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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 are talking with Albert Hendrickson out of Morris. Albert, tell us a little bit about some of the early years. Where were you born?

AH: 00:15 I was born in Pope County.

LT: 00:18 Did you grow up on a farm?

AH: 00:19 Yeah, I grew up on a farm.

LT: 00:23 Tell us a little bit about your family.

AH: 00:25 Well, there was 11 of us in the family.

LT: 00:31 A pretty good-sized family there.

AH: 00:33 Yeah. I was the third oldest one.

LT: 00:37 What do you remember about growing up? Was it a lot of work?

AH: 00:40 All of us had to work on the farm. Dad would see to it that we all worked.

LT: 00:49 What things did you like about the farm work the best?

AH: 00:53 Well, it's pretty much the same. I liked to tend to horses mostly. I liked the horses.

LT: 01:03 How many horses did you used to have on the farm that work?

AH: 01:06 We had about four horses in those days.

LT: 01:11 As a young man, as a teenager, you got your first job. Tell us about that.

AH: 01:17 Well, my first job I was a hired man. I worked on the farm for two years. I worked for Nelson for five months and the next year I worked for T.K. Monu(?) for five months. But after that, then I took off for South Dakota.

LT: 01:36 How did you get the job in South Dakota?

AH: 01:37 I decided to work with a veterinary. I got on the good side of him, and he wanted me to drive for him.

LT: 01:46 I've heard a lot of doctors and veterinarians, they didn't used to drive themselves. Why was that?

AH: 01:53 Well, I don't know. They don't seem to be bothered much with horses but they liked better to ride and look around the country, I think.

LT: 02:00 I supposed that driving it used to be a little bit more work, and I suppose they wanted to be rested up by the time they got to their job.

AH: 02:08 That's one thing in places in South Dakota, when it comes to a lot places on about half-a-dozen dogs, you better stay in that buggy or get ate up.

LT: 02:16 What kind of buggy did you drive?

AH: 02:19 It was a single buggy, a top buggy.

LT: 02:25 I suppose you get a chance to really see a lot of country that way too?

AH: 02:28 Oh, yeah, yeah. I liked that.

LT: 02:33 Did you ever have any easy times? Was it work all the time or did you have some time off?

AH: 02:39 It was all easy because I was driving; that's all I did.

LT: 02:43 You got some time off too when he was busy doing things.

AH: 02:47 Yeah. Well, I had to take care of the horses just the same when he had to go out. He did inspecting cattle, throughout the state.

LT: 03:00 Albert, there was one thing that you used to do when you had some free time and that's kind of hang around blacksmith shops. How did you develop an interest in that?

AH: 03:09 Well, I don't know. I had a little shop on the farm and I start monkeying around in there. Then I got paid why I had to hang around the blacksmith shops. I thought it was fun to see what they were doing.

LT: 03:21 Of course, a blacksmith could do just about anything.

AH: 03:24 Oh, yeah. They had to do everything in the blacksmith shop those days.

LT: 03:29 You got a job or did you buy a blacksmith shop in South Dakota?

AH: 03:33 No, I'd come back from South Dakota, and I bought the shop in Hancock, me and my brother-in-law.

LT: 03:42 What kind of work did you do there?

AH: 03:45 General blacksmithing, all kinds.

LT: 03:49 Farmers, were they the biggest customers?

AH: 03:52 Yeah, farmers was the biggest customers.

LT: 03:55 What are some of the things that you did?

AH: 03:58 Well, I was horseshoeing and plow work, wagon work. All stuff like that.

LT: 04:06 There is seem to be few people that are still in the business of shoeing horses. Were there any tricks? Now, what happened if you got a jumpy or a skittish horse, how did you put a shoe on those?

AH: 04:19 There wasn't a horse who went out of the stall without shoes. When I say a lot them, I put on 104 shoes one day.

LT: 04:27 What did you used to charge for shoeing a horse?

AH: 04:29 Twenty-five cents a shoe.

LT: 04:33 What happen if you had a wild horse? How'd you tame them down?

AH: 04:37 Well, I was pretty good with horses. They found that out, and it wasn't so bad.

LT: 04:41 You had to talk to them a little bit and just settle them down.

AH: 04:44 Broncos ride out of the stockyard with the rope around their neck. You brought them in and they had shoes on.

LT: 04:50 It sounds like dangerous work a little bit.

AH: 04:53 I thought it was dangerous. They bite you and all that, so I looked out for that.

LT: 05:00 You mentioned wagon wheels. Back then, were they wooden wheels or steel wheels?

AH: 05:06 They were mostly wooden wheels. Steel wheels, we didn't do nothing with them—but wooden wheels.

LT: 05:12 But they had steel on them.

AH: 05:14 We had to put on steel tires or set tires too when they got loose.

LT: 05:21 How thick were these, and how long did these metal part on the wheel last?

AH: 05:26 Oh, they'll last as long as the wheel lasted. Some were two inches wide and some are three inches wide.

LT: 05:36 If somebody wanted new steel tires on their wheels, how did you do it?

AH: 05:42 Well, we had to put on new steel tires. They come in bars.

LT: 05:47 They were straight bars.

AH: 05:50 Straight bars, and we had to round them up—we had the machine to put them in and round them up—and then weld them, measure them out and put them on the wheel. You had to give them about a quarter-of-an inch smaller than whatever hub you could drop them off. When they cool off they shrunk right up right.

LT: 06:09 They just kind of tighten themselves on there.

AH: 06:11 Yeah.

LT: 06:12 You talked about welding. What kind of welding was it that you did?

AH: 06:17 Welding and forge coal. Blacksmith Forge.

LT: 06:21 Now we think of arc welding and gas welding.

AH: 06:24 There wasn't too much of that those days. It wasn't hardly any arc welding those days. They had all welding in the fire. All that you had to weld in a fire.

LT: 06:35 So you got them hot—what made them stick together though, I guess, I'm asking?

AH: 06:39 You had to pound, beat everything when the iron was hot.

LT: 06:43 Pound it together and then it cooled down and then it would stick.

AH: 06:47 Well, you have to do the stock while they stayed there.

LT: 06:55 That was a job that developed some muscles on you too, wasn't it?

AH: 06:59 Oh, yeah. To take a big tire like that, you had two tongs and you had to have muscles to handle them. A told a guy one time in the shop and he said, "You must be weak to handle that tire." I said, "I bet you can't handle that tire." He tried and he couldn't touch the tire.

LT: 07:19 I'm sure that just making parts—that you couldn't get parts like you can today. When somebody had something broke, you had to make a part for a person.

AH: 07:28 Well, there were certain iron part you could make it, you know, and it wasn't so complicated. But wagon tires, you had to make sure you had a bar of steel, cut them off at the right length.

LT: 07:44 You got into the car business a little bit later. How did you decide to get into the car business?

AH: 07:50 Well, after I got in with Murphy, he wanted somebody in there. So I stayed with him for eight years.

LT: 08:03 When we see the cars getting unloaded today, there's a big transport truck and they unload them. But back then a little bit different.

AH: 08:11 They come in a boxcar set up. But first of all, you took them out and we got them and press on the gas tank and rode them uptown to the garage and put bodies on them.

LT: 08:23 The bodies and the chassis came separate?

AH: 08:26 Yeah, sure they did. That's why they could load so many in a car.

LT: 08:30 How did you get the bodies down to the garage?

AH: 08:35 We had to haul them up there on trucks.

LT: 08:40 Was it mostly a mechanic type of work that you did, Albert?

AH: 08:43 Yeah, in the garage.

LT: 08:48 After Murphy's sold out, you continued to work for the new guy.

AH: 08:52 He went on retirement then. He had John Deere machinery and cars—new Monte cars then.

LT: 09:04 Some of these cars—we think today, there is so many parts on cars. I think more moving parts the things to go wrong. But those cars didn't have quite so many parts. What kind of problems did people have with their cars?

AH: 09:17 Well, it was mostly bands wore out—the transmission bands wore up and slip you. You had to put in new bands. There are old style of bands. You take the motor out but they got new style of bands, you cut them off and put new ones in. You could change them pretty often then.

LT: 09:36 That made it a lot easier to fix them.

AH: 09:38 Oh, yeah.

LT: 09:40 The cars today, as compared to the cars that you used to work on, they were pretty easy to work on weren't they, or easy to get parts and things?

AH: 09:49 Oh, yeah, they were easy to work on, but then they come out with the starter and generator and battery. Then they were really up-to-date.

LT: 10:04 A little bit later, then you moved up to Morris. What year was that?

AH: 10:07 That was in '42.

LT: 10:12 They sold out or something in Hancock? Is that why you moved to—

AH: 10:15 They sold out there the John Deere and he went to Mankato I think he went to. So I left there.

LT: 10:22 You weren't out of work for very long, though, were you?

AH: 10:24 No, I come up to Morris loafing around and I met Bill Eklund. He says, "What are you doing?" I says, "Loafing." He says, "Come on and help me out for about three days." I was there for about 27 years.

LT: 10:37 Now, this was bodywork then working for Eklund's. Had you done much of that before in Hancock?

AH: 10:43 Oh, I monkeyed around little. I fixed up some trading cars as I traded when I was younger.

LT: 10:50 Did you like the bodywork?

AH: 10:52 Oh, yeah. It was kind of interesting too.

LT: 10:55 Well, if you worked there for 27 years—from '42 up to 27 years later, the cars really changed.

AH: 11:03 Yeah, yeah.

LT: 11:04 Everybody says today they make the cars out of such thin metal. Is the metal on the cars today much thinner?

AH: 11:10 The metal wasn't so much different, I didn't think, but there was a bigger flat surface. It sounded like they were thinner but the stuff was pretty good—about the same. But they didn't have a chance to rust out so much those days because no water could lodge inside of the frame.

LT: 11:29 There wasn't too much salt on the highways either, I bet.

AH: 11:32 Yeah, calcium chloride, that was bad.

LT: 11:38 In the earlier days when you were working on cars, did they fix mostly or did they have to replace and put on new fenders and things?

AH: 11:46 If it's too bad, they would put on new fenders, of course.

LT: 11:51 Were there many cars that were beyond hope that you couldn't fix?

AH: 11:55 Oh, yeah. Then the insurance man totaled them out. They didn't want to pay the price.

LT: 12:03 I suppose it's even much more expensive today.

AH: 12:08 Oh, yeah, more expensive now too. Everything cost more as soon as you buy it.

LT: 12:13 Albert, I'm sure that a lot of people would know you if they know your car. You've got a distinctive car today. Tell us a little bit about that.

AH: 12:23 Well, I'm driving a Henry J now. That was a good car.

LT: 12:29 What year Henry J is it?

AH: 12:31 '51 model. It's a good champion.

LT: 12:37 It was Kaiser that made that car, wasn't it?

AH: 12:39 They called it Henry J. That was a young car, you see, that's why they call it Henry J.

LT: 12:45 What kind of mileage do you get on that car?

AH: 12:47 About 25 miles an hour.

LT: 12:50 A lot of people would like to get their hands on it. You say even you drive downtown and people—

AH: 12:57 Yeah, a lot of them wants to buy that car, you know. I wouldn't have no trouble selling it. It's an antique now.

LT: 13:03 They leave you notes and everything?

AH: 13:04 They leave notes and say, "How much for the car? What will you take for the car?"

LT: 13:09 It's a good car and you get good mileage. You are going to keep it, right?



AH: 13:12 Yeah. I don't drive it much. I go out and buy groceries. I don't take it on very big runs. But it would run; I could use it.

LT: 13:25 Before you retired, you worked quite a few years. You didn't stop at 65 like a lot of people.

AH: 13:30 No, no, I kept on monkeying around, working a little bit. I went over there in Dempsey's Garage too after they come wanting me to fix up some cars, and I was there for about two years too.

LT: 13:44 Since you have retired, what things are you interested in now?

AH: 13:50 Well, I mostly sit and take-in TV mostly.

LT: 13:56 You still like to do a little woodwork and some metal work?

AH: 13:59 Oh, yeah, I do a little—I made a little spinning wheel, kind of kill a little time. There's always a little something to do, work around the house.

LT: 14:11 Albert, I always ask one question when I end the interview and that's your age.

AH: 14:15 I'll be 89 in August.

LT: 14:19 Thank you very much—the 15th?

AH: 14:23 Yeah. I'll be 89 the 15th of August.

LT: 14:26 Thank you very much. We've been talking with Albert Hendrickson of Morris, on *Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota: a Saturday KMRS News Feature*.