

Interview by Joy Nielsen and Grant Schmit

Nov. 16, 1990

**Background:** Viola Hoffman was born in 1906 and has been a resident of Stevens Co. since 1918. She was from a farm family of five children. Viola attended the eight grades at Morris before getting married and becoming a farm wife at age 22.

**Exposure:** Viola first heard the radio when she and her husband bought one for their home in the early 1930's. The radio was a table-top model with a big horn. It ran off a car battery and was hard to hear unless you were very close to the horn. The radio was bought as a source of information because they did not have a telephone. Before the radio, "word of mouth" was their main source of news, and house dances were her main source of entertainment. After they got the radio, it was an important source of news, music, and entertainment.

**Programs:** Ma Perkins and Jack Benny were the two programs that Viola remembered best, and Ma Perkins was her personal favorite. Her mother was a huge Ma Perkins fan and was not to be bothered when the show was on. When Viola listened to the radio, it was with a lot of attention. She sometimes sewed and listened, but the radio was only on when she was listening closely because there was always the fear of running down the battery and missing Jack Benny on Sunday night.

**Use:** Their one radio was in the dining room. The Jack Benny program brought the family together on Sunday nights. He would get the chores done early, and she would have supper ready early so they could eat and then sit down in front of the show. Viola often used the radio in the afternoons, but it was on very rarely in the evenings, except Sunday nights.

**Meaning:** The Jack Benny Show was something that was looked forward to all week. Viola often talked with her mother about Ma Perkins. She related with the ups and downs of family life on Ma Perkins, and she thought that the show may have helped her find ways to solve relationship problems with her husband.

Viola had a very sharp mind, but did not even remember whether there were commercials on early radio! She seemed not to be emotionally impacted by radio, and it was not an important political source.