

Oscar Aanerud
Narrator

Lee Tempte
KMRS
Interviewer

1975

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- LT: 00:00 We're talking now with Oscar Aanerud of Donnelly. And Oscar, maybe you could tell us a little bit about when your ancestors came to this part of the country.
- OA: 00:10 Well, I wasn't around when they came, but I've been told it was in 1877 that my grandfather homesteaded this farm where I'm living on. And well, he died in 1893, and then my father who had married the daughter of the homesteader, took over the farming and farmed on until 1926.
- LT: 00:40 So this farm then has been farmed by Aaneruds for a long, long time.
- OA: 00:44 It's been in the Aanerud name ownership ever since it was homesteaded.
- LT: 00:51 Well, now, tell us a little bit about when you were a young man, one thing that people appreciate now is health care. And back then, when someone was sick, many times they died, it was rough.
- OA: 01:05 Well, I can especially remember when you had a toothache, the only thing that was done about was to pull the old tooth. There was no filling of teeth when I was 14, 15, and 16 years old. Perhaps the kids in town and had the benefit of dentist, but we didn't out here in the country. So we stuck it

out with a toothache until we got to disturbing the whole household and they took us to a local doctor, and he yanked the old tooth out.

- LT: 01:38 One of the things, too, that young men, whether they matured any earlier or not, they would expect to do a full day's work even at a pretty young age.
- OA: 01:48 Well, I finished eighth grade in Donnelly at about age 14, close to 15. And right away, I was considered a man. We worked in the harvest fields, shocked and of course, it was chores morning and night. I don't suppose I did as much as a grown up man, but I thought I did anyway, I tried to be a man.
- LT: 02:16 A little bit later on, you had a chance to go to West Central for a short time. When was that?
- OA: 02:22 In '25 and '26. I was already quite a—been grown up quite a while and I took sort of a business course. I felt I needed a little more education.
- LT: 02:35 You started a little bit late in your class. How come that was?
- OA: 02:38 Well, you see, we picked the corn by hand in those days, and it generally took to Thanksgiving time before you got the last ears picked and hauled home.
- LT: 02:52 A lot of people are talking about grain prices these days, and sometimes they're high, sometimes they're low, but you remember when grain prices didn't make a lot of difference?
- OA: 03:02 Well, I suppose that was during the drought years in '33 and '34 when we didn't get any crop, didn't really make much difference then. But the prices were poor preceding that in the late '20s and into '30. Oats came down at one time as low as about 10, 12 cents a bushel. And corn, I don't believe it was more than 40 cents.
- LT: 03:32 Well, Oscar, back in 1935 you got your first tractor. Did you barter for that or did you pay cash?
- OA: 03:38 Well, I bought it on time and got a dinner once a month.
- LT: 03:43 Yeah. And what did you trade in on it?

- OA: 03:45 I traded in three horses, and then I paid a little bit cash to boot.
- LT: 03:51 So in other words, you were using horses for quite a while. Were they pretty dependable?
- OA: 03:58 Well, yes, they'd always start, it seems, but you couldn't put in the long days with them that you can with a tractor and you always had to give them an hour at noon. And when you came home in the evening from the field, it wasn't to just shut off a switch and walk slow toward the house to have a supper, you had to at them put away in the bar and the unharnessed. It was a rough life, I figure.
- LT: 04:26 Then just a couple years later, about 1940, you got electricity. How much difference did that make on the farm?
- OA: 04:32 Well, it made it an awful lot more interesting, you could see to do chores in the dark. And of course in the house, that helped the wife out a lot to have electric washer. Before that, it was to have one run with a gas motor, and they seemed to smoke and were awful noisy, and it was quite an improvement. And lights in the house was a good thing to have.
- LT: 05:01 Well, right now, you're still busy, you're still helping your son on the farm. You got your plowing done yet?
- OA: 05:09 No, we haven't because he farms so much, over 1,200 acres. But I have personally plowed over 400 acres, and plow a little every day. He's picked all the corn himself without any help, and the sunflowers, he did them mostly himself. I hauled a little—did some the hauling. So he's more busy than I am, of course. I'm only a helper-outer.
- LT: 05:42 Well, I think there's one other thing, too, that you mentioned the name of Oscar Aanerud that a lot of people have heard of you, and I think that you perhaps enjoy your hobby doing this, too, what is that?
- OA: 05:59 Well, this tune, I don't know, it's called a mazurka. You mean what the instrument is?
- LT: 06:05 It's your fiddle. Okay, let's hear it.