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**Narrator**

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**Interviewer**

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- LT: 00:01 This is Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota, a Saturday KMRS news feature. We're talking today with Robert Thedin of Morris. Well, Bob, what part of the country did you come from before you got to Morris?
- RT: 00:14 I was born in Kensington, Minnesota on a farm south of Kensington.
- LT: 00:19 So you started out farming then at Kensington?
- RT: 00:21 Yeah. I farmed there for quite a number of years.
- LT: 00:25 When did you decide to retire from the farming business and get into something else?
- RT: 00:31 Well, in the first place I got sick so I had to quit farming, laid up for two years, and then I started to write insurance, hail insurance for bank in Kensington.
- LT: 00:43 Okay. And what brought you to Morris?
- RT: 00:46 Well, the company I wrote insurance for, hail insurance, they wanted a man to go to Morris or Hancock, and I went here and intended to be here for only a couple of months, but I'm still here.
- LT: 01:04 Okay. Insurance and real estate go together pretty good, I know a lot of people are into both. How did you get into the field of real estate?

RT: 01:15 Well, I started to pick up some farms when I was selling insurance and there wasn't much activity in farmland then, but made some trades and some sales once in a while.

LT: 01:29 Back then when you were starting, and this was what year about that you came to Morris?

RT: 01:34 I came to Morris March 22, 1926.

LT: 01:40 What was good farmland selling for back then?

RT: 01:43 Back then is sold for \$40, \$50 an acre, but then later on it went down still further.

LT: 01:53 That of course was the big crash and then the drought in '29, the early '30s. How far did the price of land go down?

RT: 02:03 Well, it's after the crash in '29 and then the bad crops in '32, and the drought in '34, I sold land shortly after then for \$25 an acre and even some less.

LT: 02:21 You had some interesting experiences, too. When people couldn't afford to pay their premiums, you got paid in a few other things.

RT: 02:30 Yeah. For insurance, I had to take eggs and meat and chickens and whatever you could get.

LT: 02:37 You had an interesting experience with a horse, too, I understand.

RT: 02:40 Yeah. They all wanted to pay of course, but they couldn't pay, nobody had any money. And I had a bill of \$65 from a farmer and he gave me a horse and I took the horse and got a little better. And halfway home, had to take him to a farmer and horse was so weak that he could hardly walk, and next day he was dead.

LT: 03:08 So selling insurance sometimes has its interesting moments, too.

RT: 03:14 Yeah, they sure have.

LT: 03:17 Well, were people back in the '30s as insurance-minded as they are today?

RT: 03:23 Oh, no. They weren't as insurance minded and you had to just really go out and sell it if you—they hardly knew of

any car insurance at that time and very little hail insurance, too. You had to make them believe that they needed it.

- LT: 03:44 Okay. When did car insurance come in? I know that back then you couldn't drive as fast and of course the roads weren't as good either. When did car insurance start to become popular and necessary?
- RT: 03:56 Well, I can't remember just exactly, but the first I sold insurance was in '35, 1935, but I guess it was in before that.
- LT: 04:08 Well, we mentioned about the price of land back in the '20s and '30s. Right now around West Central, Minnesota, what's top price on good farmland?
- RT: 04:22 Well, what I've sold—I haven't sold higher than 650 an acre, but there are land up towards Grant and Big Stone and Traverse Counties, I understand to be selling for \$1,300, \$1,400 an acre.
- LT: 04:38 Well, that's quite a change. Now, I've heard of a lot of people that have come from other state into Minnesota and they can get lower price land. Have you sold to a lot of out-of-state people?
- RT: 04:49 Yeah, I sold to lots of people out of state. From New York and Ohio and Illinois and California, different states.
- LT: 05:00 There have been some people, too, from other states that have been farmers that have gotten lower price land so they moved to Minnesota, isn't it?
- RT: 05:07 Yeah. They sell their land for a higher price and come up here and buy cheaper land.
- LT: 05:13 Just in the last few years, let's say the last five, ten years, inflation of course has helped to increase the price of land. Do some of these farms have a pretty rapid turnover in ownership?
- RT: 05:26 Yeah. I sold seven farms to one man in a span of nine, ten years and then resold them again. And he made money on all the farms. And I sold—largest farm I sold was 1,340 acres, a man from New York.
- LT: 05:48 Well, now, the size of farms has changed considerably. When you first started selling farms, what was a big farm?

RT: 05:56 Oh, half a section was a big farm in '35. But now, they are up to a thousand acres and more.

LT: 06:08 And of course, what's the reason for that, machinery?

RT: 06:11 Machinery, large machinery that they got to have more land if they're going to use the large machinery.

LT: 06:18 In fact, you even have sold, you mentioned about the number of out-of-state people from other countries, you've sold land to.

RT: 06:26 Yeah. I sold especially one I can remember right now from Estonia, a little country close to Finland. He was run over in the Second World War with Russia, I guess, and took everything away from him. So he got back to this country and he came to Morris somewhere and I sold my farm down by Hancock.

LT: 06:49 Well, you mentioned that the turnover in farms and how some people buy for investments, in other words, your job is making money for other people, does that make you happy?

RT: 06:57 Yeah. I feel good when you can make money for others, because then it reflects back, you get some yourself.

LT: 07:05 Well, you've had some help in your business at Thedin Realty and Insurance. Your son joined the business, what year was that?

RT: 07:13 1958 Glenn took over the insurance business because I couldn't handle all.

LT: 07:20 And you've had some good help from your wife, too.

RT: 07:24 Yeah. My wife, Mae, she has been with me all the time, has been both operator and receptionist and answer the telephone.

LT: 07:37 Whatever needs doing, she does it.

RT: 07:38 Yeah. Everything.

LT: 07:40 Well, this might be kind of a hard question to ask, but I know that you're not exactly the starting age for working, when do you plan retiring?

RT: 07:52 Well, so I have to do like the rest, when I get old, I have to retire.

LT: 07:59 And Bob, how old are you?

RT: 08:01 I'm 86.

LT: 08:03 You don't look a day over 60.

RT: 08:07 Well, that's nice to hear.

LT: 08:09 Does it make a difference? Do you find that the time just slips by when you're busy?

RT: 08:15 Yeah, the time goes too fast.

LT: 08:18 Do you feel like you're 86?

RT: 08:19 No, I don't feel any different than when I was 46.

LT: 08:23 Thank you very much. We've been talking to Bob Thedin of Morris on Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota, a Saturday KMRS news feature.