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Narrator

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Interviewer

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- LT: 00:00 This is Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota, a Saturday KMRS news feature. Today, we're talking with Gust Kositzke of Florida. And Gust, although you're from Florida, you lived for many years in Minnesota, but you actually came and were born in a different state. Where were you born?
- GK: 00:19 Escanaba, Michigan.
- LT: 00:20 And although you were born in Michigan, you almost were born somewhere else.
- GK: 00:25 On the sea.
- LT: 00:27 Okay. And your folks came from where then?
- GK: 00:30 From Hanover, Germany.
- LT: 00:32 So you grew up then as a young man in Michigan?
- GK: 00:35 Yes.
- LT: 00:36 What type of business were your folks in?
- GK: 00:39 My father was just a common laborer.
- LT: 00:43 Well, when you got a little bit older, you decided to take off, and was it in search of a job? Is that how you happened to leave?

GK: 00:51 Yes, I left in 1908.

LT: 00:54 And where did you find your first job after you left home?

GK: 00:58 Brooklyn, Iowa.

LT: 01:00 And what kind of a business was that?

GK: 01:02 In the pipe plowing business.

LT: 01:05 And what type of things did you work on?

GK: 01:08 On railroad engines and passenger coaches and houses.

LT: 01:13 I'm sure that a lot of people have ridden on trains and I don't know if more people or fewer people, I guess it's coming up a little bit, but was there a big plant there in Iowa where they built coaches?

GK: 01:26 It was a central for the Great Western Railroad Company.

LT: 01:32 Do these—were there a lot of cars that were bigger than others or more fancy than others? What type of different cars were they building mostly?

GK: 01:43 Well, it was just mostly passenger coaches.

LT: 01:48 Did you get a chance to travel much on the railroad? Did you ever get the railroad bug that you really—or did you have enough railroad when you got done working, I suppose.

GK: 01:59 I had enough railroad when I worked there, when I quit.

LT: 02:04 All right. You must have had enough because a few years later, you got married in Iowa, wasn't it?

GK: 02:10 Yes. I got married in Owen, Iowa.

LT: 02:14 Okay. And a couple years after that, you decided to move, and where did you go?

GK: 02:19 Moved to Trent, South Dakota.

LT: 02:24 What—did you decide—did you get a job or were you on your own? What did you do?

GK: 02:28 I started farming.

LT: 02:31 What was South Dakota like back in the teens? Was it somewhat different than today?

GK: 02:37 Oh, yes. Mostly all prairie land.

LT: 02:41 Did you have to—I'm trying to think of the word that they called it, were you homesteaded but you had to clear up the land in that?

GK: 02:50 No, I was just a renter on the farm. I rented the farm.

LT: 02:56 Okay. What kind of crops were you raising back in 1914?

GK: 03:01 Corn, oats, and barley.

LT: 03:06 You were there for about three years, were the crops good or either so good or were they so bad that you decided to leave?

GK: 03:13 No, it was very good.

LT: 03:18 Okay. You then decided to move into Minnesota. And I've talked to a lot of people that have come from some of the southern states like Iowa and moved up because land was cheaper. How did you happen to move to Minnesota?

GK: 03:30 Well, I moved to Minnesota because I couldn't rent the farm anymore. Then I moved to Minnesota.

LT: 03:37 And you moved to what area?

GK: 03:40 In Swift County, Appleton, Minnesota.

LT: 03:43 Did you rent then or did you buy?

GK: 03:46 Yes, I rented the farm.

LT: 03:49 And you were farming for about 25 years. During those years from '17 to '42, I'm sure a lot of things changed. I know for a fact that tractors—or rather, from horses to tractors is one of the things that probably happened during that time.

GK: 04:07 I had 30 head of horses on the one time. In 1928, I bought my first tractor.

LT: 04:14 Now, what did you like best, horses or tractors, or did you use them both?

GK: 04:20 I used them both while was on the farm.

LT: 04:23 One of the things that I always thought was neat about a buggy or something with horses in the winter time, if you happen to go off the road, you can always get the horses to pull you out of the ditch, but with a car, it's a little bit different. Thirty head of horses, did you have a pretty good-size farm or did everybody have that many horses?

GK: 04:42 I had a thousand acres farm.

LT: 04:45 At that time, that was a extremely large farm, wasn't it? Were there many farms the same size as yours?

GK: 04:55 Oh, no, there was a lot of smaller farms, too, but mostly half section and a quarter.

LT: 05:00 Did you have a lot of help working the farm?

GK: 05:03 About three hired men.

LT: 05:06 Any difference in the crops that you had in South Dakota?

GK: 05:11 No, not much difference I would say.

LT: 05:15 Of course, people today are down around that area, their sugar beets and sunflowers are coming on strong. I don't suppose you had any of those.

GK: 05:22 No, we didn't have any of those. We didn't have no sugar beets or sunflowers.

LT: 05:27 I suppose the horses are probably more oats grown, too.

GK: 05:30 Yes. We used lot of oats for them horses.

LT: 05:34 And it's probably cheaper than gasoline anyway.

GK: 05:36 At that time, it was.

LT: 05:39 Well, you, like you say, farmed for about 25 years and then you finally moved into town.

GK: 05:45 Yes. I moved to St. Paul in one year, and then I moved back to Appleton and I bought a house there.

LT: 05:53 And although you moved off the farm, you certainly weren't sitting around doing nothing, you got involved with quite a few different things like custom corn picking.

GK: 06:04 Custom corn picking and plumbing and carpenter work.

LT: 06:10 Flax straw, too, you used to buy that from area farmers?

GK: 06:14 I bought the flax straw from the farmers.

LT: 06:17 And what's that used for? I've heard that cigarette paper is one thing. Is that about the only thing or what?

GK: 06:22 That's the only thing they made is cigarette papers out of it.

LT: 06:27 But it's, what, loaded up in box cars and sent off then?

GK: 06:32 Well, it was piled up on in a stack first and then it was taken to Olivia, Minnesota to dry it and then get the fiber out.

LT: 06:45 And you worked at the golf course at Appleton for a while.

GK: 06:49 Three years I worked there.

LT: 06:53 I suppose that after farming for a few years, just keeping the grass nice, is that easier or harder than farming?

GK: 07:01 Oh, that was a lot easier.

LT: 07:04 And you sold seed corn, too, for a few years.

GK: 07:07 I sold Pioneer seed corn for 11 years.

LT: 07:11 And I bet your Pioneer is still your favorite. Do you see signs in your travels now as you go along the highway?

GK: 07:17 Yes, I do. A lot of them.

LT: 07:19 We'll let you put in a plug for Pioneer, that's okay. Well, Gust, you visited Florida for the first time in 1951. What was Florida like back in the '50s?

GK: 07:31 Well, there wasn't very much there then, it was mostly all woods where we are settled.

LT: 07:35 No Disney World or anything like that down there.

GK: 07:38 No, it wasn't.

LT: 07:40 You, what, visited then or vacationed down there in the winter time then for quite a few years.

GK: 07:46 Yeah. About 15 years, I went down there for the winter.

LT: 07:51 And finally, you decided that that might be a good place to live.

GK: 07:55 Yes, it is a nice place to live.

LT: 07:59 So you sold your home here and moved down there permanently?

GK: 08:03 Yes, I did.

LT: 08:05 Your wife died in '56, I believe, and then you remarried, and so now, you and your wife live in Florida for about how many months of the year?

GK: 08:16 Twelve months a year.

LT: 08:18 But you always make time to come back to Minnesota?

GK: 08:21 Oh, every summer so far, but this is the last summer.

LT: 08:25 The last summer. Well, I've heard stories like that before, I can't believe that. There are some advantages living in Florida and I didn't know this, and this isn't something that's happened years ago, but we talked about taxes and things like that. Florida, I always thought was a expensive place to live, but there are some benefits that Minnesota doesn't have.

GK: 08:46 Yes. We don't have real estate tax there at all.

LT: 08:51 And no real estate tax. And what about state income tax?

GK: 08:56 No state income tax.

LT: 08:59 What about the temperature? It sounds pretty good. Does it get really hot down there?

GK: 09:04 Well, I never seen it a hundred, but it's ninety-five today and ninety-five tomorrow and ninety-five yesterday.

LT: 09:12 So the summer time it does stay pretty consistently warm?

GK: 09:16 Yes, it does.

LT: 09:17 But you're close to the gulf. And do you ever go out deep-sea fishing at all? Not too much, huh? You're a Minnesota fisherman, I bet, with a cane pole and bobber, is that the

kind of fishing you like? Do you ever go out in the ocean fishing?

- GK: 09:34 Yes. I tried it once, but I've never got a line in it.
- LT: 09:37 Well, I can see why, maybe that you're hesitant to go. Gust, I ask one question at the end of every interview and that's when I ask the person what their age is.
- GK: 09:48 Eighty-six.
- LT: 09:50 You don't look 86. Has anybody ever told you that before?
- GK: 09:54 Yes, a lot of them did.
- LT: 09:56 Well, you must you must keep in pretty good shape. What do you do for exercise?
- GK: 10:00 I ride a bicycle, two-wheel bicycle.
- LT: 10:03 A two-wheeler, too. We've been talking with Gust Kositzke of Florida on Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota, a Saturday KMRS news feature.