

## Initial Impact of Television in Stevens County

Research project for the University of Minnesota, Morris; supervised by Dr. Harold Hinds

Interview with Edith Henrichs, member of Faith Lutheran Church and Green River  
Apartments

Interviewed by Tamara Sippel and Chad Dolly

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Edith Karin Nelson Henrichs was born February 15, 1907 in Sanfred Township, rural Elbow Lake, Grand County, MN. She moved to Stevens County when married in 1929. Her husband and her lived on a farm from 1934-1957. They then moved to the city of Morris in 1957 and purchased their first television. They had three children, Karene, Donna, and David; Donna and David were the only two children still in the home. They were both in high school at the time. Edith and her husband had farmed before moving to Morris, but upon moving, Edith became a nurse's assistant at the hospital and her husband was a construction worker.

Edith and her husband purchased their first television because her husband became interested in it and he made the decision to buy it. They had first seen a set at their friends' homes. Their first set was about a 20" set. The reception was very good at the time and the electricity was reliable. They didn't purchase their second set until many years later, and Edith still has that set today. The novelty never did wear off for Edith's husband.

Their first television was placed in their dining room where they could see it from two rooms, both the dining room and the living room. They also had a piano and a radio, but they were not displaced by the television, nor did the use of them diminish. Their meals did not change because of television. It was still very important for them to sit together for meals as a family and they always turned the set off. Their children never really watched television, it was mostly just Edith and her husband. Edith's husband watched in a big rocking chair while Edith sat by him and crocheted. She would look up at times and make some remark so that her husband thought that she was interested. The only thing she really was interested in was the news. Her husband liked to watch shows such as the Lawrence Welk Show. Edith felt that her husband knew she wasn't really watching, but he never scolded her. Her husband watched television more than she had expected him to before they bought it. He turned on the set after

supper, around 6:00 and turned it off around 10:00. He was also in control of channel selection and volume control.

Before television, the couple was busy farming and had no time for television. It was only upon their move to town that they had some free time to watch it. Before television they played a lot of games with their children and also played cards and such with friends. They also kept busy with their children who were in the 4-H club. After they got their television they spent less time doing these family type activities because Edith's husband no longer cared to, he would rather watch television in the evenings.

The family visited back and forth often with friends. As mentioned earlier, the children didn't watch much television. Television did not affect their family cohesiveness. The only rule they had was that they all ate together and that the television and radio were off during meals.

Faith Lutheran Church's pastor at the time never discussed a stance on television. Edith was very involved in different women's groups at the time but does not remember how women's roles were portrayed on television.

Their main source of news before television was the newspaper, and after television they used both the paper and the television as their main sources of news. Edith feels that the news on television was quite reliable.

The most visual image that Edith remembers from their television was Franklin Delanor Roosevelt, this was when Edith became interested in politics. She remembers him being shown in his wheelchair and she thought of her nephews who had polio. She felt very sorry for FDR and watched all of the activities that he was in. Both Edith and her husband voted for FDR.

That concluded the interview.