of the contests was, we need a mascot for the club house and what should that be. Well it came in elephants and rhinoceroses and everything, but we kind of steered it to a dog. Then, of course, we had to have another contest. What kind of a dog? Well there was a basset hound appearing on television in New York at the time. I can’t remember the dog’s name. [Cleo?] Sure. Cleo the Basset Hound, that’s right. So they decided on a basset hound. Then we had to have another contest to name the basset hound. All the names came in, Sleepy and Dopey and Sad Eyes and Grumpy. But the hydroplane boats were so popular in those days. They were called the Slow Motions: Slow Motion 1 and Slow Motion 2. The dog slept in that basket nearly every day, so she [the contest winner] came in with the name No Motion because she didn’t move much. So that was the winning name for the dog and she got a bicycle for naming No Motion. The dog was so popular. The kids just loved her and so did we. She lived at home. Actually the second dog—the first one, they’re great diggers, you know, and she dug out under our fence and got out on Sand Point way and got hit by a car—but there was a clone out there at Woodinville. The name of the people out there were Bassets, Dick Bassets, and they grew basset hounds. There was a clone out there that I’d noticed, but she was very young and quite thing. I went out there that day after the dog died and got the clone. I took her down to the studio on Saturday and Sunday. Got her familiar with the basket and everything. And on Monday afternoon we walked into the studio with the different dog and not even the crew knew that we’d switched dogs. So we didn’t have to explain that one got killed. ‘Course I kept her in that basket as much as I could until we fattened her up, because if she got out then the kids would know that it was a different dog because she was much thinner. So we made a real smooth switch with the new dog. And she lived 16 and a half years. She had seven pups—I kept track of where the pups went—and she outlived all seven pups. Sixteen and a half years for a basset is very good.
So we wrote songs. That was my forte. They were six daily kids’ television shows here in the Puget Sound area: Brakeman Bill, Captain Puget, J.P. Patches, Gertrude, and Wunda Wunda, Sheriff Tex, and me. I used to write songs that I hoped would make the kids grow up to be the right kind of kids. Like I’d sing the “Pick Up Song.”

Don’t forget to pick up after you,
Let’s put things away when we are through.
There’s a closet, there’s a door,
Don’t leave messes on the floor.
Pick, pick, pick, pick, pick up after you!

That was one of them. Mothers loved them. I don’t know if the kids liked them, but the mothers thought they were great. And then:

It doesn’t hurt a bit to be polite.
It only shows that you are very bright.

And I’d write a bunch of those songs.

There are two little magic words
That can open any door with ease.
One little word is thanks
And the other little word is please.

And the mothers would call up and say, “Sing that polite song again” or “Sing the pick up song again.” So I’d do it. There’s no songs like that anymore that I know of. When I go out for personal appearances now I get requests to do those songs for the Baby Boomers that grew up.

[How long did program run?]
It was on 12 years. Six years for the evening variety show and then [12 for the kids show]. So I was at KING for 18 years all told. [What caused its demise?] I don’t know. I thought it was going good. But it was replaced. At the end of the year they gave me my notice—in November I think—that the show would be over. It was replaced by some kind of a spook afternoon show. I don’t remember the name of it. But anyway, things change. I thought 18 years was great, although J.P. Patches went 25. It started in 1949 and went off in 1967. I think what happened was the afternoon talk shows got longer and the news started earlier. So it just squeezed that children’s hour out. Now there’s no children’s shows at all. Mostly all cartoons. Nothing live. I think Mr. Rogers was the last one.

[About personal appearances during the TV show era?]
I had an act that I put together. Of course I changed the jokes a lot. I have 12 albums, so I’ve got a lot of songs that I can sing. In fact I’m performing Saturday in Ballard for the Senior Day. And then Sunday I do a 50th anniversary. And I had my own orchestra, a five piece orchestra. And I had that orchestra for about 35 years. Stan Boreson Band. I have an album that we did. Two of the guys that were on that album, Peter Lederer, was the pianist for the Seattle Symphony. And then he’d come out and play schottisches and polkas with us. A fantastic musician. Trained in Czechoslovakia. Then Chuck Bennett was a fantastic guitar player and teacher. And he passed away. So I was down to just Ted Simon and Hal Champ on the bass, Ted Simon on the drums, and me. And then I hired another very fine piano player. And he passed away. So I think they’re trying to tell me something. Don’t play with Stan or you’re going to pass away. So I don’t—dances are tough, when you have to hold that accordion for four hours. It’s a very heavy instrument. They do have a new accordion that’s sixteen pounds, but it’s all transistorized, so
then you have to have a bunch of speakers and sound equipment. So I don’t think there’s any advantage for me to do that. And they don’t sound the same. My accordion now, it’s a Petosa. Joe Petosa says, “Now are you taking good care of that accordion? That’s one of the last accordions that they made with hand-made reeds.” Now they’re all machine-made reeds. But this is hand-made reeds. And it’s just a fabulous instrument. He imports them from fifty miles north of Rome at Castelfidardo, that’s where the Petosa Accordions are made. He sells them all over the world. [He’s based here in Seattle.] Right up in Lynnwood.

[Personal appearances for kids? adults? Different repertoires?] I’ve gradually gotten away from the kids now. I strictly perform for the grown up crowds now. I was just out to the shrine, out here at Bitter Lake, did a show out there last Sunday. It’s all for grown-ups now. I do a lot of churches. I was out to Prince of Peace Lutheran Church on Saturday and did a show. They had a big 50th anniversary, and I did the segment between 5 and 6 o’clock in the afternoon. And everything I do is squeaky clean. I was back in Minneapolis and they reviewed the show I did back there. And Bob Diehl [probably Bill Diehl of the St. Paul Pioneer Press] the writer for the newspaper back there wrote “Here is a show that you could take your sister to, if she was a nun.” And I thought that was very nice. About ten years ago. But I’ve gone to Westby, Wisconsin. I did a show back in New York at Eisenhower Park for Swedish Night. And there were 10,000 people there. [10,000 Swedes?] Yeah–ran through the weeds. But I don’t think they were all Swedes.

[After children’s career ended, then mainly personal appearances?] Yeah. And then my wife Barbara, she and I started a tour company 18 years ago now. We just started out. See she was a meeting planner. She would plan meetings for big corporations. She did a lot of work for Microsoft and Milliman & Robertson, the actuary firm, and so on. And then she came home one day. She’d just been a meeting planner for a bunch of doctors from Texas. They said, “We would like to go see something up this way. We’ve come all this way. How about Banff and Lake Louise and Jasper, up in that area?” She came home and said, “You know, we’ve done that many times. We’re certainly qualified to take these doctors and their wives up there. Will you consider bringing your accordion along and we’ll, the two of us, take the people.” Gosh we were only going to do that one. We ended up putting out the word at a few churches. And we did three tours. And then all the people that were on those tours said, “Where are we going next?” So we decided that New Orleans would be a fun one to go to. So we got about 40 people on that one. While we were down there, we said, “Boy this Mississippi Queen looks good.” We put out the info on the Mississippi Queen and we got a lot of people to go on that one. Up the Mississippi up to Baton Rouge. I’d have my accordion on all these jaunts. And if it was on a bus, we’d sing on the bus. We had songbooks. And we had one lady who has been with us 23 times. She’s even taken one trip twice that she’d already done. I said, “Lois, you’ve already done that one.” She says, “Well, this time I’ll look out of the other side of the bus.” She’s going to Nova Scotia—that’s our next one, in September. And she’s taking six of her relatives on that one. That’ll be her 24th trip with us. Isn’t that amazing? [Mostly bus tours?] No. Branson, we’ll be doing in November for the Christmas shows. We’ll fly into St. Louis and we’ll do St. Louis for a day or two, then we’ll bus down to Branson. Then we go to nine shows in four days. [Goes on to elaborate on the shows there.]

[Performed on national media?]
While I was on television we got word from the Kate Smith Show—she had a daily television show—and they asked me to fly back to New York and be on the Kate Smith Show. Which I did. And that was a wonderful experience. She treated me very nicely, a lovely lady. And I did “Walking in My Winter Underwear” and a couple other songs. And then Lawrence Welk. My cousin, Harry Lindbeck and I had the Seven Cedars in Mount Vernon. And of course we’d book big bands when they were coming through. And when the Lawrence Welk Band was working its way across the country to go down to LA where they really hit it big, they were playing one night stands. And we got a little card saying they would be in Mount Vernon, it was a Thursday night I think, and would we be interested in having them play at the Seven Cedars? And so we said absolutely we would. We got the whole band—16 piece band—with Alice Lon, the Champagne Lady, and Lawrence and the whole thing for $750. When he got on television the price went up to $30,000. But we got him for $750. He was so nice. We got two little packages in the mail for him. So when he got there we gave him these two little packages. We met in the office of the Seven Cedars. He opened the packages and they were cookies from his wife Fern. So before he started the dance that night we had coffee and cookies. We just barely broke even at $750 because nobody knew who he was up here—unless they were from the Midwest and were transplants. But of course I followed his band for years and bought his records when they came out because he did some polkas and schottisches. And so everybody who was there just loved it–like we all do still—and they said, “Now if you’ll stay one more night, we’ll go back and each one of us will go ten people to come.” But of course he was in Seattle the next night, Portland the next night, and down the coast. So he couldn’t stay another night. [Did you perform on his program?] Yes. On TV. That was once. He had two television shows. The Saturday night show and then, I think, it was a Monday night show. On that Monday night show he introduced new talent to the world, I guess. So I was on that show that one time. On that new talent show.

[A lot of performances for Scandinavian audiences?]
That’s true, but I perform—see, I don’t do all those Scandinavian songs when I’m performing. In fact, on the new album I have I’ve got some pretty funny songs that I’ve found: “I Lobster and Never Flounder” and “Are You Lonesome Tonight?”—a new parody on “Are You Lonesome Tonight?” So I mix in some of that Scandinavian stuff and some of the jokes, of course—some of them are classics—but it’s not a strictly Scandinavian show. [But you do perform for Scandinavians a lot?] Oh, absolutely. About two Saturdays ago I was at the Vashon Island Strawberry Festival on Vashon Island. And I put on an hour show there on a flatbed truck in the parking lot. And Sons of Norways, there’s a big one up in Everett, of course, and a big one up in Bothell. I hit a lot of those. And, of course, Saturday I’m in Ballard for the big senior day and there’ll be a lot of Scandinavians there. I keep busy.

[Have you performed in Scandinavia?]
Just for our [tour] group. Although I’ve gotten letters from people that say they play your records over here, in Oslo and in Stockholm. But I’ve never performed over there actually. But some of the fellows from over there come over here. Erik Bye is one of the guys that comes over here. And we’ve performed together up in Anchorage, Alaska. He is a very well-known act over in Norway. It was a lot of fun to meet him and perform with him.

[What about the real old standards, like “Kan du glemme gamle Norge”]
My mother used to sing that. [sings] Kan du glemme gamle Norge [Can you forget old Norway],
Yeah and “Balen i Karlstad,” of course, that schottische.

END OF SIDE ONE

Some of those old classics. My mother used to sing some of those and I remember learning those when I was a kid. [Are they part of your repertoire?] No, not really. That vintage, they’re gone. Those are my mother’s type. She passed away at 89. I remember going to the Pioneer Picnic up in Stanwood that was up on Camino Island, where they had a picnic, and hearing a lot of the old stories about those old timers. See my grandfather came over to Camino Island on a sailing vessel from Norway. And he’d been all over the world, sailing like that for over six years. He and the cook—see my grandfather was the shipwright, like the carpenter on the ship—they decided they wanted to stay in the United States at that time. So they jumped ship and hid in the woods for over a week until the ship left. Captain came out with a gun looking for them, but couldn’t find them. And they lived on berries for about 6-7 days until the ship left. Then they came out and sent for their wives and homesteaded. The cook went to Whidbey Island, his name was Olson. And my grandfather, Hans, stayed on Camino Island. And when they had their families—my grandmother had six children on Camino Island—they would get together on the weekends. The cook would row over from Whidbey and my grandfather would grow over. So they traded back and forth on the weekends to visit each other.

[I recently recorded a Norwegian male chorus and they do old songs like “Nidelven.”]
I do “Nidelven.” Of course, that’s from World War II. See, the kid that wrote that, he was going to go to Sweden because the Germans were after him. They caught the car at the border and the machine gun in the trunk, and he was hiding in the trunk. And he’s the kid that wrote “Nidelven.” It’s about the old bridge that crosses the old river in the old town of Trondheim. The Elven River. That’s a beautiful song. Very popular.

[How much are you performing nowadays?]
Oh about twice a week. But see this is the slow time now. When the clubs open again, people are back from their vacations, that’s when things start. But although I’ve been playing about two times a week during the summer, maybe three. But I don’t play for dances anymore. That’s too tough. I just do a solo act, about an hour. A lot of jokes and a lot of songs, new and old. Some they want to hear again, like even in July they want me to sing “I Yust Go Nuts at Christmas.” See I have two Christmas albums. Fractured Christmas has got “Lena Got Run Over by a Reindeer” and some of those. And then I Yust Go Nuts at Christmas has about 12. They each have about 12 songs. And then the new album called Laughing It Up. And that has 12 songs on it, which are more current material.

[Do you still do “I Left My Heart in Mukilteo” and “I’m Going to Hang My Hat on a Tree that Grows in Ballard”?]
Yes. When I go to Ballard I do that one. [Some other classic Stan Boreson hits?] In the summertime I do the “Picnic Song,” [sings in dialect] “Let’s all go on a picnic, said Olson’s wife to mine.” That’s a good one. And “Nincompoops Have All the Fun,” that’s a good one. “Mrs. Johnson, Turn Me Loose.” Those are a lot of fun. And some of these are fun too [looks at one of his CDs.] I do some bedtime stories, “Uncle Torvald’s Story of Cinderella.” [Stan gets a list.]
[Jens notices that Stan has humor books on his desk—You’re always delving for new material?] Absolutely. There’s one that I do a lot when the elections are on, “Torvald for President.” And “When It’s Springtime Up in Sitka,” “Cold, Cold Wet Fjords,” “Telephone,” of course. “I Enjoy Being a Swede.” Here’s one that you would like, “A Finn Could Tell a Lie” [sings]:

Be sure it’s true when he says he loves you,
‘Cause a Finn could tell a lie.
Millions of hearts have been busted
Just because a Finn was trusted.
Please take heed, trust a Swede or Dane, dear,
Or a nice Norwegian guy.
But if comes from Helsinki, get that ring upon your pinkie,
Because a Finn could tell a lie.

Oh dear. And then “The Object of My Affection” and “All I Want for Christmas is My Upper Plate,” “Ragnar the Flap-nosed Reindeer.” I have so many, you know. But I love to find these songs. Besides the two Christmas ones, the next most popular record I have is called, Honey, Little Green Apples. And that has “Don’t Put Off Chasing Women Until You’re Too Old to Catch ‘Em,” “Mama’s Grown Young, Papa’s Grown Old,” “Frieda, the Clam Digger’s Sweetheart,” “Who Hid the Halibut on the Poopdeck,” “The Goose-Plucker’s Picnic,” and [sings]:

Yust a little lefse vil go a long vay.
Give you indiyestation most all of the day.
Put it on your menu, you’ll be sure to say
Yust a little lefse vil go a long vay.

And “All Pooped Out” [sings]:

Vunce upon a time I gave da girls da eye,
Now I’d rather have another piece of pie.

And on and on and on. On the new one, “Ann and her Little Sedan,” “Are You Lonesome Tonight?,” “Oh Lord, It’s Hard to be Humble,” “The Rusty Chevrolet,” and so on. [Do you still do “Crackeryack Lumberyack Yack”?] I haven’t really done that, but I was invited back to Duluth and I was made a “Duke of Duluth” back there. They presented me with a medal, that I still have, because of that song, “Crackeryack Lumberyack Yack.” [Sings]: “But a woman took me off my track.” Anyway, I have this one called Yust Yoking Around. That was recorded live. I’ve been back to Hostfest in Minot, North Dakota, six times. Once with George Burns. George Strait once, a wonderful guy. That’s a really fun place. So they recorded the show I did back there that recorded the jokes and the songs. That’s exactly what I do at a show.

[Stan gives Jens a copy of his catalog and a press release. Jens asks for a general statement.] I took accounting and personnel management in college. I was going to take Music classes, but there were always prerequisites. You had to take 1 and 2 to get to 3, and I wanted to take 3. So I didn’t take any Music in college. I was Personnel Management and Accounting. And I kid about it, I say I got out of college and I couldn’t find any personnel to manage and I haven’t accounted for anything. But I think I was very lucky. I was at the right place at the right time. Because people now come to me and they say, “How do you break into television?” I wouldn’t have a clue. I was just very lucky because they were looking for people and programs to fill the time here. Everything they got was on kinescope, two-three days late, flown in from either New York or LA. So they wanted to develop some local things that they could count on every week. So
that’s how come, just out of the blue, Lee Shulman says, “Well why don’t the two of you get together and have a 15 minute television show?” Sounded like fun. They went down and made a trade out with Sherman and Clay, got an upright piano and, of course, I had an accordion. We got $25 a week, which we split, $12.50 apiece, to have our 15 minute TV show. And when we got a sponsor we started getting more money. And that’s how come that I got on TV. I’d just be a sap to leave this part of the country, because this is where the show was and where all the kids grew up. And so if I moved to Timbuktu, I wouldn’t create a stir at all there.

[How did you become a humorist, a parody writer?]
I just love parodies, I think in terms of parodies. I don’t know, it just came naturally for me to do this. When I started getting asked to go out on public appearances, you don’t get very far if you’re going to play “The Sharpshooter’s March” on the accordion. Nobody cares. So I had to have some humor, humorous ways to introduce different songs. Like this parody now that I’m doing on “Are You Lonesome Tonight?,” I start out by saying, “You know, it’s hard to believe that Elvis Presley has been dead now for 25 years and he’s more popular now than when he was alive, practically. If he was alive today, he’d be eligible to live in a retirement home. And he made a record called ‘Are You Lonesome Tonight?’ But if he was living in a retirement home, he’d sing the words a lot different than he recorded it. [Sings]:

Are you lonesome tonight, does your tummy feel tight?
Did you bring your Mylanta and Tums?
Does your heart seem to stray to that bright summer day
When you had all your teeth in your gums?
Is your hairline receding, are your eyes growing dim?
It’s hysterectomy for her, and it’s prostate for him,
Does your heart give you pain, do your knees predict rain?
Tell me dear, are you lonesome tonight?

That’s a parody! The last line is [sings]:

He was once so romantic and witty and smart.
How’d he turn out to be such a cranky old guy?

That always gets a good laugh.

THE SESSION ENDS

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