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1979

Interview done for the Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota KMRS Feature



The transcription of this oral history was made possible in part by the people of Minnesota through a grant funded by an appropriation to the Minnesota Historical Society from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. Any views, findings, opinions, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the State of Minnesota, the Minnesota Historical Society, or the Minnesota Historic Resources Advisory Committee.

- LT: 00:01 This is Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota, a Saturday KMRS News Feature.
- 00:07 Today, we're talking with Louie Fishbach of Morris. Louie, I know that you haven't lived in Morris too long; you lived in the Hoffman area for quite a few years, but which town were you born in?
- LF: 00:19 Lake Henry, 10 miles north of Paynesville.
- LT: 00:24 Tell us a little bit about your parents; they came from a different country and one that we haven't talked too much about on Reminiscing.
- LF: 00:30 My parents both came from France.
- LT: 00:34 But you've got a kind of a German name?
- LF: 00:37 Yes, my grandparents came from Germany on my dad's side, of course.
- LT: 00:42 How old were they, when they came over?
- LF: 00:45 I really don't know how old they were, but my dad was four years old when he came over, so how old my grandparents were, I don't know.
- LT: 00:56 Did you live on a farm, then, around Lake Henry?
- LF: 00:59 Yes, just a mile east.

LT: 01:03 Of course, I think people that know Minnesota, there must be quite a few German people in that neck of the world, Stearns County.

LF: 01:09 Solid German community, you bet.

LT: 01:13 Have any reminiscences about going to school there; did you go to country school, first of all?

LF: 01:20 Yeah, I went to country school all the time and after I was through the eighth grade, why I stayed home for a few years. Then, I went to the St. Cloud Business College.

LT: 01:30 That's still in existence, but when you went to school there, it was called something else.

LF: 01:35 Vat and Ollis Business College, at that time.

LT: 01:39 There were two guys that started the school?

LF: 01:40 Um-huh, yes, they started it and Mr. Vat died, when I went to school there. Right after that, then Mr. Ollis changed it to the St. Cloud Business College.

LT: 01:55 What things did you take up in college?

LF: 01:57 I took up accounting. I got my diploma in accounting.

LT: 02:02 What was your first job, then, when you got through with school?

LF: 02:03 I started in a grocery school in Paynesville. I worked there for 11 years and then, there was an opening with the North American Creameries and I took that and was with them, then, for six years.

LT: 02:18 In the grocery business, was it selling a little bit of everything type of thing?

LF: 02:23 General merchandise, yes. Sold everything from clothing to prunes.

LT: 02:31 Especially now, when you go to a supermarket like today and you see the things, merchandising was a little bit different—more things in bulk?

- LF: 02:41 Everything bulk, yes, we didn't have any packages. We'd have to sell a pair of shoes and go up and pack up prunes, the way I recall it.
- LT: 02:50 You mentioned that you started at North American Creamery; what type of work did you do for them?
- LF: 02:54 I did accounting work; I was with the accounts receivable, at that time, for the local sales. I had nine trucks going out. I had to record it.
- LT: 03:07 And at that time, too, or around in that time, there was a North American Creamery here at Morris, too.
- LF: 03:10 Oh, yes. I can even mention Mr. Anderson, here, was the last one—I'm sure he was the last one that was in charge of North American, here. Just before that, it was a fellow by the name of Johnson. I think it was Art.
- LT: 03:27 You, of course, knew these people, too, when you were at Paynesville, then?
- LF: 03:32 Yes. The main office was in Alexandria with the Noonan boys.
- LT: 03:38 Then, you started getting toward war time—World War II. You weren't in the service, I don't believe, but you were directly involved with the war effort?
- LF: 03:48 Yes, I signed up with the Army Engineers and went to the ALCAN Highway—that's the way it's known—and I was personnel director for them.
- LT: 03:58 Why did they build this highway, in the first place? It seems '42, it doesn't seem that long ago; to a lot of people, it seems like yesterday. What was the purpose of building this highway?
- LF: 04:07 I think it was more or less to get merchandise to Minnesota to Alaska, in there, because that was close to the Russian border and things of that sort. When we first went through there, that was just solid wilderness. The highway, right now, seems to be a pretty nice highway, but when I was there, why—oh, boy.
- LT: 04:41 Was it a problem being that you were so far of everything to get people that were interested in working; the pay

sufficient that there were enough people that wanted to work?

- LF: 04:49 A lot of people that came to work, but the turnover was about three every day, because they'd come and they'd stay for three days and away they'd go, because it was tough.
- LT: 05:02 I suppose they had to be away from their families, too.
- LF: 05:03 Oh, yes. That was another big problem, especially with the personnel department, where I was in. It was a problem.
- LT: 05:15 After the highway was built, how long did it take to build?
- LF: 05:19 The highway still is in existence, but it didn't take so long to build—I can't say exactly how long it did take to build it, but it didn't take so long. Well, after the war, then everything was closed down. In fact, I was the last buy out on the highway; I closed up all the camps that were from Edmonton, Canada to Whitehorse.
- LT: 05:50 You settled in Seattle; you were there for a little bit. What were you doing there?
- LF: 05:54 I was with the—well, first of all, I started with a salvage yard there; I was foreman of a salvage yard. When that was closed, then, I went with the Veterans' Administration as a troubleshooter.
- LT: 06:07 You came back in Minnesota in about '47?
- LF: 06:11 I came in the summer of '46—June of '46. That's when my wife's dad passed away.
- LT: 06:19 You started farming, but you had a few problems in some of those early years in farming.
- LF: 06:24 Yes, it was an odd couple of years in a row and that was enough.
- LT: 06:30 Alright, but you were there; you stayed on the farm, even though you worked in a couple different towns—Kensington and Morris, both?
- LF: 06:39 Yes, I just took a job wherever I could get one until, finally, I ended up here in Morris and [unclear 06:46] Hart was good enough to hire me, so I stayed right with them.

- LT: 06:51 Your children, of course, were going to school, when you lived on the farm and you've got two sons and they both ended up in the Air Force?
- LF: 07:01 Right, they're both in the Air Force. One of them just retired here, last week, and I still have one there. I also have a daughter here in town, that's a teacher in Hancock.
- LT: 07:26 Louie, I'll never forget the first time I met you and that was—I came in '65 and you were working in the City of Morris. I think it must have been the off sale at that time. Or was it the on sale year, or both?
- LF: 07:39 On sale, when you first came.
- LT: 07:42 You always seem to have kind of a knack with people; you get along with older people, younger people, and especially college kids and college students. What's the secret of getting along with people and having them like you and you like them?
- LF: 07:58 Well, first of all, I think you've got to like people and I like people. That's why I'm still there a couple days now, because I miss my people.
- LT: 08:09 One of the things, too, is some of these alumni come back—they're here for four years, but they always come back for that football game in the spring and homecoming in the fall. Do they stop in and see you?
- LF: 08:22 Oh, by all means; that's a great day when they come back.
- LT: 08:29 I happen to remember, too, a few years back that there was a parade. There was just a bunch of students that got together and you were the Grand Marshall of the parade. You were known as the Dean of the Downtown Campus. That must have been a fun day for you?
- LF: 08:42 That was a great day; yes, I'll never forget.
- LT: 08:45 Well, you mentioned that you still are working, which is now, the Met Lounge. You get a chance to see people all the time. That's something that you can't take away. You like people and you're going to stick with it.
- LF: 09:03 You betcha I will; as long as I can, I will.

LT: 09:06 Louie, when we end up these, you mentioned that your son had retired, already. That must make you feel a little bit older; when are you going to retire?

LF: 09:18 Well, I'll tell you, I'll never retire. I might quit working, but I'll never retire.

LT: 09:24 Thank you, Louie. One more question and that's your age?

LF: 09:27 Oh, I'm 72.

LT: 09:28 Seventy-two, I wouldn't believe it. You're still as peppy as I knew you when you were 65.

09:34 We've been talking with Louie Fischbach of Morris on Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota, a Saturday KMRS News Feature.