

Interview Summary
Lois Sommer

Conducted May 18th, 1995 12:30pm
by Andy Kedl and Shannon Rhatigan

Lois Sommer was born in Douglas North Dakota in 1920. She moved to Steven's county in 1942 and lived on a 500+ acre farm. Her first contact with television is unclear. She doesn't remember first learning of it. They bought their first set in 1957. She received Garden City South Dakota and occasionally Fargo City ND, and latter Alexandra. Her house hold had three people, her husband, herself, and her son, who was 15 at the time. Repair was not a problem. Reception tended to have a lot of snow. Television was a neat thing. Shows she remembers watching were *The Lone Ranger*, *The Wagon Train*, *Roy Rogers*, and *Gene Autry*, *Ed Sullivan*, *Mitch Miller*, *Ereine Covacs*, *George Gobo*, *Jimmy Durante*, *Luck Strike Ten Top*, and *Arthur Godfree*. The novelty of television never really materialized. Television watching was limited to the evening. Meals were unaffected.

The purchase of a television was a common decision. Their neighbors in town had a television and they would go in and watch it, which encouraged their purchase. She did not remember the cost or if she had to save up for it. Although, she guesses it cost 300-500 dollars. It was one of the largest available; a blond console to match their furniture. It was placed in the living room, and they rearranged the furniture to accommodate it. It did not take the focus of the room. It could not be seen from more than one room.

The initial set was replaced when color came. Prior to television they had a radio. The radio was used during the day while they worked and was listened to during the night. Visiting habits changed. People tended to stay home to watch television and when people visited they would come to watch television. Social situations changed. Whenever people went out people watched Television. "It was a little bit disturbing... you didn't visit as much, it did change..."

When watching television she would do hand projects like crocheting or would read the paper during ads, as she still does. The other members of her family mostly watched the television or had a bottle of pop. The lack of stations eliminated the conflict about what channel. By the time of introduction of more channels, they had purchased another television set. Television time was just a little time in the evening, little to no day time television. In the winter they watched more television than other times of the year because during the summer they had work to do. Commercials didn't have much impact on her memory. They did influence purchases and it was considered an effective advertisement. Some things were not available locally, so they

went to the cities.

Favorite show was *Mitch Miller*. Then latter on *Lucy Strike* and even latter *Arthur Godfree* and *Ed Sylvian*. She liked them because they were simply entertainment. The Television was more realistic then. She didn't really care for Ermine Covac but her husband and son did. It was a good show though. Noting really was bad. The shows were clean.

Children had few rules about television watching. "When it signs off at eleven you don't have to worry." Nothing was very educational.

Before television newspapers and the radio were the primary news source. Little changed when television came. Back then the television news was more accurate than it is now. Television did affect how saw politicians and she likes to see them on television. And it may have made her feel more confident when voting.

Before television they did not attend Movies regularly. Less time was spent on hobbies. They were a close family and television didn't affect them. Although having two televisions enabled them to watch different shows, this only happened once or twice a week.

Her church, the Federated, did not have a stand on television, occasionally their may have been a comment on something pedicular. Relating to the content of a specific programs. Women's roles were not realistic. "Nothing countryfied was real." Farm work was not realistic and portrayed differently. The high skill level of a farmer was not recognized.

Viewing was limited by the single channel so ratings didn't matter much. "What they gave us, we watched." Daytime television wasn't worth the time. They watched their favorite shows and didn't watch the shows scheduled around them. Many friends don't watch much television.

"Just, It [television] isn't a great palace in my life , even as today." She perceived that people in town were affected more.