

Interview with Mary Erickson

May 18, 1995

Interviewers: Charles Binsfeld, Thea Svingen.

Mary was born in Duluth, MN; she did not wish to tell us the date of her birth. She moved to Stevens County in 1948 (she moved away from Stevens County for a few years between 1948 and 1956, however). She lived in town. Her first television was purchased in 1956 in Morris. There were three people living in the household at the time. She was a housewife (now a retired school teacher) and her husband was a school teacher. She purchased a television because she was familiar with it from before she came to Morris.

Her first TV was a "big, boxy, console set." Reception was poor and would sometimes go out. They had a rotary antenna and received three channels. Electricity was reliable. The television occasionally needed to be repaired. This was done in Morris.

The television set was placed in a corner of the living room. It was moved downstairs when the children got older so they could watch without disturbing Mary and her husband.

Mary did not expect to watch television much when she first got it. She watched a little more than she had expected; she enjoyed Bonanza and Lawrence Welk. Her favorite show was Bonanza because it was on Sundays. She remembers seeing Kennedy's assassination and Edward giving up his throne on television.

Mary had a radio before getting a television set and still used it during the day even after the arrival of television. Her main sources of news were radio, Newsweek, and the newspaper. After buying a TV, she says they stopped buying Newsweek.

Mary says they watched more TV during the winter; television watching was rare in the summer except for the news. Her children were very young when she first got a television set, and viewing was often interrupted by them. Before she got a television set, a typical evening might be spent playing cards; this was still done occasionally even after television came. She did go to the movies before she got a television, but went less after buying the set. She was neither among the first nor among the last to buy a set. She would occasionally have people over to watch basketball tournaments on TV. She was not aware of television's top-rated programs. She says that television provided more information about political candidates. She does not recall her church (Roman Catholic) taking any stand on television.