

**Benny Amborn
Narrator**

1990

Interview done for the Golden Age of Radio Oral History Project



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Interviewer: 00:04 All right, we're here at the Chokio Senior Center, and we're going to interview Benny Amborn now. It's November 16th, 1990. When were you born?

BA: 00:14 1910.

I: 00:16 How long have you lived in Stevens County?

BA: 00:18 Well, all but 15 years.

I: 00:21 What type of education did you receive, if any?

BA: 00:25 Oh, I went partly to high school, and then we moved away from here, and then I quit.

I: 00:32 Did you live in town, or on a farm?

BA: 00:34 I lived on a farm, but I moved to town.

I: 00:37 And about how many miles from town were you when you were on the farm?

BA: 00:40 Oh, about four miles.

I: 00:41 So, about how often did you get into town?

BA: 00:44 Oh, I don't know. A couple of times a week, I suppose.

I: 00:50 How many people were there in your family?

BA: 00:52 Well, there's four kids, and then the parents.

I: 00:56 Were you the youngest child? Oldest?

BA: 00:57 No. You mean me?

I: 00:59 Yes.

BA: 00:59 No, I was about the fourth one.

I: 01:04 Did you get married?

BA: 01:07 Yes.

I: 01:09 And what was your occupation?

BA: 01:10 Farm man.

I: 01:11 The entire time? And about how long was your workday, I would imagine? How long did you work a day? How many hours did you spend?

BA: 01:20 Well, about 10 years ago I retired.

I: 01:23 But in the '30s through the '50s, how long were you in the fields, about?

BA: 01:27 How many hours, you mean?

I: 01:28 Yeah.

BA: 01:30 Oh, I don't know, 10-hour days some days, and some days, not so long.

I: 01:35 And when did electricity come to your house?

BA: 01:37 In '46.

I: 01:41 When did you first listen to the radio?

BA: 01:45 When it was out in the farm, at home. Well, I wasn't married, then, but I think it was in about '24.

I: 01:55 And with whom did you listen to the radio?

BA: 01:57 Oh, it doesn't really—first, we'd listen with the earphone for a little while. And then, we got the regular radio, and then we listened to that until we got electricity.

I: 02:09 Do you remember the first program you listened to?

BA: 02:12 Oh, I think it was *Amos 'n' Andy*, if I can remember right.

I: 02:16 Did you listen to that with your family or your friends?

BA: 02:18 No, just my folks were living with me.

I: 02:24 When did you get your first radio?

BA: 02:30 Oh, jeez, I don't know. I think it was—it must have been 1940-something, '45 probably.

I: 02:37 What factors influenced you to buy the radio?

BA: 02:44 Oh, I don't know. We were home with the folks and we listened to their radio.

I: 02:52 Could you describe the radio you had?

BA: 02:55 Oh, just a little thing. A box, and it had two earphones on it. And if you wanted to listen to it, you had to listen to it on one of the earphones, or both of them.

I: 03:04 So, how many people could listen to that at a time? Just two?

BA: 03:06 Well, we'd sit and listen and try to get a little at a time.

I: 03:13 What stations were available?

BA: 03:16 I don't even know. You mean the first ones?

I: 03:20 Or were they more local stations? Did you get a national station?

BA: 03:24 The local stations, usually.

I: 03:28 Were there two stations available, or were there many?

BA: 03:31 Well, I don't know that, either. You mean the first ones?

I: 03:33 Yeah.

BA: 03:35 I don't know. I know we listened to that one.

I: 03:39 What did you do for news, music, and entertainment before the radio?

BA: 03:47 Oh, I don't know, played cards when you stayed at home, I guess.

I: 03:51 Did you go to a lot of movies? Were movies available?

BA: 03:54 Yeah, we went to some.

I: 03:56 Did you go a lot? Were they expensive?

BA: 04:00 No, no.

I: 04:02 Did you go with your family to the movies?

BA: 04:03 Yeah, we did. When they started, we all went together, but after we got married, we separated from them.

I: 04:09 When did you get married? What year?

BA: 04:12 '33.

I: 04:15 Did you have a local newspaper?

BA: 04:17 Well, we always had the Chokio paper, as long as I remember.

I: 04:22 And did you get that at your home?

BA: 04:24 Yeah, we always—it'd come on the route.

I: 04:27 How about, did you or your family read a lot of books at home?

BA: 04:32 Well, not so many, no.

I: 04:36 How did radio change your life?

BA: 04:38 Well, I forget [inaudible 04:39] well, we didn't have no electricity. We had a battery radio, and it'd come in pretty good.

I: 04:50 What types of programs were on the air?

BA: 04:54 Well, you mean when?

I: 04:54 Well, that your family listened to.

BA: 04:57 Well, I don't know. Mostly just *Amos 'n' Andy*, and I don't know what else.

I: 05:03 Was that your favorite program, then, *Amos 'n' Andy*?

BA: 05:05 Well, it's kind of comical, that's why I listened to it.

I: 05:10 Did anyone in your family listen to *Ma Perkins*, at all?

BA: 05:15 Well, I don't know. I couldn't tell you what that is.

I: 05:20 How many radios were in your household?

BA: 05:25 Oh, I know there was two in there.

I: 05:27 Where were they located?

BA: 05:28 At our place, you mean?

I: 05:30 Yeah.

BA: 05:31 In the house.

I: 05:31 In the living room?

BA: 05:32 In the living room, yeah.

I: 05:35 Who did they belong to?

BA: 05:37 Well, the one we had there belonged to the folks, so we listened to it. You mean early days?

I: 05:41 Yeah.

BA: 05:42 Yeah, the folks and so on.

I: 05:45 Did you listen with anyone else to the radio?

BA: 05:48 Not so much, no. Not until we got the—because you'd use the battery out of there.

I: 05:54 When you were able to listen to the radio without the earphones, were there any certain programs that your whole family listened to?

BA: 06:04 Well, I can't remember too much which were on the air.

I: 06:06 Okay. Do you think the radio brought you closer together with your family? Or did you think there were a lot of fights over which program to listen to?

BA: 06:18 No, not so much. To me, I was the only boy. I didn't have much to say about it.

I: 06:25 Were there any rules for listening to the radio?

BA: 06:30 No, I don't think so.

I: 06:33 Were there any shows that your parents thought were offensive for you to listen to?

BA: 06:37 No, I don't remember any of them.

I: 06:40 Who chose what programs you listened to?

BA: 06:47 I don't know.

I: 06:49 It was kind of first come, first serve?

BA: 06:50 Yeah.

I: 06:53 What time of the day was the radio on?

BA: 06:55 Oh, it was on from 5:00 until evening, most of the time. Daytime, it was on.

I: 07:00 What were you doing while you were listening to the radio?

BA: 07:05 Well, I don't think you'd do much of anything, you'd listen to the radio.

I: 07:09 Did you do other little tasks around the house and just listen to it while you were doing these tasks?

BA: 07:14 I think so.

I: 07:16 Did you carry on other conversations while you were listening to the radio?

BA: 07:20 Oh, not too much.

I: 07:23 Did you find yourself altering your day around a certain program or a certain time that you wanted to listen to the radio?

BA: 07:34 Well, it'd only be around 5:00 on that I would.

I: 07:37 Did you find yourself listening more in, say, the winter than you did in the summer?

BA: 07:42 Well, in summer, we never were around much.

I: 07:47 For what reason did you tune into certain shows, certain programs?

BA: 07:53 Gee, I don't know. I don't remember.

I: 07:54 Did you look forward to certain shows?

BA: 07:56 Oh, yeah. We did at 5:00 on.

I: 08:00 Did you ever discuss the programs that you heard on the radio with other family members or neighbors?

BA: 08:07 No, I don't think so.

I: 08:08 Did you identify with any of the characters or the families, or situations presented in the programs that you listened to?

BA: 08:18 No, I don't think so. I've forgot most of them by now.

I: 08:22 Did the radio help you or any family members solve any of your programs, with like, household tips or farm information, or market research?

BA: 08:29 Farming information, it helped some.

I: 08:31 Do you remember what time the farm information would come on?

BA: 08:34 Oh, that'd be on after 6:00.

I: 08:41 Did radio change the way you looked at political events, or political figures at all?

BA: 08:49 No.

I: 08:49 No? You didn't hear very many speeches?

BA: 08:53 No.

I: 08:53 Did commercials ever influence you to buy products that were advertised?

BA: 08:58 Oh, there was some of that, yeah.

I: 09:00 Was that mostly because it was giving you more information about them, or was it because they sponsored a program that you liked?

BA: 09:05 They sponsored a program.

I: 09:08 Did you have a positive or negative attitude towards commercials?

BA: 09:12 Oh, I don't know.

I: 09:15 Was there anything on radio that had an emotional impact on you, or any other member of your family?

BA: 09:22 No.

I: 09:24 Did you listen to *War of the Worlds*?

BA: 09:31 Some, yeah.

I: 09:32 Is there anything else you'd like to add?

BA: 09:35 No.

I: 09:37 All right. Thank you very much for your time.