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Interview with Reuben and Bonna (Wilkes) Dahlstrom

February 13, 1978

Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection

St. Cloud State University Archives

Interview by Cal Gower and John LeDoux

Gower ([00:00:01](#)):

This is an interview conducted by Calvin Gower and John LeDoux for the Central Minnesota Historical Center. Today, which is February 13, 1978, we're interviewing Mrs. Reuben Dahlstrom, and what is your first name?

Bonna ([00:00:26](#)):

Bonna.

Gower ([00:00:26](#)):

Bonna?

Gower ([00:00:26](#)):

B-O-N-N-A, Bonna.

Gower ([00:00:28](#)):

Mrs., B-O-N- N-A, Bonna, and later we will be interviewing her husband, Reuben Dahlstrom, in Milaca, Minnesota. Okay, let's start out here by asking you, Mrs. Dahlstrom, where your ancestors came from, where they settled in Minnesota and how you came to be here in Milaca and so on there. Then we can carry it on from there.

Bonna ([00:00:56](#)):

Well, how far back do you want me to go now?

Gower ([00:00:59](#)):

Go back to your grandparents at least.

Bonna ([00:01:03](#)):

My grandparents came from the state of New York on one side and from France on the other, and the ones from New York came here in around 1860 from Sardinia, Erie County, New York. They went to Sunrise, Minnesota, which was the one little place there, at that time, on the St. Croix River. It had a mill, so that they had a place to grind their grain, and that was one of the attractions of the place.

Gower ([00:01:46](#)):

Is--

Bonna ([00:01:47](#)):

But they weren't there too awfully long, because North Branch, which you've perhaps heard of, wasn't there at that time, but the railroads finally went through there and I think it was perhaps in the middle '60s.

Gower ([00:02:07](#)):

What was that railroad? Do you know?

Bonna ([00:02:09](#)):

Well, Route between Minneapolis and Duluth, now--

Gower ([00:02:13](#)):

Oh that railroad, sure, okay.

Bonna ([00:02:13](#)):

That railroad went through North Branch and that started the town of North Branch. At that time, they moved from Sunrise to a farm near North Branch, and there was where my father was born.

Gower ([00:02:29](#)):

Now is Sunrise on the St. Croix?

Bonna ([00:02:32](#)):

Sunrise is not too far from the St. Croix, but it's not right on the St. Croix.

Gower ([00:02:39](#)):

No, I didn't think it was. What year was your father born?

Bonna ([00:02:41](#)):

In 1865.

Gower ([00:02:43](#)):

1865 in North Branch?

Bonna ([00:02:46](#)):

In North Branch, the town of Branch, which he was on a farm.

Gower ([00:02:51](#)):

Yeah, sure.

Bonna ([00:02:52](#)):

Not right in the town.

Gower ([00:02:52](#)):

But he was born on a farm near North Branch.

Bonna ([00:02:55](#)):

Right.

Gower ([00:02:58](#)):

His background then was, his parents were both from the United States?

Bonna ([00:03:03](#)):

Yes, right, in New York state.

Gower ([00:03:06](#)):

Uh-huh (affirmative), and your mother then, her parents were from which?

Bonna ([00:03:13](#)):

From France.

Gower ([00:03:13](#)):

They were from France. When did they come to the United States?

Bonna ([00:03:16](#)):

They came about the same time, but they came up through New Orleans by boat and up the river to St. Paul. They didn't especially like it at St. Paul, so they went farther up the St. Croix to this little town of Sunrise. There, they had a farm and raised their family.

Gower ([00:03:39](#)):

What was their name?

Bonna ([00:03:41](#)):

Their name was Simon. In French, it's called Simon.

Gower ([00:03:47](#)):

S-I-M-O-N though?

Bonna ([00:03:48](#)):

Right, he was Francois Simon.

Gower ([00:03:51](#)):

What was your father's name?

Bonna ([00:03:53](#)):

My father's name was Wilkes.

Gower ([00:03:56](#)):

W-I-L-K-E-S?

Bonna ([00:03:57](#)):

K-E-S. His father's name was Leonard.

Gower ([00:04:01](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative), okay, and what did your father do then in-- Did he stay in the North Branch area or did he come to Milaca or what?

Bonna ([00:04:10](#)):

Well, he stayed there, and he was married in that area to my mother because they lived in the same area. I believe he farmed with his brother for just a short time, maybe one season. Then he decided to come here to Milaca. Milaca was a young town, it wasn't very old, and that time there, he was looking for promising places like that to settle. He came here in 1888, I believe in the fall.

Gower ([00:04:52](#)):

In 1888?

Bonna ([00:04:53](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

LeDoux ([00:04:54](#)):

Now, [inaudible 00:04:55], your parents were married. What was the date? Do you remember the year?

Bonna ([00:04:59](#)):

Yes, they were married April 20, 1886.

Gower ([00:05:03](#)):

1886, and then they moved two years later?

Bonna ([00:05:09](#)):

Got married at Taylor's Falls.

Gower ([00:05:10](#)):

Oh, Taylor's Falls, and then two years later they moved to Milaca?

Bonna ([00:05:10](#)):

Yes.

LeDoux ([00:05:10](#)):

Now--

Bonna ([00:05:13](#)):

Two or three. Now wait, they were married in six--

Gower ([00:05:19](#)):

Almost three maybe.

Bonna ([00:05:20](#)):

It was almost three, because--

Gower ([00:05:23](#)):

Because it was near the end of 1888.

Bonna ([00:05:24](#)):

Let's see. It would be two and a half, because Essie a year and a half, that's how I figured. My oldest sister, I've gotten a lot from her, and she was a year and a half when they came here and the only child.

Gower ([00:05:38](#)):

Oh, sure, mm-hmm (affirmative).

LeDoux ([00:05:42](#)):

Now is, after you mentioned that your father farmed for a while. Now, did he take up for surveying? The occupation he took up after this, or what did he do after he quit farming?

Bonna ([00:05:53](#)):

I don't know really when he started to survey. He's always some of that as long as I could remember, but I don't think that was his initial occupation in any way.

Gower ([00:06:08](#)):

Was there still lumbering going on here in Milaca when he came?

Bonna ([00:06:10](#)):

He worked in the lumber mill. He couldn't find a place to live. When he came here, there was no available house. There's a little town, Foreston, you went through a coming, which is much older than Milaca. It was called Bridgman, originally.

Gower ([00:06:27](#)):

Bridgman?

Bonna ([00:06:30](#)):

Bridgman, right, and he went there and he bought a house and they lived there until after my brother was born. He was born in '90. It was after '90 that he finally found a place to live here, and I think he came here perhaps when he bought the hotel. There was a hotel here called the Arlington Hotel, and I don't think it had been here too long, maybe more than a year or two. He bought that and there was a little house beside it where they lived.

Gower ([00:07:13](#)):

Do you have any idea what the size of Milaca was in 1890?

Bonna ([00:07:19](#)):

Well, you got me there.

Gower ([00:07:21](#)):

It's okay. Was this the very large hotel at your father bought?

Bonna ([00:07:26](#)):

Yeah. I have a picture of it.

Gower ([00:07:28](#)):

Oh, had a number of rooms in it then?

Bonna ([00:07:30](#)):

Yes, sir, quite a few rooms in it.

Gower ([00:07:30](#)):

Now was Milaca--

Bonna ([00:07:35](#)):

It had a drug drugstore in part of it, and it had a saloon on the other corner. It was quite an active hotel.

Gower ([00:07:42](#)):

Did it have a pretty nice--

Bonna ([00:07:43](#)):

They served meals.

Gower ([00:07:44](#)):

Oh, yeah. Was Milaca a railroad town too, as well as lumbering?

Bonna ([00:07:51](#)):

I don't really know, but you could find that out--

Gower ([00:07:55](#)):

Sure, [crosstalk 00:07:56].

Bonna ([00:07:55](#)):

--exactly when that railroad came through here. But I think, because the town site was filed up here in 1886.

Gower ([00:08:09](#)):

1886?

Bonna ([00:08:11](#)):

Yeah, and it was filed, and through the railroad some way, because I think Jim Hill had something to do with it.

Gower ([00:08:24](#)):

Milaca was much younger-

Bonna ([00:08:26](#)):

Maybe it didn't have any plant of any kind until after the railroad came through.

Gower ([00:08:31](#)):

Yeah, I wonder if it didn't, sure.

Bonna ([00:08:34](#)):

I suppose that could be--

Gower ([00:08:36](#)):

Yeah, we could find that out. Sure.

Bonna ([00:08:37](#)):

Find out. I think maybe I have some books here that might-- If I could, I will look it up later.

Gower ([00:08:43](#)):

Well, we've got that book by Herman Nelson and our senator.

Bonna ([00:08:47](#)):

Yeah, but there's another one.

Gower ([00:08:50](#)):

Oh, we can check on that, sure.

Bonna ([00:08:52](#)):

I don't know whether I took that back to the museum [crosstalk 00:08:54]

Gower ([00:08:54](#)):

Okay, now, did your father, was he in this hotel business for some time then, or?

Bonna ([00:09:01](#)):

Well, I don't know the exact number of years, but on the picture that I have, it was taken in 1895.

LeDoux ([00:09:13](#)):

Now at the same time, was he also working with the lumbering industry while he was owning this hotel? You don't know if this was before or after.

Bonna ([00:09:25](#)):

No. I think when he first came here, he did work in the lumber mill, because they all did.

Gower ([00:09:29](#)):

But that was from Foreston and so on.

Bonna ([00:09:31](#)):

You see, there's from '88 until he got in the hotel, I'm sure.

Gower ([00:09:37](#)):

Then he was in the [crosstalk 00:09:39].

Bonna ([00:09:39](#)):

In fact, he was the-- They called it the saw filer.

Gower ([00:09:47](#)):

Oh sure.

Bonna ([00:09:48](#)):

Sharpen the saw. That was his position in the saw mill.

Gower ([00:09:51](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative), sure.

LeDoux ([00:09:52](#)):

So do you recall what he did after? What did he do after the hotel? Did he own this for some time and then go into other business or?

Bonna ([00:10:01](#)):

Well, he sold it to somebody, I believe by the name of Clark or Warren. No, Clark. He was there for a while, but he couldn't seem to handle it, so he took it back for a while. Now, that much I know, but then he took it again and he had it, this Warren Clark, I think had it for many, many years. Then my dad had a store on the other side of the street.

Gower ([00:10:33](#)):

What kind of a store?

Bonna ([00:10:37](#)):

Mercantile store with Grant McClure.

Gower ([00:10:40](#)):

Grant McClure?

Bonna ([00:10:40](#)):

Yes. They were together in the store.

LeDoux ([00:10:44](#)):

Was business always pretty good, as far as retail in that time, as far as--

Bonna ([00:10:50](#)):

I don't know. I guess it wasn't too bad.

Gower ([00:10:54](#)):

Then, what year and month and day were you born?

Bonna ([00:10:57](#)):

I was born February 14, 1906.

Gower ([00:11:01](#)):

1906. Here in Milaca?

Bonna ([00:11:01](#)):

In Milaca.

Gower ([00:11:04](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative), and you've lived here all of your life then?

Bonna ([00:11:07](#)):

Right.

Gower ([00:11:09](#)):

Okay. Now, what do you remember as what your father was doing? What kind of work he was doing when you were a young girl?

Bonna ([00:11:18](#)):

Oh, a lot of things. Let's see.

Gower ([00:11:23](#)):

Was he still in that store?

Bonna ([00:11:24](#)):

He comes to [crosstalk 00:11:25]. No, no. Well, he might've been in a [jiff 00:11:28] when I was born. Maybe, yeah, I think he was. I think on my birth certificate, it says mercantile dealer. I think that's where I got it.

Gower ([00:11:42](#)):

Sure.

Bonna ([00:11:44](#)):

I know it wasn't very long after that, and let's see. [inaudible 00:11:58] He had a farm out here, but he didn't live on it. He was very much into things in town. We have over here on the first school was over here, Westerns, and I have a picture of that, and he is on that as a board member. That was taken before the school was built where it is now on the corner of 23 and 169. I don't know if you came that way.

Gower ([00:12:35](#)):

Yeah, we came that way. Well, we turned off.

Bonna ([00:12:36](#)):

It's called the middle school now, but there was a school built there. See, I think, excuse me, I think it was 1901, something like that. At that time, we had built a house across the street from it, and that's where I was born.

Gower ([00:13:01](#)):

Oh, you were born there, okay, sweet.

Bonna ([00:13:06](#)):

That school burned down in 1915.

Gower ([00:13:10](#)):

1915? Gosh, it wasn't there very long.

Bonna ([00:13:12](#)):

No. It wasn't.

Gower ([00:13:18](#)):

Your father then was doing all manner of things throughout his adult years.

Bonna ([00:13:20](#)):

Well, he was farming and he was lumbering.

Gower ([00:13:20](#)):

Did you--

Bonna ([00:13:27](#)):

He had the first garage here.

Gower ([00:13:29](#)):

The first automobile garage.

Bonna ([00:13:33](#)):

It was.

Gower ([00:13:33](#)):

When was that? Do you have any idea? 1910 or so or--

Bonna ([00:13:37](#)):

Reb would know, I think. Maybe around 1910.

Gower ([00:13:43](#)):

About 1910. Did he have a dealership?

Bonna ([00:13:45](#)):

He had the dealership for the Imperial car.

Gower ([00:13:48](#)):

The Imperial car.

Bonna ([00:13:49](#)):

Right.

LeDoux ([00:13:50](#)):

Were there a lot of cars around at this time, or were there still comparatively few, as far as--

Bonna ([00:13:56](#)):

Well, you can get all that car stuff from Reb, because he was here and very interested, of course, and that was the time when cars first were on the market with [crosstalk 00:14:11]. My father had the first garage except the little, behind one of RL Cram's hardware store. I believe they worked on Fords, because Reb can tell you about that.

Gower ([00:13:56](#)):

Okay, fine.

Bonna ([00:13:56](#)):

We'll skip that for me.

Gower ([00:13:56](#)):

We'll ask that, sure.

Bonna ([00:14:31](#)):

You can get more out of him.

Gower ([00:14:32](#)):

Sure, and then you said, I understand your father was the mayor of Milaca at one time?

Bonna ([00:14:38](#)):

Yes, he was but I don't know the year. I was going to go and find out, but I know he was because my mother had it in his obituary. But he was--

Gower ([00:14:38](#)):

It was only one year or so that he was the mayor?

Bonna ([00:14:49](#)):

No, I think perhaps it was more than that. He also was the first fire chief and started the first fire department here. He and my oldest brother were both fireman for many, many years.

Gower ([00:15:05](#)):

Oh, was that a volunteer fire department?

Bonna ([00:15:07](#)):

Yes, it was.

Gower ([00:15:08](#)):

Yeah, sure. It just sounds as if he did many different things, your father.

Bonna ([00:15:13](#)):

Yes. He was very interested and took part in a lot of things.

LeDoux ([00:15:13](#)):

Pretty much a community leader.

Bonna ([00:15:19](#)):

He was on a school board for many years. I know he was on the school board, and he probably was on the council too. I don't know, but I know he was mayor because that I found out from my mother.

Gower ([00:15:33](#)):

Was the mayor and elected position as far as you know?

Bonna ([00:15:38](#)):

I think it was at that time, but I'm not sure about it.

Gower ([00:15:44](#)):

Yep, sure. Did your father ever talk much about how it was like here in those earlier years that you recall?

Bonna ([00:15:52](#)):

Oh yeah, he did a lot of talk-- He was a person that could tell his stories, and you could sit around by the hour and listen. He was a hunter and he always had lots of hunting stories. He was a lumberman. He worked in the lumber mills, and he took out a claim-- What do you call it?

Homestead?

Gower ([00:16:14](#)):

Homestead, yeah.

Bonna ([00:16:14](#)):

Up here in what's called Cove now on Mille Lacs Lake.

Gower ([00:16:18](#)):

Cove, C-O-V-E?

Bonna ([00:16:20](#)):

Right. It's close in there. I have a paper on it. I think it's 160 acres, but I can't recall. I probably better look before I say that. But I know he ended the family, which included two children at that time, my sister Essie and brother Lloyd. They stayed up there and worked that claim until they had the land proved, so it was theirs. Then later I know he sold it, because they didn't stay up there any longer than that. He was well acquainted with the Indians at that time. He could converse with the Indians.

Gower ([00:17:05](#)):

These were the Chippewa or Ojibwe Indians.

Bonna ([00:17:07](#)):

Right. He knew their old chief, what was his name? [Moosomine 00:17:12], Chief Moosomine.

Gower ([00:17:17](#)):

Moosomine?

Bonna ([00:17:17](#)):

There's one point that comes out Mille Lacs Lake there that's named after him, and I have a medal that was given to this chief. It's interesting the way he got the medal, and I don't know the year that he got it, but this little cold store, the store is still up there. He went in there one day and this-- Okay.

Gower ([00:17:43](#)):

It's okay.

Bonna ([00:17:48](#)):

This owner of the store had just taken the medal in for some groceries that an Indian had brought in. My father paid him for it and gave him the money for it. He took the medal. He had it for years, and I believe it has a peace pipe on one side and then hands clasped on the other.

LeDoux ([00:18:16](#)):

Now, during the different parts of his life, then your father was involved in surveying throughout the city.

Bonna ([00:18:25](#)):

Yes. He always--

LeDoux ([00:18:26](#)):

Now, this involved moving around?

Bonna ([00:18:27](#)):

He always had this surveyor outfit, and I think we still have it.

Gower ([00:18:30](#)):

Did he move around quite a bit doing the surveying or was it almost always right in this immediate area?

Bonna ([00:18:35](#)):

Well, it was in his later years that he was our county surveyor.

Gower ([00:18:39](#)):

Oh, he was the county surveyor?

Bonna ([00:18:40](#)):

Yeah, and in later years he was a boiler inspector too.

LeDoux ([00:18:46](#)):

Did he follow the railroad pretty much when he was a younger man then?

Bonna ([00:18:50](#)):

No, I don't think so.

LeDoux ([00:18:52](#)):

Stayed pretty much in this area.

Bonna ([00:18:53](#)):

He came here with his family, and he stayed here.

Gower ([00:18:56](#)):

Did he leave any of his records as a county surveyor or not?

Bonna ([00:19:01](#)):

Those are in the courthouse. I don't know.

Gower ([00:19:03](#)):

We've got a bunch of records of John Morgan, who was the Stearns County surveyor for many years.

Bonna ([00:19:11](#)):

Well, now--

Gower ([00:19:12](#)):

These were his own records, as far as I know.

Bonna ([00:19:15](#)):

Well, they weren't--

Gower ([00:19:15](#)):

That's my understanding. We got them from his son, Arthur Morgan.

Bonna ([00:19:21](#)):

I don't have that, and I wouldn't know where it-- I don't think he had it because I never saw it. He had a satchel that he had all these papers in, and I never seen anything like that in that.

Gower ([00:19:32](#)):

Well, how many brothers and sisters do you have then?

Bonna ([00:19:35](#)):

I had two brothers and three sisters.

Gower ([00:19:35](#)):

And three sisters.

Bonna ([00:19:36](#)):

There were six of us.

Gower ([00:19:39](#)):

Okay, four girls and two boys.

Bonna ([00:19:43](#)):

Two boys.

Gower ([00:19:47](#)):

You're--

Bonna ([00:19:48](#)):

I'm the trailer.

Gower ([00:19:48](#)):

You're the youngest one.

Bonna ([00:19:49](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative). My oldest sister's 20 years older than I, so all my information has come because I was a good listener in a family of grownups, and that, besides being teased, I learned a lot.

Gower ([00:20:05](#)):

Yeah, that's right. That's right I was the fourth in a family of six, but I did a lot of the teasing too.

Bonna ([00:20:17](#)):

Oh, you did? You were probably like the brother that was close to me, six years older.

Gower ([00:20:17](#)):

Right. Yeah, I think I was. I was--

Bonna ([00:20:17](#)):

He was the limit, really.

Gower ([00:20:19](#)):

Yeah, I'm afraid I was that way. My two younger sisters tell me that, see.

Bonna ([00:20:19](#)):

I see that.

Gower ([00:20:25](#)):

Well, did you go to a school here then, all through the grade school and high school and so on, in Milaca or what?

Bonna ([00:20:25](#)):

I went to grade school here, just grade school.

Gower ([00:20:35](#)):

Just grade school.

Bonna ([00:20:37](#)):

Then my father sold the house and he did different things. It seems like he worked up in Duluth for a while that summer. Well, that was after the school burned, and I went down to Princeton.

No, that isn't right either. I was on the fourth grade that the school burned.

Gower ([00:21:00](#)):

School burned in 1915.

Bonna ([00:21:01](#)):

'15 and I think I was in the fourth grade.

Gower ([00:21:04](#)):

You were born in 1906?

Bonna ([00:21:04](#)):

Six.

Gower ([00:21:04](#)):

Yeah. Yeah, that'd be about right.

Bonna ([00:21:09](#)):

I went to Princeton and lived with my sister and finished that year. Then I came back here, and my family and they were all married. Then I was the only one left. Well, except a brother who was in the service, but let's see.

Gower ([00:21:31](#)):

Did you finish grade school here in Milaca then?

Bonna ([00:21:32](#)):

Yes. I finished grade school, and then my father sold-- He left here and went to Princeton to work, and he was chief of police there. It's one of the things he did there. He always had

lumbering that he did up in Mudgett Township here someplace, and he had his farm and he would take care of the hay on that.

Gower ([00:22:02](#)):

How long were you in Princeton?

Bonna ([00:22:04](#)):

I was there long enough to go to high school.

Gower ([00:22:06](#)):

Did you graduate from Princeton High School?

Bonna ([00:22:08](#)):

I graduated from Princeton.

Gower ([00:22:10](#)):

This was about--

Bonna ([00:22:12](#)):

I was gone from here six years, because my father sold the house there and they decided to try out West. My sister was out there, and so I went out there and lived for two years. Then I came back to Mora.

Gower ([00:22:12](#)):

This was-

Bonna ([00:22:32](#)):

My folks both came back to Mora.

Gower ([00:22:36](#)):

They came back here too. Yeah, this was-

Bonna ([00:22:38](#)):

They stayed here until they died here.

Gower ([00:22:40](#)):

This was about what year then? 1924 or '26?

Bonna ([00:22:42](#)):

'25 I came back here.

Gower ([00:22:46](#)):

1925, okay.

Bonna ([00:22:49](#)):

Two years later, we were married.

Gower ([00:22:51](#)):

Okay. Had you known him before, your husband to-be or?

Bonna ([00:22:56](#)):

No, not till I come back. Well, I kind of--

Gower ([00:22:59](#)):

Even though you both were in this town?

Bonna ([00:23:00](#)):

He was my brother's age more and I probably--

Bonna ([00:23:00](#)):

He was my brother's age more and I probably saw him, but I didn't--

Gower ([00:23:05](#)):

But you had not known each other in that period?

Bonna ([00:23:08](#)):

It didn't seem-- I didn't remember him too.

Gower ([00:23:12](#)):

What kind of work did you--

Bonna ([00:23:13](#)):

I remember the family, though.

Gower ([00:23:17](#)):

Oh. What kind of work did you do before you got married, then? You were out of high school and--

Bonna ([00:23:19](#)):

Well, I was a stenographer. I did that out in Seattle for two years.

Gower ([00:23:24](#)):

Was this from training you had gotten in high school?

Bonna ([00:23:28](#)):

Yes. [crosstalk 00:23:28] Then I worked at the courthouse up here in the auditor's office for about six years.

Gower ([00:23:35](#)):

About six years. Was this back in your early married years?

Bonna ([00:23:39](#)):

That was before and after I got married.

Gower ([00:23:39](#)):

After you got married. Yeah. Before you had a family?

Bonna ([00:23:42](#)):

Before we had a family.

Gower ([00:23:44](#)):

Sure. Okay.

Bonna ([00:23:44](#)):

I never worked after we had a family.

Gower ([00:23:48](#)):

This would take us over to about maybe 1932 or something like that, huh?

Bonna ([00:23:54](#)):

David was born in '35.

Gower ([00:23:56](#)):

Oh, okay. Sure. Okay. And so then, how many children did you have?

Bonna ([00:24:03](#)):

I had four boys.

Gower ([00:24:04](#)):

Four boys. The first one was born in 19--

Bonna ([00:24:04](#)):

'35.

Gower ([00:24:13](#)):

'35.

Bonna ([00:24:14](#)):

And '39, Peter. '40 John. And then we had another little trailer in '47. Old enough to quit, but we still had one.

Gower ([00:24:22](#)):

Okay. Let me just turn this off for a second. Okay. Then, after your family was started, you've been a housewife from then on?

Bonna ([00:24:37](#)):

Yes, I've been a housewife ever since.

Gower ([00:24:39](#)):

Have you been involved in a number of organizations of some kind? Outside your home?

Bonna ([00:24:46](#)):

Right now I belong to the Civic Club and I work with the museum down here.

Gower ([00:24:51](#)):

With the historical museum?

Bonna ([00:24:53](#)):

Museum.

Gower ([00:24:53](#)):

Yeah. Uh-huh (affirmative).

Bonna ([00:24:54](#)):

We have a very interesting village hall. Have you seen that?

Gower ([00:24:58](#)):

No. I really don't know much about Milaca. I've just been through here a few times.

Bonna ([00:25:01](#)):

Well, that is something that you should see.

Gower ([00:25:01](#)):

Oh, I'll have to--

Bonna ([00:25:04](#)):

Now you remember, perhaps in your work here, the WPA artists that went-- Well, they brought their showing of it. I don't know whether it was the Minnesota Historical Society.

Gower ([00:25:21](#)):

Yes, I think it was.

Bonna ([00:25:24](#)):

They brought it all here because they couldn't take ours. The village hall has murals all around it of our lumbering industry, and they're very good. In life size, if even bigger.

Gower ([00:25:41](#)):

This was in connection with the show last year about the art of Minnesota?

Bonna ([00:25:48](#)):

Yeah.

Gower ([00:25:48](#)):

Oh, I see. Great.

Bonna ([00:25:49](#)):

This year up until in December.

Gower ([00:25:51](#)):

Yes.

Bonna ([00:25:52](#)):

They were here for about a month.

Gower ([00:25:54](#)):

[crosstalk 00:25:54] Part of the bicentennial. Sure. Did you belong to any women's groups during your--

Bonna ([00:26:05](#)):

Well, I was in Eastern Star.

Gower ([00:26:08](#)):

Sure.

Bonna ([00:26:09](#)):

Well, I'm a 50-year member.

Gower ([00:26:11](#)):

Oh, yeah. Sure.

Bonna ([00:26:13](#)):

My father was a Mason. I [inaudible 00:26:17] him when I was about 18.

Gower ([00:26:17](#)):

Sure. Okay.

Bonna ([00:26:24](#)):

Outside of that, I guess I just raised my boys.

Gower ([00:26:29](#)):

Do you think there have been very many changes there in Milaca during the time you've lived here?

Bonna ([00:26:35](#)):

Well, some, but I don't think-- I think we're still a nice little small town.

Gower ([00:26:45](#)):

Fairly stable all the way through?

Bonna ([00:26:49](#)):

Lots of people that run the businesses here have been like us. They've been here, born here.

There are some new, of course, new names all the time.

Gower ([00:27:01](#)):

Do the children stay around here very much? Or did they move on?

Bonna ([00:27:06](#)):

I have two sons here, and you can get that from Rub, because they worked with him in his business. He was a body man.

Gower ([00:27:18](#)):

Okay. Fine.

Bonna ([00:27:18](#)):

And then I have one boy who took up music and he's an instructor in band in Anoka [inaudible 00:27:32]. And then the youngest one, Jim, is an electrical engineer, graduated from University of Minnesota, and he works for Control Data down in Omaha. And John is teaching bodywork in the body shop that used to be ours.

Gower ([00:27:58](#)):

Oh, is this through the vocational school?

Bonna ([00:28:00](#)):

Vocational

Gower ([00:28:00](#)):

Sure, sure. Okay. John, did you want to ask her anything else here?

LeDoux ([00:28:05](#)):

No.

Gower ([00:28:07](#)):

Okay. Very good. We'll just turn this off now then.

Now we are talking with Reuben Dahlstrom. That's D-A-H-L-S-T-R-O-M?

Reuben ([00:28:20](#)):

Right.

Gower ([00:28:21](#)):

And your wife said that your nickname was Rub?

Reuben ([00:28:24](#)):

Right.

Gower ([00:28:25](#)):

Like R-U-B?

Reuben ([00:28:26](#)):

R-U-B.

Gower ([00:28:27](#)):

Okay. Would you tell us about your grandparents, where they came from and where they lived?

And then your parents and then yourself and so on, please?

Reuben ([00:28:41](#)):

Well, my dad and mother, they both come from Sweden.

Gower ([00:28:45](#)):

Both your dad and mother came from Sweden?

Reuben ([00:28:51](#)):

Yes. You probably better be close on that trigger because this is going to be a little bit difficult for me to get these details down the way you want them. [crosstalk 00:29:01]

Gower ([00:29:02](#)):

No, no, it doesn't matter. Uh-uh (negative). If it's just approximate, that's okay too.

Reuben ([00:29:08](#)):

And my dad come here about 1891. You probably gave him some of that.

Bonna ([00:29:20](#)):

No, I didn't. I [crosstalk 00:29:20].

Reuben ([00:29:22](#)):

All right. But they did. And when he come to this country, they picked him up down in Zimmerman. And a couple of guys brought him up here on a hand car.

Gower ([00:29:32](#)):

Who were these--

Reuben ([00:29:34](#)):

One of the fellows was a guy by the name of Bless.

Gower ([00:29:39](#)):

Did he know them before?

Reuben ([00:29:42](#)):

I don't think so. They had some distant relatives, I suppose, around here, but I can't give you the complete detail of it. But anyway, when they brought dad up here from Zimmerman, they used one of these old pump hand cars, like they had then, and they brought him up here to Milaca.

Gower ([00:30:10](#)):

How old was your father then, would you guess?

Reuben ([00:30:20](#)):

Well.

Bonna ([00:30:20](#)):

He was married and had two little boys.

Gower ([00:30:20](#)):

Oh, he was married and had two little boys?

Bonna ([00:30:21](#)):

Two little boys.

Gower ([00:30:23](#)):

So he must have been into his mid-twenties at least, maybe?

Reuben ([00:30:27](#)):

Yes. I would say so. Probably up to 30, as far as that goes. At least that much because Dad was a professional shoe maker over in the old country, and he had several men that worked for him when they went out from farm to farm, and they made new shoes for the whole family when they went out. So when he come to this country, why, that was the one point that I know he started from was Zimmerman, and then they brought him up here on the hand car, like I told you.

Gower ([00:31:07](#)):

Now, did he come on his own without his wife and children?

Reuben ([00:31:12](#)):

I don't believe he did. I think they all come together, because this wife died soon after they got here, and he had a black diphtheria and one thing and another. The wife died and one of his sons died. And my dad was also sick during that particular time, and they tolled the bell in the church up there for him, too. Same deal, but he come out of it. It was my dad and this one son. And then my mother, evidently, she had a sister living in this country and she'd come here and their sister

and her husband had a tailor shop in this particular town. And well, dad evidently courted this gal and they were married and that's where our particular bunch of boys come from on that side.

Gower ([00:32:26](#)):

Was this in Minnesota that her sister lived?

Reuben ([00:32:31](#)):

Right.

Gower ([00:32:32](#)):

But it wasn't here in Milaca?

Reuben ([00:32:32](#)):

Yes, it was.

Gower ([00:32:34](#)):

Oh, it was here in Milaca? Oh, I see. Sure. Okay. But she was Swedish also, though.

Reuben ([00:32:38](#)):

Right.

Gower ([00:32:39](#)):

She had come over from Sweden. Okay.

Reuben ([00:32:42](#)):

Couldn't talk English, either one of them, so it was Swede just from the word go.

Gower ([00:32:51](#)):

And your father then went into a shoe making business right away here?

Reuben ([00:32:54](#)):

Well, not right away. No. They worked on the section because I remember they always talked about it, where they got about 90 cents or a dollar a day when they worked on the section until he

got things going. And then he started up a shoe shop of his own at that time and made new shoes, made driving boots and things for these loggers that-- This was all logging country right through here.

Gower ([00:33:25](#)):

What were driving boots?

Reuben ([00:33:26](#)):

Driving boots, the fellows that drove the logs down the river, and they'd have big steel spikes or corks that were driven into the soles of the shoes so they could ride the log. Otherwise they would slip off. And dad did that type of thing.

Gower ([00:33:55](#)):

He repaired shoes and made new shoes both?

Reuben ([00:34:00](#)):

He made new shoes. And in the early days, the loggers used to wear just a plain rubber. You've seen these boats where they have the leather top and the rubber bottoms on them? You've seen those, where they sew the tops onto the rubbers. Well, the loggers used to wear just those rubber bottoms and then they had several pair of socks on, of course. Well, Dad designed the tops that went on those rubbers and sewed them on there for the loggers. So he started that, that boot, I mean, that has that leather top on. That was one of his ideas in this country when he come here. So he made new shoes and then boots and all those leather tops that run clear down. That got to be quite a fad then.

Gower ([00:34:58](#)):

Sure. Now let's see, John, were you going to ask something there?

LeDoux (00:35:03):

No, I know it's different [inaudible 00:35:05]. Did your father have his shop downtown?

Reuben (00:35:07):

Yes.

Gower (00:35:09):

Is this what he did then, all the rest of the time that he lived here in Milaca?

Reuben (00:35:14):

All his life. Yes, right.

Gower (00:35:15):

Was it a pretty good business, do you think? Or--

Reuben (00:35:18):

Well, he was really a professional in his trade. It was good enough so that he was able to raise his family and one thing another. We always lived, I would say, like ordinary people, not suffering any, that's for sure. We had everything we needed.

Gower (00:35:46):

So it was a pretty good business, then, apparently?

Reuben (00:35:48):

I would say it was decent business.

Gower (00:35:48):

Sure.

LeDoux (00:35:52):

Now you were born in what year?

Reuben ([00:35:54](#)):

I beg your pardon?

LeDoux ([00:35:55](#)):

You were born in what year?

Reuben ([00:35:56](#)):

1902.

LeDoux ([00:35:57](#)):

1902.

Gower ([00:35:59](#)):

What month and day?

Reuben ([00:36:00](#)):

December 1st.

Gower ([00:36:01](#)):

December 1st.

LeDoux ([00:36:02](#)):

You were born here in Milaca? You were born here in Milaca?

Reuben ([00:36:08](#)):

Yes. I was born here in Milaca. I've got to adjust this thing up here.

LeDoux ([00:36:08](#)):

Sorry.

Gower ([00:36:15](#)):

And you lived in Milaca all of your life then?

Reuben ([00:36:18](#)):

Yes.

LeDoux ([00:36:19](#)):

And you went to school here also?

Reuben ([00:36:21](#)):

Right.

LeDoux ([00:36:22](#)):

All the way through high school--

Reuben ([00:36:23](#)):

Yeah.

LeDoux ([00:36:23](#)):

--then? Did you work then in your father's shop while you were growing up?

Reuben ([00:36:29](#)):

Yes, we did that too. All of us had a chance to do that. It was all of us boys, we always worked in the shop.

LeDoux ([00:36:38](#)):

What type of work would you commonly do for him then?

Reuben ([00:36:42](#)):

Oh, we would do a lot of the sewing on the sewing machine, putting half soles on heels, finishing them on the polishing machines. Did quite a lot of the detail work, would wait on the customers.

LeDoux ([00:37:03](#)):

Did people commonly come to the store always? Did any of the boys make deliveries after
[crosstalk 00:37:10]?

Reuben ([00:37:09](#)):

No, we never had to do anything like that. No. They'd always come to [inaudible 00:37:18].

Gower ([00:37:21](#)):

You graduated from the high school in Milaca then?

Reuben ([00:37:23](#)):

Right.

Gower ([00:37:24](#)):

And then you were in the automobile business, were you, later then? Or did you start on that right away?

Reuben ([00:37:34](#)):

In our shoe shop we used to sew cellulite in the side curtains on automobiles, and of course I got to the point where I took care of most of those things in the shops, the side curtains and things. And that's how I got swung into the automobile business, because they had a new garage starting down here. They wanted a top man and so forth. I left the shop then and went to work for them as a top man. Made side curtains and tops and did all those things until we started doing bonding work. I just kept going that way until when we sold out here about a year or two ago.

Gower ([00:38:36](#)):

What year did you start in the automobile business then?

Reuben ([00:38:39](#)):

Well, I would say 1923, somewhere in there.

Gower ([00:38:44](#)):

And you said you were a top man and a side curtain man. Did that mean that when the automobile came here, it was just open and then you'd fix these--

Reuben ([00:38:53](#)):

Right.

Gower ([00:38:55](#)):

--tops and sides for that?

Reuben ([00:38:56](#)):

All of our cars, there wasn't any enclosed jobs that we had at that particular time. I can remember when Ford first come with their sedan, those kind of cars, but most of our cars were all open cars. We made the tops and side curtains and then gradually graduated into the next step, like winter enclosures and all that, until they finally had their sedans and winter tops and all those kind of things.

Gower ([00:39:38](#)):

Now, when you first started there on the cars, then most cars wouldn't be used in the winter as much at all. Is that right?

Reuben ([00:39:46](#)):

Well, pretty much right. Yes.

Gower ([00:39:48](#)):

They'd put them on blocks [crosstalk 00:39:50]

Reuben ([00:39:50](#)):

Right. They would be up on blocks. I know we did with our car. We had a Model T and we had it sitting up on blocks until spring come. You very seldom drove your cars in winter time, although I drove quite early because, even when I was-- Possibly before I was even in the high school, because like most kids that were on the streets, you were always curious about cars and you probably only had half a dozen cars to look at in the whole town.

LeDoux ([00:40:32](#)):

There weren't very many cars [crosstalk 00:40:35]?

Reuben ([00:40:34](#)):

No.

Bonna ([00:40:34](#)):

What were some of the kinds they first had?

Reuben ([00:40:41](#)):

Well, we had the Imperial and there was one fellow that had a little car they called the Brush.

And there was one make, I can't remember the first name, Underslung car. And many of them were chain drive automobiles. We had one or two steamers around here.

Gower ([00:41:16](#)):

Did the Ford come in fairly soon?

Reuben ([00:41:18](#)):

The Ford? Oh, that wouldn't have been then. Let's see, we had two doctors here and they-- You can shut that thing off.

LeDoux ([00:41:30](#)):

Whoa, pardon me.

Gower ([00:41:39](#)):

Okay. What were some of those first cars here in Milaca?

Reuben ([00:41:41](#)):

Well, we had about a 1907 Ford in town here. There was the Brush. And during my wife's folks there, they sold the Imperial. They sold the King car and they also sold the friction drive automobile, the Cartercar.

Gower ([00:42:06](#)):

Friction drive?

Reuben ([00:42:08](#)):

Yeah.

Gower ([00:42:08](#)):

What did that mean?

Reuben ([00:42:08](#)):

They have that large wheel on back of the flywheel, a large disk. Then they had a counter wheel that run the other way, that slid on the shaft, and that would make contact with the disk up there. And then from this counter shaft to the rear wheels, there would be chain that went back to drive the wheels. And at first your speed was worked by shifting this little wheel on the counter shaft, so you had whatever-- An enormous amount of different shifts that you went through, because the thing would start small and then we had to wind way out to the end?

Gower ([00:42:52](#)):

Did it work pretty well, that car?

Reuben ([00:42:52](#)):

Well, not real well.

Gower ([00:42:56](#)):

Some mechanical troubles quite often maybe?

Reuben ([00:42:58](#)):

Yeah, keeping it in adjustment, one thing another.

LeDoux ([00:43:01](#)):

Were there several bugs in those early cars, as far as repair work in there?

Reuben ([00:43:07](#)):

Well--

LeDoux ([00:43:09](#)):

Or didn't people know how to use them?

Reuben ([00:43:11](#)):

I think that there were a lot of bugs because I can remember places where we worked, where we'd have to throw in a little ground cork and stuff in the rear end to keep them from making too much noise and all those kinds of things. And breaking rear axles and all those things were quite common. In the one place where I worked as a kid, which I did-- I started when I was about 12 years old working in a machine shop and we made even made batteries and all those kind of things in the shop. I can remember turning out axles on the turning lathe and we'd have a one-cylinder gasoline engine in there for power to run the lathe and that kind of stuff.

LeDoux ([00:44:11](#)):

Now, as a fairly new item, the car in this area, did people, the garage then, have to teach people how to use them and get them acquainted with this?

Reuben ([00:44:23](#)):

Well, there wasn't really that much to them, to tell you the truth about it. They were mostly the-- You had a magneto on it, or you had drive cells that operated a coil, and that was about it. And the carburetion was very, very simple on it. And some of the motors would probably be a two-cylinder job or a one-cylinder job. I think we had one old-time REO in town that had just a one-cylinder deal and then the lever in front to steer it with.

Gower ([00:45:08](#)):

What would they go? How fast would they go?

Reuben ([00:45:12](#)):

Oh, I would say those one cylinders, probably anywheres from five to 10 miles an hour.

LeDoux ([00:45:20](#)):

Were there speed limits established, once [crosstalk 00:45:23]

Reuben ([00:45:23](#)):

No, there was no speed limit.

Gower ([00:45:23](#)):

Not at the beginning.

Reuben ([00:45:26](#)):

The road limited you. You didn't have to worry about going too fast.

LeDoux ([00:45:31](#)):

I just wondered, because I remember in the early days, in some towns they wouldn't post speed limits.

Gower ([00:45:35](#)):

Yeah. Five miles per hour.

LeDoux ([00:45:37](#)):

[crosstalk 00:45:37] an hour or--

Reuben ([00:45:38](#)):

That was mostly because of the horses and things, you know, that they had.

LeDoux ([00:45:40](#)):

Right. There weren't many--

Reuben ([00:45:43](#)):

I can't remember posting in that town on that particular speed limit.

Gower ([00:45:49](#)):

Well, wasn't one of the good things about the Model T the fact that it didn't break down as much and so on? Or is that wrong?

Reuben ([00:45:55](#)):

Well, yes. There isn't any question about it. It was very simple. The transmission just-

Reuben ([00:46:00](#)):

--very simple, the transmission. You just had bands in there that tightened up to hold certain drums while the gears went around inside of them and changed either the power from forward to reverse. And your high gear was a matter of pushing your brake lever ahead, and that just engaged a bunch of discs in there that made a direct drive from the motor to the rear end. We used to go out in the country and put a rear end in the Ford, that is taking the rear axle out of them right on your road, take them apart and put a new axle in or whatever they needed in the rear end. They never towed them into town. I mean, you just did it right there on the road.

LeDoux ([00:46:58](#)):

Just a minute here.

Reuben ([00:46:59](#)):

Okay.

LeDoux ([00:47:00](#)):

This interview will be continued on the other side of the tape. You started working on automobiles when you were 12 years old or so?

Reuben ([00:47:13](#)):

I would say that, yes.

LeDoux ([00:47:14](#)):

But you were also working for your father in the shoe-

Reuben ([00:47:19](#)):

We would do that shop, right.

LeDoux ([00:47:21](#)):

Sure. And then you started full-time on the automobiles about 1923 or so, did you say?

Reuben ([00:47:27](#)):

I would think it was about '23 according to [crosstalk 00:47:34].

Bonna ([00:47:34](#)):

[crosstalk 00:47:34]

Reuben ([00:47:34](#)):

Right.

LeDoux ([00:47:35](#)):

Now you mentioned in the back of a hardware store, a small machine shop. Was this what you were talking about in fixing cars or did I get that mixed up?

Reuben ([00:47:43](#)):

Yes.

LeDoux ([00:47:45](#)):

This was where you were fixing the cars as a boy then?

Reuben ([00:47:48](#)):

We did it there.

Gower ([00:47:49](#)):

That was way back--

LeDoux ([00:47:50](#)):

[crosstalk 00:47:50] the garage then.

Reuben ([00:47:52](#)):

That was the only type of the garage that really wasn't a garage. It was room enough to get a car in.

LeDoux ([00:47:58](#)):

But there was no dealership at the time.

Reuben ([00:48:01](#)):

Well yes, there was.

LeDoux ([00:48:01](#)):

There was.

Reuben ([00:48:03](#)):

There was a Ford dealership, that's all, and that was out of a hardware store.

LeDoux ([00:48:07](#)):

I see. Okay, I gotcha.

Gower ([00:48:09](#)):

How about the Imperial? Wasn't that going too?

Reuben ([00:48:12](#)):

Well, the Imperial, Mr. Welkes had built a large tin garage that would have been considered quite large, I suppose, in that time. I don't remember how many cars it would hold, but quite a number of cars you could get in there, and that's where they had their agency for the Imperial [crosstalk 00:48:36].

Gower ([00:48:36](#)):

Did they do their repairs, too, on the Imperial then?

Reuben ([00:48:38](#)):

Yes, I think they did. I never got too close to them in that particular part. A person would have got as close as they could with kids running in and out, but I'm sure that they did a certain amount of repairs and things on them to keep them running.

Bonna ([00:48:58](#)):

Did Lloyd work in here?

Reuben ([00:48:59](#)):

Yes, sure. Lloyd was, I presume, almost the kingpin on the work that would have been done around there. He always demonstrated the cars when they did any of-- They test these cars up to go up some steep incline, you know? And boy, if they could get up to the top of something, that was just miraculous [inaudible 00:49:28] for an automobile. Her brother was more or less kind of a daredevil guy in a way. So he was just built for testing these automobiles. As far as speed or any way that they had to go, why, he can do it.

LeDoux ([00:49:52](#)):

So did he help people who had no inkling of what to do with the car once [crosstalk 00:49:57]?

Reuben ([00:49:56](#)):

Well, he would, yeah.

LeDoux ([00:49:58](#)):

He'd help them drive it.

Reuben ([00:49:58](#)):

Right.

LeDoux ([00:49:59](#)):

Right, okay.

Gower ([00:50:01](#)):

What kind of a car was the Imperial? Was that a pretty good car?

LeDoux ([00:50:05](#)):

Yes.

Gower ([00:50:06](#)):

Was that manufactured in Minnesota or Michigan?

Reuben ([00:50:13](#)):

No, it wasn't.

Gower ([00:50:16](#)):

Where was that Imperial manufactured?

Reuben ([00:50:20](#)):

It was manufactured in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

Gower ([00:50:23](#)):

What kind of a car was it?

Reuben ([00:50:24](#)):

It was a four cylinder automobile. It had dual ignition and they were a water cooled outfit with a three speed transmission. It had a wheel base of about nine feet.

Gower ([00:50:45](#)):

How long was it manufactured? Do you have that information?

Reuben ([00:50:50](#)):

Well, I think I can get it for you here. Imperial-- It was up till about 1914.

Gower ([00:51:03](#)):

Oh. So when your dad had that, then it was--

Bonna ([00:51:08](#)):

About that time.

Gower ([00:51:10](#)):

--right about in the middle of that time.

Reuben ([00:51:12](#)):

It was right about that time.

Gower ([00:51:12](#)):

Sure, sure.

Bonna ([00:51:13](#)):

Because I think he sold it just-- Because we moved away from here in '15 after the schoolhouse burned.

Gower ([00:51:22](#)):

Right, okay.

Reuben ([00:51:23](#)):

So we got that one [inaudible 00:51:24].

Gower ([00:51:25](#)):

Okay, fine. Now then, had you become really quite extremely interested in automobiles then as you grew up there as a teenager and so on?

Reuben ([00:51:40](#)):

I think all of the teenagers in those days were very much interested in automobiles and could drive them [crosstalk 00:51:49].

Gower ([00:51:48](#)):

But you were interested in the mechanical part of them too, right?

Reuben ([00:51:55](#)):

Mine was mechanical [crosstalk 00:51:55]. When I went to school I took all the industrial art things and all the mechanical drawing and all those things, so I had all mechanical and sheet metal and all that type of things in school, which have followed through from all my life.

Gower ([00:52:22](#)):

Okay. Now you worked for someone for a number of years and then you got your own business going. Was that what happened?

Reuben ([00:52:32](#)):

Well, yes. I worked for Odegard's till--

Gower ([00:52:38](#)):

This is Odegard, O-D-E-G-A-R-D?

Reuben ([00:52:40](#)):

Right. We ran a Ford outfit.

Gower ([00:52:42](#)):

This was in Milaca?

Reuben ([00:52:44](#)):

It was in Milaca.

Gower ([00:52:45](#)):

Is this related to the Odegard in Princeton?

Reuben ([00:52:47](#)):

Right, brother of [crosstalk 00:52:48]--

Gower ([00:52:48](#)):

Brother, oh, sure.

Reuben ([00:52:52](#)):

There was a whole bunch of them. There was San Diego, Glendorado, and Princeton [crosstalk 00:52:59]--

Gower ([00:52:58](#)):

And they were all Ford garages?

Reuben ([00:53:00](#)):

Most of them I think were [crosstalk 00:53:02]. In fact one of them was down in Anoka, they had a Ford garage down there too.

Gower ([00:53:09](#)):

And you worked for Odegard Ford for how long?

Reuben ([00:53:12](#)):

I worked for them till-- Boy, I better check it again.

Gower ([00:53:26](#)):

Okay, you were working at Odegard's into the early 1930s, right?

Reuben ([00:53:30](#)):

Right.

Gower ([00:53:30](#)):

And then the Depression came along and business got to be very poor at Odegard's, was that it?

Reuben ([00:53:37](#)):

That it was.

Gower ([00:53:39](#)):

And so maybe about 1936 or so, you went over to Pontiac?

Reuben ([00:53:45](#)):

Yes, we went over to the Pontiac Garage. I and Harry Berg. We set up the mechanical department there with Ralph Helmen, and Ralph was the Pontiac distributor at that time.

Gower ([00:54:04](#)):

What was going on there in the depression? They just weren't selling very many cars and not very many people were coming in for repairs?

Reuben ([00:54:12](#)):

People just didn't have money, that was all. We had one of our salesmen that would go out to make a trade on an automobile or something like that. We took in wood on cars. We'd take in -- probably he'd come back with a couple bushels of potatoes or a couple of chickens or any darn thing to boot, and this particular salesman was a fellow by the name of Walter Benson. He was colonel as an auctioneer. You know when an auctioneer gets up to that particular part. They called him Colonel Benson, and he would never go out and trade unless he got boot. It wasn't anything unusual to see him come back with a sack with some potatoes in or a chicken or two. Never come back unless you got something, you know? And so this was really kind of a fascinating experience when we look back over.

LeDoux ([00:55:21](#)):

How hard hit was Milaca? How do you remember the Depression in Milaca? For the benefit of my generation that had no idea what it was like.

Reuben ([00:55:32](#)):

We had several banks-- Well, we had two banks that had closed up in our town and had gone broke, and people that wouldn't have \$1,000 or \$2,000 in the bank, heck, they were well fixed people. Now most of these young guys go out, you almost get that much in a week. If they aren't getting \$1,000 a month here on the poverty side of the ledger, and then if we got \$1,000 a year, why, I mean, you were just a well paid employee and I don't mean maybe.

Gower ([00:56:22](#)):

But they were losing their deposits in the banks too?

Reuben ([00:56:26](#)):

Right.

LeDoux ([00:56:27](#)):

Did a number of businessmen fail in Milaca?

Reuben ([00:56:32](#)):

I can't recall so much of the businessmen failing really because I presume that most of them never had anything to begin with so there wasn't probably anything to take away from them maybe more than anything else and they were just accustomed to hanging on. I think that that's a thing that you learn when we're going through hard times. You just have-- Well, there isn't much to do. You just hang on tight, that's all.

Gower ([00:57:04](#)):

Now why was this Pontiac something that you could go into whereas Odegard Ford wasn't doing so well?

Reuben ([00:57:11](#)):

Well, the Pontiac setup had just opened up probably about six months or so before we went in--

Bonna ([00:57:11](#)):

This was at the end of that.

Gower ([00:57:11](#)):

You're getting into a little bit better times.

Reuben ([00:57:26](#)):

Yeah, this was when it was starting to improve. Ralph Helmen--

Gower ([00:57:32](#)):

Is that H-E-L-M-A-N?

Reuben ([00:57:35](#)):

Yes.

Gower ([00:57:36](#)):

H-A-L--

Reuben ([00:57:37](#)):

H-E-L--

Bonna ([00:57:38](#)):

H-E-L-M-E-N.

Gower ([00:57:42](#)):

M-E-N, okay.

Reuben ([00:57:43](#)):

But Ralph was a very good automobile salesman and I presume that he had laugh on the same kind of a situation that we had. It was just difficult getting along that way and he had a chance to get this agency and he just grabbed it. The rent that we had to pay for the building that we were in was just a small deal and when he needed a mechanic, why he'd approach Harry and asked

him about it. Harry was a very good mechanic that worked for [inaudible 00:58:24] and of course we knew one another, all three of us, for many years.

Bonna ([00:58:30](#)):

Rub did the bodywork as I understand.

Reuben ([00:58:30](#)):

I did the bodywork and Harry did the mechanical, and--

Gower ([00:58:36](#)):

What was Harry's last name?

Reuben ([00:58:38](#)):

Bird. Harry Bird.

Gower ([00:58:39](#)):

Harry Bird, right. You had mentioned it.

Reuben ([00:58:42](#)):

So we really had a nice setup, very nice setup. I think that we got along really quite well. This went on until World War II started and then we had to break up because-- Well, we were all more or less-- Ralph and I and Harry were in the old man's bracket, of course in the draft and the only one that got called was--

Bonna ([00:59:16](#)):

Harry.

Reuben ([00:59:17](#)):

--Harry, and Harry bought Ralph and I out. He was the only one that was called because he was single. Then I tried to get a job. I'd been down at the city several times and they put my applications in and I never did get into anything definite. You were always waiting for your

application to come up. And then I'd been over to St. Cloud one day and I'd stepped into a body place there and there was a fellow in there that wanted to sell an air compressor and some spray equipment and stuff like that. He asked me if I wanted to buy it and I said I just got through selling. But I'd come back to Milaca and I thought about it for a while and I'd looked all around for a building to get in, and one thing another, and then this same fellow, Ralph Helmen, had rented a building back off the street. The building where I started in a machine shop. I said, "What are you going to do with the darned thing?" And he says, "Well, really," he says, "nothing particular." He says, "Why, do you want it?" And I says, "Yeah." I says, "I'd just as soon have it." He says, "Well, that's okay." He says, "If you think you want to start up, you can have the building." So then I went back to St. Cloud and I bought the stuff from the guy and we come back and I started my own shop. From there on in, why, I stayed [crosstalk 01:01:08]--

Gower ([01:01:07](#)):

You had your own shop.

Reuben ([01:01:08](#)):

Right.

Gower ([01:01:09](#)):

This was about 1943 or '42?

Reuben ([01:01:09](#)):

I think it was in--

Bonna ([01:01:09](#)):

'41?

Reuben ([01:01:12](#)):

It could have been--

Bonna ([01:01:16](#)):

It was right after the war started.

Gower ([01:01:19](#)):

The war started in December 1941.

Bonna ([01:01:21](#)):

Yeah, well we were there in-- Let's see. Ralph and I were still together, I think, then in '41, so it must have been about '42 that--

LeDoux ([01:01:34](#)):

Now, was your shop selling and repairing cars?

Bonna ([01:01:40](#)):

Mine, when I started?

LeDoux ([01:01:40](#)):

When you started.

Bonna ([01:01:43](#)):

No, I just did bodywork.

LeDoux ([01:01:45](#)):

You just did bodywork.

Gower ([01:01:45](#)):

You just did bodywork.

Reuben ([01:01:45](#)):

I did just bodywork.

Gower ([01:01:47](#)):

On all kinds of cars?

Reuben ([01:01:49](#)):

Oh yeah, anything on that.

Gower ([01:01:53](#)):

Did you have your business from about 1942 to 1976 or so then?

Reuben ([01:01:57](#)):

Right.

LeDoux ([01:01:59](#)):

How was--

Reuben ([01:02:00](#)):

We bought another building. I'd bought a building from across the river on the cemetery road--

Bonna ([01:02:09](#)):

That was '47.

Gower ([01:02:09](#)):

In 1947?

Reuben ([01:02:13](#)):

Right, and when I went into that building, we were one of the first radiant heat outfits in the country.

Gower ([01:02:25](#)):

Radiant heat?

Reuben ([01:02:26](#)):

Right. We put copper tubing in the floor. It had hot water going through it and because I had worked on these cement floors all these years and every time you laid your tools down, you'd just about freeze your hands when you picked them up.

Gower ([01:02:26](#)):

I see, sure.

Reuben ([01:02:49](#)):

So I decided first I was going to put in hot air ducts going in the floor like that and we got ahold of a fellow that had just graduated at the University of Minnesota, and he was a heating engineer. We got him up on the building and he designed our hot water setup for us and we put it in. It was one of the first radiant heat in that system and is still operating today. When we set that thing in, we adjusted it up and that thing has never been changed. We added on about, I forget how many feet onto the building there, and we did the same thing with the new part. They added a hot water deal. That was one of the finest places in the world to work.

Gower ([01:03:44](#)):

It worked out really well.

Reuben ([01:03:46](#)):

The floor never got hot and in those days we did an awful lot of top work because our country roads and things were always hazardous, really, for the wild drivers, you know? It was kind of easy to roll one over. So most of our work was top work. And from ordinary heating systems, all the heat would go up to the ceiling, but with radiant heat it never did that. I mean, it would be the same temperature up there as it would be down at the floor, and about a level of about five feet up, that would be a little higher degree. So it would seem like it was coming up about so high, it the ceiling and bounced back, so it had become like a reflected detail. So it was the most comfortable heat and the most comfortable place in the world to work.

LeDoux ([01:04:51](#)):

I had a question. During World War II, how was your business as far as the bodywork in some of the dealerships? How were they affected by, for example, the reconversion, the cutback of making cars in different parts of the country? The scrap metal drives and all that.

Reuben ([01:05:10](#)):

It was real rough. We'd have a hard time to get our paint and have a real difficult time getting parts. In fact, we straightened out-- You really got to be a real good body man because you didn't hang on loose stuff. You just went in straight [crosstalk 01:05:31]--

LeDoux ([01:05:31](#)):

Did your best with the old?

Reuben ([01:05:36](#)):

Right. I had a fellow that come in with a Ford at that time and he needed a front fender, and there was just no way that we could get one. I says, "Well you just better pick up what you had left of whatever that front fender was and bring it in. We'll straighten it up and put it in." When he brought it in, it was about this big around and boy, I looked at that thing and I said, "Well, we'll labor." And I says, "Well, see what we can do." I rolled it out. Well I always say we and I was all alone, really. But I rolled it out, we scraped it out, put it on, and we did that all the time. You didn't throw anything away until you found out whether you could get a part for it.

LeDoux ([01:06:32](#)):

I don't imagine there could have been too many cars either coming into the showrooms or being sold because, remember, there was a rubber shortage and not many cars were being [inaudible 01:06:43] as I understand.

Reuben ([01:06:43](#)):

It was difficult, real difficult. There wasn't any cars that were-- Well, there were cars that were being sold, but I presume that they went through the same kind of a cycle as-- I mean, just like politics with everything. You'll have to acknowledge the one thing that there are a lot of people that have got a little foresight and there's other guys that are just loaded with hindsight, and I'm one of the hindsight. But the guys would cop onto anything they could get their hands on and double the price on it. You'd have your dealers that were real good dealers that got the cars and they could put any price they wanted to, almost, on the car because you just lead so much money under the table there and then we'll give you a ripping job on the thing, and that's the way that it worked. There was a lot of that going on. There's just that type of thing that goes on all the time.

LeDoux ([01:08:06](#)):

After the wars and when controls were lifted and the plants went back to making cars each year, did your business and others then experience kind of an upsurge in demand for bodywork and demand for cars, et cetera? Did you notice it then?

Reuben ([01:08:23](#)):

Well, it was a lot better. It was a lot better, the improvement-- I don't think that we suffered financially during the war at all. The only thing that I know that we had trouble with was because when they'd come in to freeze everything there was down the line, like our labor charges were all froze and all that stuff, so if you did certain specific items, you just had better stick to that particular figure or some guy could turn you in—

Reuben ([01:09:00](#)):

That particular figure or some guy could turn you in for it. I think I was turned in at one time for something. I don't remember just what it was. But our local office just took care of it like that

and it was cleared with no problem at all. I haven't any idea today what I was turned in for, but just somebody probably that maybe had a chip on their shoulder or something. Things are hard to figure out what those are. But I can recall that one. But our local office just took care of it. I didn't have any problem. I think what it was was a General Motors insurance deal. I put in the glass or something and they figured the charge was too much or that we'd broken some deal. But they handled it over in our own local office. Evidently, nothing was wrong, so it was all right.

Gower ([01:10:12](#)):

Yeah. Actually, I would think that probably your business might've been even better during the war.

Reuben ([01:10:20](#)):

Oh, it was.

Gower ([01:10:20](#)):

Because more people--

Reuben ([01:10:20](#)):

It was good.

Gower ([01:10:21](#)):

--they couldn't just go get a new car.

Reuben ([01:10:22](#)):

No.

Gower ([01:10:23](#)):

They had to get repairs on the body and so on.

Reuben ([01:10:26](#)):

It was--

Bonna ([01:10:27](#)):

You had a list.

Reuben ([01:10:27](#)):

Oh, sure.

Gower ([01:10:29](#)):

A waiting list all the time? Sure. Yeah. Even though there would be the problems on getting the parts.

Reuben ([01:10:36](#)):

Right.

Gower ([01:10:36](#)):

And so on. Yeah.

Reuben ([01:10:38](#)):

Sure. I recall David, when he was just a little boy. I don't know. How old would he have been then? About 10, 12 years old?

Bonna ([01:10:47](#)):

He was 12 when you bought the new one.

Reuben ([01:10:48](#)):

Oh, then he would have been--

Bonna ([01:10:48](#)):

He was--

Reuben ([01:11:00](#)):

He would have been 10 years old. He'd come down and help me. He was a little boy.

Gower ([01:11:02](#)):

Oh, did all of your sons help you a little bit?

Reuben ([01:11:05](#)):

No. Oh, after we got--

Gower ([01:11:08](#)):

Yes.

Reuben ([01:11:11](#)):

Yes. I had Jim. Let's see. Yes, all of them did. John and David of course, they were with me in the later years.

Gower ([01:11:11](#)):

Sure.

Reuben ([01:11:23](#)):

After they graduated from going through school and so forth. In fact, David managed it after my retirement or when I could have retired. I stayed in, but I just turned it over to Dave to run. I still worked there and everything.

Gower ([01:11:47](#)):

Your son David has this business now, is that right?

Reuben ([01:11:50](#)):

No. We sold it out to the school and made a vocational body school out of it.

Gower ([01:11:55](#)):

Oh, you sold your business out for this?

Reuben ([01:11:57](#)):

Oh, sure.

Gower ([01:11:58](#)):

I see. I didn't realize that.

Bonna ([01:11:58](#)):

Last year.

Reuben ([01:11:58](#)):

Sure.

Gower ([01:12:00](#)):

Right. Sure.

Reuben ([01:12:00](#)):

It got sold to the school.

Bonna ([01:12:03](#)):

Sold it a year ago.

Gower ([01:12:04](#)):

This is to the local school district.

Reuben ([01:12:04](#)):

Right.

Bonna ([01:12:04](#)):

Three schools.

Reuben ([01:12:05](#)):

Well, yeah. It takes in about three school districts.

Bonna ([01:12:11](#)):

Milaca.

Reuben ([01:12:11](#)):

Foley.

Bonna ([01:12:12](#)):

Foley, Isle.

Reuben ([01:12:17](#)):

And Milaca.

Gower ([01:12:17](#)):

But this is not an area vocational school type of thing then. It's run through your local school or school district?

Reuben ([01:12:26](#)):

Right. It's just for high school. It isn't your area educational at the same time.

Gower ([01:12:31](#)):

Right. Beyond the high school years. Right.

Reuben ([01:12:33](#)):

No.

Gower ([01:12:35](#)):

Does it concentrate just on body work or is it all kinds of work to do with automobiles?

Bonna ([01:12:42](#)):

Just body work.

Reuben ([01:12:42](#)):

Our particular set up there was just body work.

Gower ([01:12:42](#)):

Just body work? I see.

Reuben ([01:12:48](#)):

They have their own mechanic department in another place and they also have carpentry set up in another place, but the one at our place was just vocational for body work.

Gower ([01:13:07](#)):

Your son David--

Reuben ([01:13:08](#)):

LeDoux runs it.

Gower ([01:13:10](#)):

Oh, John runs this school?

Reuben ([01:13:13](#)):

Right.

Gower ([01:13:13](#)):

What about David? What's he doing?

Reuben ([01:13:14](#)):

David is working for--

Bonna ([01:13:14](#)):

Gorecki.

Reuben ([01:13:16](#)):

For Gorecki here as a process engineer. That's what they're trained to work for up here.

Gower ([01:13:16](#)):

Gorecki?

Reuben ([01:13:26](#)):

Gorecki.

Gower ([01:13:27](#)):

How do you spell that?

Bonna ([01:13:29](#)):

They manufacture things for--

Reuben ([01:13:31](#)):

Minnesota mining.

Bonna ([01:13:32](#)):

Minnesota mining.

Reuben ([01:13:33](#)):

Is it G-O-R-I-C-K?

Bonna ([01:13:39](#)):

G-O-R-E-C-K-I.

Gower ([01:13:42](#)):

G-O-R-E-C-K-I. Okay. Gorecki Manufacturing.

Reuben ([01:13:49](#)):

He taught in vocational as a part-time teacher in Anoka in the area of vocational.

Gower ([01:13:59](#)):

This was David?

Reuben ([01:14:00](#)):

Yes. He's a good front end alignment man.

Gower ([01:14:00](#)):

Sure.

Reuben ([01:14:06](#)):

Front end and brakes and all that.

Gower ([01:14:08](#)):

Sure.

Reuben ([01:14:09](#)):

LeDoux was a very good body man.

Gower ([01:14:15](#)):

Okay. John, what were you going to ask there?

LeDoux ([01:14:17](#)):

I was just going to ask, what changes if any, have you noticed through the years in the automotive business from the different ends you pursued in Milaca. [inaudible 01:14:26]? What changes have you noticed in the way business is done or the way it works? Just the climate maybe.

Reuben ([01:14:36](#)):

Well, I think there is one thing. During my particular period of coming up, we did a lot of service work for people that you never charged them anything for it. A guy would come in, "My door doesn't work very good." You would go out there and oil it and adjust it up and try it a few times. "How much?" "Oh, that's okay. Forget it." Now you go in there and there's nothing that they can forget and it isn't because they're hoggish or anything about it at all. It's just that they just can't forget it. They've got to charge you for every darn thing they do. There's no way to do it any different.

Gower ([01:15:35](#)):

Why do they have to do that?

Reuben ([01:15:36](#)):

Because our insurance is so terrific and for all the rules and regulations that your shop has got to operate on, that a person can't run a shop and really come out by hiring a bunch of men and paying all the benefits and things that they've got to have nowadays that we didn't have to do before. It's just absolutely terrific. I know because we were in for a long time on the hard end of it and it was much easier to come out with a buck and get some place than it is now, even though the prices are terrific. I just had a new alternator put on my Buick. It cost me over 90 bucks and it was 17 bucks labor.

Gower ([01:16:38](#)):

Yeah. Have you noticed, for example earlier, there were many different kinds of cars?

Reuben ([01:16:46](#)):

Yeah.

Gower ([01:16:46](#)):

Now you've narrowed down to the big three.

Reuben ([01:16:49](#)):

Yes. Right.

Gower ([01:16:50](#)):

That would be a difference.

Reuben ([01:16:52](#)):

We would have cars of every make that you could think of. It was really terrific when you come down to it.

LeDoux ([01:16:58](#)):

Does it make it more interesting as far as doing the body work for it, I would imagine with all the different brands?

Reuben ([01:17:04](#)):

It was so difficult to get the parts.

LeDoux ([01:17:04](#)):

Oh, yeah.

Reuben ([01:17:08](#)):

When I first started in body work, now you can buy anything you want for a car. It can be replaced. The time when I first started and a good many years of it, boy, you saved every piece you took off, like a molding or anything like that, which were probably nailed on and the nail holes were plugged and all that. You saved every scrap of thing that there was. You never knew that you could get another piece for it. You just did it with what you had there.

Gower ([01:17:48](#)):

Do you think there's been quite a change in the way in which the cars are sold now than back in those days or is that about the same as you would recall?

Reuben ([01:18:03](#)):

It seems like there is a big change to me because they will always give me so much above the cost, for instance. That seems to be in a lot of places, a common thing. I can't remember that we ever did anything like that. We probably never got our full price up because you always traded with a guy and the guy could hop from your place to the next guy and so forth down the line and probably make themselves whatever difference he figured was necessary in order to make the deal. I don't think we do that too much anymore. I think it's just the other way around.

Bonna ([01:18:51](#)):

Would you like a cup of coffee?

Reuben ([01:18:53](#)):

Better put it on.

Gower ([01:18:54](#)):

Yeah, that'd be fine. Do you think you've noticed many changes here in Milaca? Let's see, you've lived here for 76 years?

Reuben ([01:19:06](#)):

Getting there.

Gower ([01:19:06](#)):

Right. Have you noticed very many changes, do you think?

Reuben ([01:19:11](#)):

Well, I presume noticing changes, you're growing in with it all the time, so you don't pay any attention.

Gower ([01:19:23](#)):

Sure. Right.

Reuben ([01:19:24](#)):

But I would assume that the changes have been quite great. I think one change that I would say would be very noticeable would be in the governing factor in our communities. I think the reason--

Gower ([01:19:49](#)):

How so? What do you mean by governing factors?

Reuben ([01:19:52](#)):

Like where you had a mayor in a town and then you probably had a city clerk or something who took care of everything. Now it's getting to be where people don't realize that even in the small community, that there are a lot of big wheeling and dealing going on. I mean, we've got our government, you can get funds to do this and funds to do that in your water system, sewer systems, and all those things. The older things are becoming outdated and have to be replaced. It requires better engineering staff and all those things in order to operate these things. I think another thing that you'll find is if there are people, that would be a lot of people in my age bracket, we go back to the dollar and the two dollar an hour deal. Now you're paying 15, 16, 17 dollars an hour. It's hard to pound it into those guys that it costs money to do these things. I would probably be like that too, but I've come up with it, so I know it's just the way that it is. I have of course, a little inside track on this because my son is the mayor of the town here.

Gower ([01:21:26](#)):

Your son is the mayor? John?

Reuben ([01:21:27](#)):

Yeah, John is.

Gower ([01:21:28](#)):

Oh. Was he elected? Is that how it is?

Reuben ([01:21:31](#)):

Yes. Well, the first one mayor resigned and then he was appointed to fill the job and then he was elected.

Gower ([01:21:43](#)):

He was elected. Sure.

Reuben ([01:21:44](#)):

But I've had a little privilege of understanding and seeing some of the things that have had to go on and really, it's getting to be run in the pretty high-class manner.

LeDoux ([01:22:00](#)):

Would you say it was more of an outside governmental influence acting upon the town rather than a self-- Everything [crosstalk 01:22:08]?

Reuben ([01:22:08](#)):

Well, I think there's a lot of outside influence because we have these opportunities. Don't you think so?

LeDoux ([01:22:08](#)):

That's what I was asking.

Reuben ([01:22:08](#)):

Yeah.

LeDoux ([01:22:16](#)):

I'm just trying to clarify what you were saying.

Reuben ([01:22:16](#)):

Right.

Gower ([01:22:20](#)):

But there are many more people working for the town of Milaca?

Reuben ([01:22:23](#)):

There is. We have, I don't know how many police officers we have. We have three or four police officers. We had one guy that prowled the street at night.

LeDoux ([01:22:37](#)):

Has that changed as far as law enforcement over the years that you would recall?

Reuben ([01:22:42](#)):

Right. I would say law enforcement definitely.

Gower ([01:22:46](#)):

When you were young, you might have a person who was a part-time patrolman.

Reuben ([01:22:50](#)):

Right. That went on probably after six o'clock.

Gower ([01:22:54](#)):

Right. Now you've got maybe three or four full-time policemen. Sure. The town has grown somewhat too though, right?

Reuben ([01:23:02](#)):

Oh, sure.

Gower ([01:23:02](#)):

Sure.

LeDoux ([01:23:04](#)):

Has the ethnic composition changed? Has it always remained pretty much the same ethnic group?

Gower ([01:23:11](#)):

Is it pretty much Scandinavian or what?

Reuben ([01:23:15](#)):

No.

Gower ([01:23:16](#)):

It's not?

Reuben ([01:23:16](#)):

No, I would say not because I hear names now that, boy, how'd they get all those letters in there?

Gower ([01:23:23](#)):

Is that then different to when you were growing up?

Reuben ([01:23:23](#)):

Right.

Gower ([01:23:26](#)):

When you were growing up, was it pretty much just Scandinavian?

Reuben ([01:23:29](#)):

Right.

Gower ([01:23:29](#)):

Swedish only or Swedish and Norwegian?

Reuben ([01:23:32](#)):

Well, I would say Swedish and Norwegian.

Gower ([01:23:35](#)):

Swedish and Norwegian.

Reuben ([01:23:36](#)):

It was all mixed there.

Gower ([01:23:37](#)):

Sure.

Reuben ([01:23:38](#)):

But you might have several Johnsons. One they'd probably call Whiskey Johnson.

Gower ([01:23:38](#)):

Whisky Johnson.

Reuben ([01:23:46](#)):

Another one, Nebraska Johnson. Then you would have some other Johnson, like perhaps Railroad Johnson because the guy had worked on the rail. Then you would have Peterson's going down here and Erickson's. There were different ones and they'd always hang these little extra names onto them, which I mentioned.

Gower ([01:24:15](#)):

Yeah, these nicknames.

Reuben ([01:24:16](#)):

Whiskey Johnson. Nelson's, it seemed like they had this Skunk Nelson because they were always trapping skunk.

Gower ([01:24:33](#)):

Oh, I see.

Reuben ([01:24:33](#)):

You could smell them coming into town.

Gower ([01:24:37](#)):

A little odiferous.

Reuben ([01:24:38](#)):

They had all of those things. I think we had perhaps more-- The only nationality I think, it has really turned into a melting pot than it ever has. You're not really associated too much whether

it's Scandinavian and so forth. I think where we would have, you would call a church like Norwegian [inaudible 01:25:08]. Now they give it a different name. They probably knocked the Norwegian out and call it something else. We had the Swedish Baptist church and they would probably throw the Swede out because you might have all the Dutchman down [inaudible 01:25:26] and so forth and the rest of them probably coming in. All these things have changed. I'm sure there's been a vast change in the population and their names. It's just like getting a guy like Gorecki up here, mixed up with the Dahlstrom's and the Johnson's.

Gower ([01:25:48](#)):

Sure.

Reuben ([01:25:51](#)):

My dad, when he came to this, well before he left the old country, he was in the Swedish army and of course they had to serve for seven years. His name originally was Erickson. He and his brother had changed their name because there were so darned many Erickson's in the army. They couldn't hang enough nicknames on the signs. They took Dahlstrom for their name and they carried it to this country here.

Gower ([01:26:25](#)):

I see, sure.

Reuben ([01:26:29](#)):

My wife always works on this genealogy. I don't have anything to trace because all my dad was, was a sharp shooter in the Swedish army. That's as far back as I can go.

Gower ([01:26:44](#)):

Oh, I see.

Bonna ([01:26:44](#)):

What was your mother's father called? Was it a Burgermeister or something? What did he, do you remember?

Gower ([01:26:55](#)):

Your mother's father? Was he a mayor over there in Sweden of a town? Burgermeister?

Reuben ([01:27:01](#)):

Yeah, evidently.

Gower ([01:27:06](#)):

That would be mayor. Sure, sure.

Reuben ([01:27:07](#)):

Probably.

Bonna ([01:27:08](#)):

I just got that name from Ester.

Gower ([01:27:11](#)):

Yeah. Now your son is the mayor here.

Bonna ([01:27:11](#)):

Yeah, he is.

Reuben ([01:27:13](#)):

I wish my sister was here. She could key you in pretty well on a lot of these things.

Gower ([01:27:23](#)):

I was going to ask you, do you have a Swedish Baptist church here?

Reuben ([01:27:27](#)):

Yes, we do.

Gower ([01:27:27](#)):

What used to be Swedish Baptist.

Reuben ([01:27:27](#)):

My dad was one of the original--

Bonna ([01:27:27](#)):

Charter member.

Gower ([01:27:32](#)):

Oh, your dad was a charter member?

Reuben ([01:27:33](#)):

Right.

Gower ([01:27:34](#)):

I see. Because we interviewed the minister down in St. Cloud of the Calvary Baptist church, which is Swedish.

Reuben ([01:27:42](#)):

Oh, yeah.

Gower ([01:27:42](#)):

He told us about when that was started. In fact, we looked at some of their records and so on.

Reuben ([01:27:48](#)):

I can't tell you when it started.

Bonna ([01:27:48](#)):

I think it's in that book of Mr. Nelson's.

Gower ([01:27:48](#)):

Yeah.

Reuben ([01:27:56](#)):

Yeah, it probably is.

Gower ([01:27:57](#)):

The one down there, I think was started in 1890 I believe. Wasn't that it, John? Something like that.

LeDoux ([01:28:02](#)):

I think so.

Reuben ([01:28:03](#)):

Well, see dad came here in 1891. It would have been between that and 1900. I'll bet that this church was started.

Gower ([01:28:12](#)):

Sure. Probably pretty soon--

Bonna ([01:28:13](#)):

Here is something interesting about Milaca.

Gower ([01:28:13](#)):

--after that. Sure.

Bonna ([01:28:17](#)):

We had one of the best butter creameries.

Gower ([01:28:20](#)):

Oh, yeah. I've heard about the creamery thing here.

Reuben ([01:28:22](#)):

Oh, sure.

Bonna ([01:28:23](#)):

Their butter was sold in New York.

Gower ([01:28:26](#)):

This was Farmers Cooperative Creamery.

Bonna ([01:28:30](#)):

This is stuffed butter tubs that were headed for New York there.

Reuben ([01:28:30](#)):

There are mills down here. Do you have anything on that?

Gower ([01:28:37](#)):

Yeah, that's very interesting.

LeDoux ([01:28:40](#)):

Now, there are some I think in the book about the lumber.

Reuben ([01:28:44](#)):

That you could get.

LeDoux ([01:28:48](#)):

Mr. Nelson was talking about a fellow that was involved, I think. Was it Mr. Nelson? I believe that was his name.

Bonna ([01:28:48](#)):

Another Nelson?

Gower ([01:29:01](#)):

He'd been involved in the lumbering?

LeDoux ([01:29:04](#)):

Yeah. His father and him both had been involved.

Gower ([01:29:05](#)):

Yeah. We should try to get somebody who'd been involved in lumbering and also somebody who'd been in the creamery activities.

LeDoux ([01:29:14](#)):

No, we didn't hear of anyone that was involved in the creamery.

Bonna ([01:29:14](#)):

Oscar Axell.

Gower ([01:29:17](#)):

Oscar Axell?

Bonna ([01:29:17](#)):

Is that name right?

Reuben ([01:29:17](#)):

Yeah.

Gower ([01:29:19](#)):

Oh.

Reuben ([01:29:20](#)):

Oscar was a board member on the creamery for many, many years.

Bonna ([01:29:20](#)):

His father was on the creamery board for years.

Gower ([01:29:26](#)):

Oh, we'll have to--

LeDoux ([01:29:27](#)):

How is his name spelled? Oscar?

Gower ([01:29:30](#)):

A-X--

Reuben ([01:29:31](#)):

A-X--

Gower ([01:29:34](#)):

H-E-L?

Reuben ([01:29:35](#)):

No.

Bonna ([01:29:35](#)):

Axell.

Gower ([01:29:37](#)):

Oh. A-X-E-L-L.

Reuben ([01:29:39](#)):

Yeah.

Gower ([01:29:40](#)):

Okay. We'll have to try to--

Bonna ([01:29:41](#)):

He lives on a farm out on--

Gower ([01:29:42](#)):

--jot this down.

Bonna ([01:29:43](#)):

A little ways out of town.

LeDoux ([01:29:45](#)):

Would he be willing to talk?

Reuben ([01:29:47](#)):

Oh, sure. He would be real willing to talk.

LeDoux ([01:29:47](#)):

Excellent.

Reuben ([01:29:47](#)):

A real nice person.

Gower ([01:29:53](#)):

Okay. That would be nice if we could-- You've told us a lot about the automobile business and we could get some of these other things. That would be nice.

Reuben ([01:29:59](#)):

I don't know if I told you anything.

Gower ([01:30:00](#)):

Oh yeah, you did. Yeah. Is there anything else that we wanted? John, do you have any other questions here?

LeDoux ([01:30:06](#)):

No. I don't have anything else.

Gower ([01:30:09](#)):

Okay. Would you want to add anything else here?

Reuben ([01:30:12](#)):

Oh, we'd better shut it off for a minute.

Gower ([01:30:14](#)):

Okay. Mr. Dahlstrom's father's name was Carl John Dahlstrom. That concludes this interview.