

**A.V. Anderson**  
**Narrator**

**Lee Tempte**  
**KMRS**  
**Interviewer**

**1976**

**Interview done for the Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota KMRS Feature**

LT: 00:01 This is Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota, a Saturday KMRS news feature. Today we're talking with A.V. Anderson from Hoffman. A.V., maybe you could tell us where you were born.

AVA: 00:14 I was born two miles east of Hoffman, Solem Township.

LT: 00:18 Okay. And I presume you're in the farming business most of your life?

AVA: 00:23 All my life.

LT: 00:25 What about your folks, did they come from around here?

AVA: 00:30 My dad come from Sweden, my mother was from around here.

LT: 00:35 You started actually farming with a lot of work at a pretty young age. Maybe you could explain about that and how you took over quite a few of the chores at a pretty young age.

AVA: 00:49 Well, I was about 12 and I had to take over most of it, my father was crippled up. From then on, work is all I knew.

LT: 00:59 Did you enjoy farming? I know it used to be quite a bit of work.

AVA: 01:03 Yes. It's interesting. I enjoyed it.

LT: 01:06 One of your specialties was livestock, though, and especially horses.

AVA: 01:11 That's right. Outlaw horses.

LT: 01:16 Okay. And tell us now how you got interested in horses. Now, back then they were the tractors of today, right?

AVA: 01:24 Well, we had to work with the horses and we raised our own, and we could feed our oats and hay to the horses.

LT: 01:34 Okay. Now, is everybody good with horses or does it take a certain person that knows horses?

AVA: 01:40 You got to have a certain knack with certain horses just like everything else.

LT: 01:46 All right. You also were into Polled Herefords, too, for many years.

AVA: 01:51 Forty-five years, registered Polled Herefords.

LT: 01:56 You—I don't know, was this a hobby or a business where you bought horses and trained them and then sold them again? Was that a business or sideline so to speak?

AVA: 02:06 Well, it's in a hobby and it's pretty good money in those days. You buy them for \$5 and sell them for \$200.

LT: 02:12 Okay. Now, the horses that you bought though, what kind of horses were they?

AVA: 02:17 Well, they were all work horses, but they'd been spoiled.

LT: 02:21 How were horses spoiled? What do you mean by being spoiled?

AVA: 02:26 Most of them had the—used to whip on them too much, which I didn't use.

LT: 02:32 Okay. How long did it take before you could retrain them then?

AVA: 02:36 Sometimes 15 minutes, and sometimes a week.

LT: 02:40 Is it difficult to train a horse, or how did you go about it?

AVA: 02:45 No, it's not difficult if you got the right equipment.

LT: 02:49 Okay. And you had some training in it, too, I believe.

AVA: 02:51 And you study ahead, that's what I went by mostly.

LT: 02:55 What can you tell about a horse by looking at its head?

AVA: 02:59 Well, you can tell if he's mean or if he's dumb or—

LT: 03:05 Just like people then, everybody's got a different face. Now, what you were telling me, too, is that while we look at television, we see these big ranches with cowboys and roping horses and cattle in this type of a thing, you did quite a bit of that yourself right here in Minnesota.

AVA: 03:23 I did on the farm for my own use. I did roping.

LT: 03:28 Does that take quite a bit of practice to be a good roper?

AVA: 03:33 I never was good. It takes practice.

LT: 03:38 Tell us a story about the time—or not the time, it happened several times, before we had trucks, now, when you wanted to get your cattle into town, how you went about it. You had quite a system with your horses, bring them in.

AVA: 03:52 Well, I had my saddle horse and I did chase them. I took 27 head three miles alone one day.

LT: 04:00 Okay. And you had it down to such a system that you didn't even have to be there, you could get your cattle to town.

AVA: 04:06 Well, either one or two, the old saddle horses will bring them in alone.

LT: 04:10 Were they tied up, or how'd that work? Did you—to get to get the cattle into town, you tied them to the horse and the horse brought them in?

AVA: 04:18 Tied them to the saddle horn, couple of stairs. And he'd go into the stock yards, he'd been there so much that he knew the way.

LT: 04:26 And then what happened then when he got to town?

AVA: 04:28 Then they'd untie the rope and hang up the rope and he'd come home again.

LT: 04:34 So that worked out pretty well for you.

AVA: 04:38 Yeah. That worked out good.

LT: 04:39 And you had a horse, too, that was stolen one time that you luckily got back. How did you go about reclaiming that horse?

AVA: 04:47 Well, that was the—that's the same horse that I always used for roping. He was stolen in the fall and I found out about him the spring, and I went to get him and he asked me if I could prove it was my horse and I said, I think so. I asked him it was my horse and I put my finger up and he said, yes, he shook his head.

LT: 05:04 What different things could you ask the horse that they would answer?

AVA: 05:09 Well, you could ask him yes or no, and he'd tell his age, he'd lay down or sit up.

LT: 05:18 Now, the way that you went about train these horses, of course, you go to a fair or circus or something like that, do they—do you go about it in about the same way that they do in training them? Are there tricks to the trade I guess I'm asking you.

AVA: 05:34 Yes. Because the people always look at the horse, not the trainer. They catch on to the trick.

LT: 05:40 Okay. So in other words, you can use signals in between the animal and the trainer.

AVA: 05:44 That's what we do, we use signals.

LT: 05:47 A.V., one of the talents that you found out that you had is that you could witch for water. Now, about how old were you when you figured out that you found out that you had this talent?

AVA: 05:58 About 30 years.

LT: 06:00 Okay. How did that all come about?

AVA: 06:03 Well, we couldn't get any water in the home place. We had three wells, 300 feet deep and never turned out. And then an old fellow told me, showed me how to do it. If it was—if I had the knack, it worked out. And I took out water on 74 feet and then we got that well water ever since.

LT: 06:20 Do many people have this talent?

AVA: 06:22 Not too many.

LT: 06:25 Well, I know, okay, just talking between you and me, I already tried it now today, and I don't have it. From the

people that you've talked to, would you say, what, maybe one in a hundred?

- AVA: 06:34 Something like that. Yeah.
- LT: 06:37 Tell us how you go about it. First of all, maybe you could explain the tool that you used, what's it made out of and what does it look like?
- AVA: 06:43 Well, I use a crutch and any kind of stick, any kind. Whether it's dry or green or don't make a difference.
- LT: 06:50 A lot of people use kind of a Y-shape thing though, right?
- AVA: 06:52 Yeah. Some use metal wires, some use pliers, some use crowbars.
- LT: 06:58 Okay. Now, when you're looking for, first of all, what you determine if there is water?
- AVA: 07:04 Yeah. I walk until the stick goes down and then I check it out.
- LT: 07:11 And if not, sometimes it not only goes down, but it's so much force it pulls it out of your hand.
- AVA: 07:15 If I hold it loose, it'll throw it out of my hand every time.
- LT: 07:18 Okay. So you go over, what, a wide area and you find out where there is water first of all?
- AVA: 07:24 Yes. There's lots of veins. I try to get a cross vein.
- LT: 07:29 Which is where there's the most water.
- AVA: 07:30 Yeah. Well, one goes one way and the other one goes the other way.
- LT: 07:33 Okay. After you've determined where—if there—that there is water under there, can you find out how deep it is?
- AVA: 07:40 Yes. I can tell the first and second vein how deep it is.
- LT: 07:45 Okay. How do you—do you use that same tool or a different one?
- AVA: 07:48 I use a straight stick for taking out the depth.

LT: 07:52 Now, how accurate can you be? What does it do? Does it bob for the number of feet or the number of—

AVA: 07:59 It bobs a color foot for every stroke that goes up and down.

LT: 08:04 So just like a machine, if it bobs 10 times, it's 10 feet underground.

AVA: 08:08 Yeah. That's right.

LT: 08:10 Okay. How accurate from the wells that have been dug, within how many feet do you get, like, within 10 feet or how much?

AVA: 08:20 Well, they usually go down a little deep because the stick stops as soon as I hit the water and then they go down deeper, so they get coarse gravel usually.

LT: 08:28 Okay. But when you—let's say that it bobs 70, 80 feet or something, how close is it where they do reach that water?

AVA: 08:36 Well, a lot of them, I hit right on the button.

LT: 08:39 What's been your success so far in the people that have been looking for water?

AVA: 08:44 Percentage? About 98 percent.

LT: 08:48 That's amazing. What about those ones you were wrong? Was it a bad day, or how can you explain when you didn't hit it right exactly?

AVA: 08:56 Well, I hit dry, coarse gravel in one place, but no water. That's—

LT: 09:02 So in other words, the gravel and maybe that's got something to do with it or—do you do this as a business owner or has this been a hobby with you?

AVA: 09:14 I don't do it as a business, no.

LT: 09:17 All right. But like you said, there's not too many people with this talent around. This year and in years to come, everybody's talking about how dry it is or talking about irrigation, whether we have enough water underground. What's going to happen do you think in the future? What if farmer A decides that he wants to put an irrigation, and what about farmer B? Is that irrigation on one farm going

to affect how much water they're going to get maybe on that next farm?

- AVA: 09:45 It will in a lot of cases.
- LT: 09:48 Do you think that there might be a time when we're just going to be no water under the ground?
- AVA: 09:55 The water will come back.
- LT: 09:57 Okay. But, of course, if the rain that makes a difference, too, if the ground gets recharged. During these dry times now, does—can you tell how much water is in the ground? Okay, you're talking about that you know how many feet down, can you tell the quantity of it by how many feet of water there is?
- AVA: 10:19 I can't tell how much water there is.
- LT: 10:21 But usually, if you have several feet of water, it's a pretty good indication of how much.
- AVA: 10:26 If the water stays at that level, you can pump it down, then you got a good well. But if it goes down, then it isn't good.
- LT: 10:34 Do you think that maybe that there are a few farmers that are going to be spending some money that might be wasted on this irrigation, or what's your personal opinion?
- AVA: 10:44 Well, I wouldn't dare to comment on that.
- LT: 10:47 Well, A.V., there's one question I always end the interview, and that's when I ask the age.
- AVA: 10:52 I would be 81 years old in September.
- LT: 10:55 Thank you very much, it's been very interesting. We've been talking with A.V. Anderson of Hoffman on Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota, a Saturday KMRS news feature.