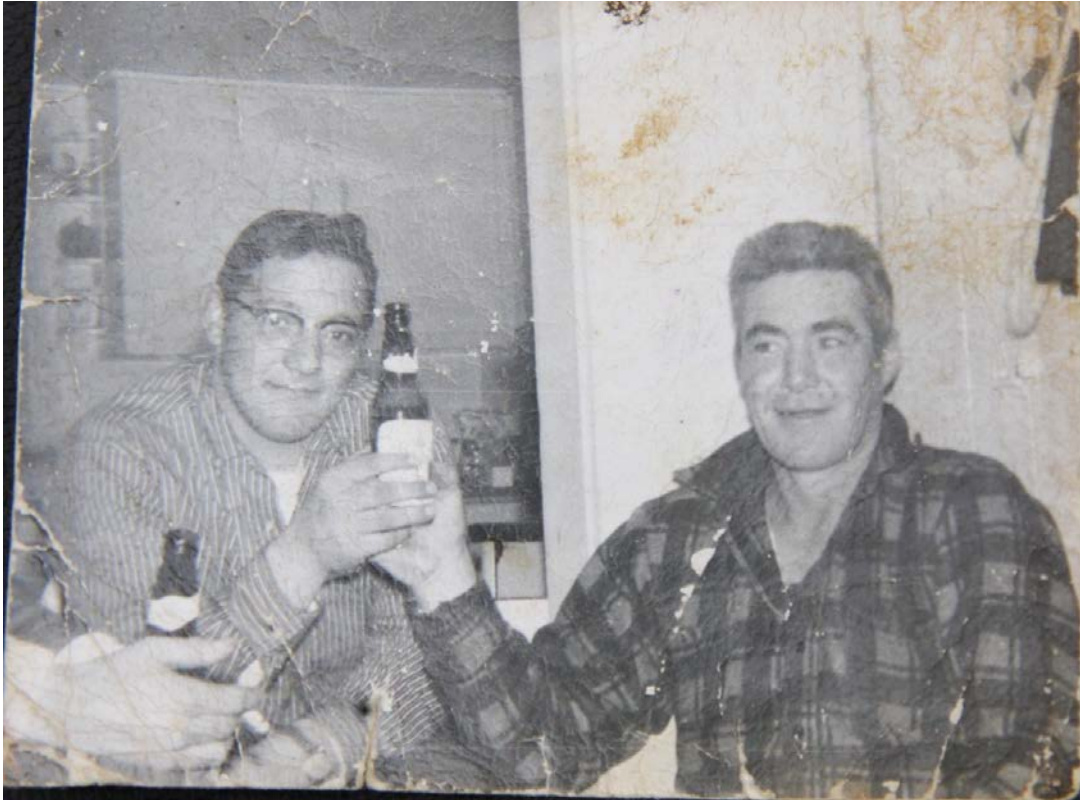


André “Andy” De Jarlis: Métis Fiddler. (1914-1975)

By Lawrence Barkwell and Marcel Meilleur

Andy De Jarlis was born on September 29, 1914 at Woodridge, Manitoba, the son of Henriette St. Germain (b. 1870) and Pierre Desjarlais (b. 1867). His paternal grandparents were Antoine Desjarlais,¹ born 1842 at St. François Xavier and Marie Anne Melanie Falcon,² born 1849 at Baie St. Paul. His maternal grandparents were Andre St. Germaine (b. 1837) and Elise Short (b. 1847) both from St. François Xavier.



Andy Desjarlais (r) and Leonide Charpentier, Woodridge Manitoba, courtesy of Terrance Delorme.

DeJarlis, who won his first fiddling contest in 1935, was one of the most popular entertainers on the Prairies, performing 1935-43 on Winnipeg's CJRC radio and touring 1937-43 in northern Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. His band was known initially as the *Red River Mates* and later as the *Early Settlers*. Though less active 1948-54, due to poor health, DeJarlis had won over 20 fiddling contests in western Canada by 1952. He

¹ Antoine was the son of Antoine Desjarlais Sr. (b. 1818) and Louise Richard (b. 1826). Antoine and his family appear as #4 on the Saulteaux Village census of 1840. Saulteaux Village (Baie St. Paul) was established in July of 1832, when Father Belcourt selected a site for his mission along the Assiniboine River where a large number of Indians and Métis gathered in the spring.

² Marie-Anne was the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Falcon (b. 1826) and Marie Nolin (b. 1828). Jean-Baptiste, son of Pierre Falcon, was the buffalo hunt leader from St. François Xavier when the Métis fought the Sioux led by Chief Medicine Bear in the Battle of the Grand Coteau in 1851.

later appeared on *Don Messer's Jubilee* and was featured 1962-3 on CFTM-TV in Montreal. In 1965 he returned to Winnipeg.

Andy Dejarlis was one of Manitoba's best-known Métis fiddlers and bandleaders. He was born near Woodridge, Manitoba in 1914 and named Joseph Patrice Ephreme Desjarlais. He comes from a family of Métis fiddlers. One of his ancestors, Pierre Falcon, was called the "Red River Bard." Andy Dejarlis was introduced to the violin at the age of 15. He came to Winnipeg in 1934 and won his first fiddling competition in 1935. He was a regular on the radio (CJRC) from 1937 to 1948 and in the 1960s appeared on CBC television with the Don Messer show. He came out with 25 LP's containing 175 original songs, and sold over half a million records.

Andy came from a long line of fiddlers; his father, Pierre Desjarlais, was a good player. Andy changed the spelling of his name from "Desjarlais" to Andrew Joseph Patrick Ephreme "Dejarlis," because radio announcers couldn't say his name correctly. At an early age his father would take him along to various fiddling jam sessions, where his fiddler fiends were artists such as Frederick Genthon and Pete Payette. DeJarlis began recording in 1956 for Quality Records and in 1959 for the London label - the latter released some 25 LPs featuring many of his more than 175 songs, fiddle tunes, and dance pieces. Most of his compositions, like his various 'Red River' pieces and his *Manitoba Waltz* (1967), are named for specific locations. His publishers included Broadland Music and DeJarlis Music. In 1962, Andy was signed by London Records and asked to go to Montreal to record. While there he was hired by Channel 10 TV to lead off a weekly music show with his band, *The Early Settlers*. In 1965, Don Messer asked him to join the network show in Halifax. After a sojourn in Winnipeg, Andy returned to the on Messer show in 1967. In 1968/69, he received an award for Best composer of Old time Music and Canada's Best Seller of Old Time Music. In 1969, he also became the first Canadian to win the annual Broadcast Music Canada Inc. prize.



When he died in 1975, Andy Dejarlis had more than 200 musical compositions to his credit (jigs, reels, polkas and waltzes) as well as 38 records. In the *Winnipeg Free Press* (25 Jun 1966) Don Messer was reported to have called DeJarlis "one of the greatest exponents of old time music in Canada." DeJarlis is particularly remembered for his way

with waltz music and his synthesis of Messer's 'down east' style with Native and Métis repertoires.

Contributions by Terrance Delorme and the late Marcel Meilleur, a long time friend and fiddling partner of Andy Dejarlis.

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