

Marlys Alm
Donnelly, MN
interviewed 11/13/90

Marlys Alm was born in Morris, MN in 1915. She went to school in the Morris area and graduated from high school. She was married in 1934 and has lived in Donnelly ever since. Her husband worked on the railroad, and she took in sewing until she began work at the Post Office in the early 1940's where she worked until retirement.

She remembers getting her first radio while she was still very young (mid 1920's). Everyone in the area was getting a radio about that time. Before long her parents bought a better set that could be listened to without headphones. Her parents liked the radio because her father was a baseball player and he wanted to listen to the games. They listened to several stations including one from Texas. News before radio came through a daily paper, and music and entertainment through family sing-alongs around the piano, or an occasional movie in Morris (but the 25 cent movie admission was often too much). When Marlys got married they lived for several years without a radio because it was too expensive to buy during the depression.

Marlys remembers her parents listening to news and sports most often, but she liked music (such as Wayne King, Lawrence Welk, and other big band orchestras), and especially comedies (such as Bob and Ray and Fibber McGee and Moly).

Only one working radio was used at a time. Batteries were expensive so use of the radio was restricted to only important programs. Listening was always a group or family affair (even the early headphone sets would be split so that two people could listen). Most listening took place in the evenings after all chores were finished. No work was done while the radio was on, it was given full attention (although people might dance if good music was on).

Marlys looked forward to the specific shows that were important enough to use up the batteries on. Often she would watch the clock closely to be sure that they didn't miss them. It was very common to talk about the programs, people usually laughed about the jokes on radio comedies. One program she identified with was Fibber McGee and Molly. To this day she uses the phrase "Fibber-McGee closet" whenever a closet is so messy that things fall out when it is opened. The radio was also an important source of information, including news, recipes etc. War news was followed very closely, and made her feel more educated about national and world events. Her parents followed election results closely, and would even hold parties on election night and wait up for the results. Marlys did not notice radio commercials as much as TV commercials today, and did not listen to the radio much after getting a television.