

**Luther Sunquist
Narrator**

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KMRS
Interviewer**

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- LT: 00:02 —talking now with Luther Sunquist of Morris. And Luther, where were you born?
- LS: 00:06 Wakefield, Nebraska.
- LT: 00:08 Do you have any fond remembrances about your childhood, for example, where'd you go to school?
- LS: 00:15 I went to a country school out about northwest of Wakefield, about seven miles. Went there for about third grade and I started—broke up and I started working out. My mother was all alone on the farm and my brothers left there, so she had to sell out. And I got about 11 years old or 12 years old, something like that, and I had to start to go and do it myself.
- LT: 00:47 And you started working as a hired man then.
- LS: 00:50 I started working for a hired man. I was supposed to get some money for it. Worked for one guy down there for two years, I was supposed to get \$10 a month. All I got was suit of clothes for \$6. And once in a while, we go to a celebration, he gave me a dime or something like that for spending money, for buying something to eat or something. We thought that was pretty good to get a dime to go to a celebration at that time.
- LT: 01:18 One of the places you worked on was a dairy farm, and you had a unique way of separating the cream.

- LS: 01:26 Well, we did. And we had about 25 to 30 cows to milk by hand in the morning and night, and a lot of times I had to do that all by myself. The fellow I was working for was out shelling corn, he was gone most of the time. That was up to me and then my milk, and you get enough milk ahead and you'd start the separator going. We had an old tread power. I don't know if any of the folks know what tread power is. It's sort of like conveyors only had made out of wood slats and going around.
- 02:01 You'd have that—well, and we had an old Billy goat that pull the tread power and you'd put him in there and he'd have to keep going for probably three or four hours to separate the milk. And once in a while, he'd get tired and he'd back out of there and he'd go and run out the door and he'd go and hide someplace. You'd have to go and look him up and shut the separator off and come back. And you'd get after by the pitch fork or something, then he hit for the tread part, and he'd be going back on and pull him like a good fellow when you came back.
- 02:39 So once in a while, he'd get out, so I got tired of it. So I went and drove some nails on the board and tied it down behind so he couldn't back out of there. And I didn't have any more trouble with him after that, but that was about eight hours every day for him to walk in there, he'd get kind of tired.
- LT: 02:59 I don't blame that poor old Billy goat. What year did you come to Minnesota?
- LS: 03:03 I came here in 1913, fall of 1913, the 16th of September.
- LT: 03:10 And you—
- LS: 03:11 That year, they had the corn alfalfa show here. We had a beautiful winter that time and winter time was around the 12th to 13th of December, I think, that corn alfalfa show. We'd go walking around in our short leaved in the middle of the night and nice and warm, and we'd be sitting around visiting on sidewalks or just like summertime.
- LT: 03:35 The way they built that arch, too, was a little bit different than they did a hundred years later during the centennial, they erected some scaffolding and stuffed it. How did they build it way back then, do you recall that?

- LS: 03:48 This was all built out of solid bales, there wasn't any—the only enforcement they had was on top where they had some timbers running across for the bales to lay on on top of the arch. The rest of it is all made out of alfalfa bales.
- LT: 04:05 Well, then you were involved with farming for a couple of years and you started in many, many different types of jobs, one was in construction work and you helped to build some of the buildings that is now the University of Minnesota, Morris campus. I believe you worked for Frank Hancock. What do you remember about that?
- LS: 04:26 Well, I worked for Frank Hancock when he had the construction of the engineering building up there. And we built that and then we built a boy's dormitory that's on the northwest corner up on the hill there next to this new building, we had to put in the fine arts building. And that's about the only two buildings that we built, but we used to help the—when we lived on the farm up on the hill where the university has their farm campus, we used to come down and I think P.E. Miller was superintendent of the school at that time, and we used to come up and get us to help cultivate corn or put up alfalfa hay, and we used to help him an awful lot of in the busy seasons.
- LT: 05:16 Tell us about the time when you taught Frank Hancock how to push concrete.
- LS: 05:21 Well, good thing that he's gone because I don't think he'd like to hear this very well, but at the time we was building the engineering building, we used to have these old steel wheelbarrows or steel wheels on the wheelbarrows. You didn't have any rubber tires then it was all steel wheels. And we used to wheel the concrete from the east or from the north end of the building over to the south end and then over to the west end of the wing and that is well, probably 300 feet to start with and kept getting less as you fill it in.
- 05:57 But one time, he was—you'd have trouble with the corners breaking off of the planks that he was wheeling on and gravel stones would fall on there and you'd skid off and get stuck once in a while. So I was coming along one day and the wheel along and the corner broke off of the plank and I got stuck. And Hancock was there, wanted to help there and he started giving them heck and he said, I used to take them things and run with them on these planks.

06:31 I set the handles down and I says, grab a hold of this and see how far he can go with it. He went about 20 feet and the corner broke off from the plank and down he went. And he went headfirst right down this concrete. Everybody on the job there started to holler and laughing and he got mad and he went out and got washed up. But he never said anymore about running off of the planks after that.

LT: 06:56 Sounds like a lot of hard work. Well, after that, you were involved in construction, road construction, worked for the railroad and then you started working for Home Builders. And how many years did you work for them?

LS: 07:09 I worked for the Home Builders for 44 years.

LT: 07:12 Everything from selling hardware to hauling coal.

LS: 07:16 That's right. I started out by hauling coal and delivering lumber and stuff like that. And you'd have to shovel it on the wagon or shovel it on the truck and shovel it off and get down the basement with them out back so you'd have room to fill the basements up. You can probably haul around 16 tons a day. That's a big day's work.

LT: 07:36 Sounds like a lot of work. Well, Luther, for the many jobs that you had, were you ever afraid of hard work?

LS: 07:43 I never was afraid of hard work and I still can do it a little bit. It bothers me a little when—

LT: 07:51 And there's one question that I always ask people and that's your age. Luther, how old are you?

LS: 07:57 I'm 83.

LT: 07:58 Enjoyed living around this area?

LS: 08:00 Well, I like it fine.

LT: 08:02 We've been talking with Luther Sunquist of Morris on Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota—