

arts/entertainment

Old-timers, youngsters fiddle day away 1920s-style

By Bill Graf

Now that the Nebraska Old Time Fiddlers' Association has enough room for guests, anyone who likes to pick and/or grin is welcome. But please, no tunes written after 1930.

And what better place to call a monthly old-time music "get together" than the Dodworth and Sons Farm Store in Have-lock, home of the town chimney sweep.

Except for an office worker taking care of the store's business on a video computer terminal, everyone else spent their Sunday 1920s style.

Association members and guests brought pot-luck dishes. Dinner was warmed on one of the wood-burning stoves that the store uses as its sole source of heat and hot water.

Some wore old-fashioned dresses and some of the instruments were older than many of their great grandfather's.

But by far, the music was the vehicle that drove everyone into the past.

Not only were there more fiddles than seemed possible, but there also were guitars, mandolins, banjos, mouthharps, a Jew's harp, a dulcimer, a piano, an ocarina and a musician to go with each one.

"FIDDLING DE" DeRyke said she started the organization 15 years ago in an effort to organize old-time fiddlers because "centennial celebrations out west had exploited the old-time fiddlers," she said.

She added that the original purpose of the association was to "protect the Nebraska old-time fiddlers" from the up-

coming Nebraska centennial.

Since the centennial the association has lasted the years by supplying listeners with a homey atmosphere and amateur musicians with a sounding board.

But no matter how young the crowd gets, DeRyke said the group plans to stick to the old-time tunes.

"Some one snuck 'Faded Love' by, but other than that one tune, everything we play is at least 50 years old." "Faded Love" was written by Bob Willis more than 30 years ago.

One musician in the crowd was Fiddling De's uncle, Joy Crandell.

Crandell said he has been playing the old-time tunes since he was 3½, which was in 1914.

IN 1929, the same year the Grand Ol' Opry went on the air, Crandell adopted the act he has now, playing mouth harp while simultaneously playing guitar.

Also on hand was Alvin Wood, Wood plays fiddle, which isn't unusual for this crowd. But what is unusual is his second instrument, an ocarina or "sweet potato."

The ocarina is called a "sweet potato" because it looks like one. But instead of eating it, it is blown into to give a sound like a recorder or tonette.

The label on the ocarina was worn, but a manufacturing date of 1877 was readable.

However, Sunday's get-together wasn't totally made up of instruments and musicians that have seen old-time fiddle music through the decades. Also present were several young listeners and musicians. For

example, there was 8½-year-old John Shaw.

Shaw took up classical violin when he was five, but according to his father, Jack, "he took up the old-time style because his mother and father enjoy it so much, but

mostly his father."

Shaw has competed with his fiddle in four states and is the Junior Fiddle Champ of Missouri.

But his father said, "Before I take him to the nationals, he'll have to get a little saltier."



Bill Yetter

Photo by Mark Billingsley

NETV program offers many topics to senior citizens

By Mary Louise Knapp

"The Grand Generation," a weekly program produced by the Nebraska Educational Television Network is in its seventh year and already has covered a lifetime of subjects.

The program is for and about the elderly, and for the past three years has been produced by Rodney Bates of NETV in Lincoln.

The Nebraska Commission on Aging recently gave Bates a \$56,000 grant as financing for the program. The grant is part of the overall budget for the program's budget, with the rest of the budget coming from the Educational Television Commission. Last year's grant was \$55,000.

Bates discussed the variety of subjects that "the Grand Generation" has covered during the years.

"We do films on services for the visually impaired, such as Talking Books, and films on food stamps and insurance. We recently had a special on Medicare and explained

what it covers and how to avoid rip-offs."

RECENTLY, "The Grand Generation" dealt with the problems of widowhood, and had a special on cosmetic surgery.

Bates emphasized that the main purpose of the program is to keep senior citizens active and independent for as long as possible.

"It is expensive to keep the elderly institutionalized," he said. "We would rather see them independent and able to take care of themselves."

Many people are not aware of the many services provided for the elderly, Bates said, "but we can reach anybody that has TV."

A federal "mini-grant" was given to the program 1½ years ago through the Lincoln Action Program to help producers reach more people. A survey showed that only 20 percent of Nebraskans were aware of the TV program.

"We can't use tax money to advertise," he said. NETV's private fundraisers earmark a nominal amount for advertising for

"The Grand Generation," Nebraskans for Public Television make contributions, and Pilot Volunteers, a group of students and young people help to advertise the program, by traveling around the state speaking to groups of all ages.

BATES EXPRESSED concern about the "tax-lid mentality" prevalent in Nebraska today.

"Unless people realize the full potential of this program, it may fall by the wayside because of lack of funds. If our budget is cut, the first thing to go will be promotion for services—the TV program—not the services themselves."

"The Grand Generation" is broadcast live every Monday at 7:30 p.m. and repeated Sunday at 5 p.m. It is composed of several different segments, many of them features about active older people.

"We interviewed an 80-year-old man who had just received his pilot's license," Bates said. "We actually went up in his plane and filmed the interview in the air." Nostalgic features, such as one about the

Lincoln Burlington Depot in its heyday around the turn of the century, are done frequently.

"We don't want to encourage people to live in the past," Bates explained, "but we want to preserve important parts of Nebraska's heritage." Serious topics such as financial management are usually the mainstay of each program.

"Often, our subject is too extensive to be covered in one program. In that case we do a 'special', one program devoted entirely to one topic."

Other segments include "A Word to the Wise," consumer tips, cooking demonstrations, advice on how to buy for one or two and exercises. Free recipes and instructions are offered. "Update" reports on legislation that affects the elderly and encourages senior citizens to write Congress concerning it.

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Watercolor, like apple pie, is part of America's medium

By Martha Murdock

Baseball, hotdogs, apple pie, and watercolor?

Watercolor has been called the American medium because, although its use originated in other countries, its full development as an art took place in the United States.

"There are so many good watercolor painters in this country that the medium is often thought of as an American one. You just don't associate it with England or Italy, for example," said George Tomko, curator of American art at Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha.

Joslyn is featuring 50 watercolor paintings by 50 artists in an exhibit called "Masters of American Watercolor" through Jan. 13. The show focuses on the works of 20th century artists.

Watercolor began to be used seriously as a medium in England late in the 18th century. Before then, oil was the major medium in Western art. Watercolor had been used mostly in preliminary studies be-

fore artists like Joseph Mallord William Turner used it as a medium in its own right.

"At the beginning of the 20th century the leadership passed to America," Tomko said. "Winslow Homer and John Singer Sargent were probably the most influential American painters in watercolor. Sargent is still imitated by a lot of artists today."

THE TWO artists began using techniques that have become standard in the medium. For instance, Homer began using blank paper in his works. He applied both translucent and opaque areas of paint in the same artwork, Tomko said.

Joslyn's show follows the development of the medium in America.

"A lot of watercolor shows present the same artists over and over. We did include the traditional artists, but the show spans all the decades of the 20th century," Tomko said. The earliest work in the show was painted in 1895. The latest was done by a young artist in Ohio in February 1979.

"The key to this show is that we've included more than the usual names; The balance is about 50-50 between old and young artists," Tomko said.

"We could have chosen 250 artists, but the 50 we chose represent a great variety in subject and style." Well-known artists in the exhibit include Maurice Prendergast, John Marin, Charles Demuth and Andrew Wyeth.

"There is also an effort here to revitalize certain careers. For example, Eliot O'Hara was big in the '40s and '50s, but because of the vagaries of the artworld, he, like other artists, lost prominence. In some cases, these artists are still alive," Tomko said.

WATERCOLOR HAS opened up new areas of expression for artists, he explained.

"Watercolor has influenced landscape painting. Artists can paint subtleties and suggest tones of atmosphere and light that they couldn't get with oil. It expanded the art of landscape," he said.

The medium itself has changed over the

years. "Watercolor pigments are different now. They're quick drying, which allows artists working in the new realism of the '70s to work with infinitesimal detail," Tomko said.

"Today artists use watercolor paper with different media," he added. "I saw a painting done with coffee stains and it was very good. Acrylics, which were developed 10 to 15 years ago, are used much like watercolors today."

However, the Joslyn show focuses on the traditional use of watercolor. "This is a traditional, old-fashioned watercolor show," Tomko said.

The paintings were done by artists from every region in the country and come from private collections, art dealers, universities and other institutions across the nation, Tomko said. Sponsored by the Mid-America Arts Alliance with grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the exhibit will circulate in several midwestern states for almost a year after it leaves Joslyn.

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