

Interview with C. Elmer Anderson

April 5, 1978

Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection

St. Cloud State University Archives

Interviewed by Cal Gower and John LeDoux

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

This is an interview by Calvin Gower and John LeDoux for the Central Missouri Historical Center. Today, we're interviewing C. Elmer Anderson, the former governor of Minnesota. Today is April 5th, 1978.

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

Okay, Mr. Anderson, would you tell us about your family background? Where your parents were born, what your father did for a living, and so on, please? I think we can just leave it there and it'll pick it up, if you--

Anderson: [\(00:40\)](#):

My parents came from a Swedish community in Finland. They were of Swedish descent. Came to Brainerd in I think it was 1897 or 1898. Settled in Brainerd. Raised a family of nine children. I was the seventh of the nine children. I was the youngest son. My father was a carpenter, and a laborer. He worked in the tie plant here in [Peshops 00:01:20]. And he also worked as a boilermaker's helper in the shops. And he died when I was 14. That was in 1926.

Gower: [\(01:30\)](#):

Now, why did they come to Brainerd?

Anderson: [\(01:33\)](#):

They came to Brainerd because there was quite a group of young people at that time that had come to Brainerd. And I guess they followed them here.

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

Group of young people from their home area, you mean?

Anderson: [\(01:49\)](#):

Yes, yes.

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

Oh. They were Swedish, but living in what is now Finland?

Anderson: ([01:54](#)):

Yes. Finland at one time was part of Sweden. This was right across the bay from Sweden. The Swedish name of the town at that time, was the name of Esse, Finland. The big town near where they lived was Jakobstad, which was a town about the size of St. Cloud.

Gower: ([02:19](#)):

Your parents were married in Sweden?

Anderson: ([02:22](#)):

They were married in Brainerd.

Gower: ([02:23](#)):

Oh, they were married in Brainerd?

Anderson: ([02:24](#)):

Yes.

Gower: ([02:25](#)):

After they came over here?

Anderson: ([02:26](#)):

Yes.

Gower: ([02:27](#)):

Sure.

Anderson: ([02:27](#)):

My father had a brother and a sister living in Superior, Wisconsin. My mother had a sister who lived here in Brainerd and my father also had a cousin living here in Brainerd.

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

But they knew each other back there too?

Anderson: ([02:42](#)):

I assume they did. I never did--

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

Oh, I see. Sure. What year were they married then?

Anderson: ([02:51](#)):

I could check back on it, but--

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

No, that's okay. Was it about 1900? Or 18-

Anderson: [\(03:00\)](#):

1890-- About 1897, I think it was.

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

1897.

Anderson: [\(03:00\)](#):

I have their marriage certificate here some place, but I think that's--

Gower: [\(03:04\)](#):

Sure, okay. You were born what day and year?

Anderson: [\(03:08\)](#):

March 16th, 1912.

Gower: [\(03:09\)](#):

1912. And you were the seventh in this family?

Anderson: [\(03:13\)](#):

That's right.

Gower: [\(03:17\)](#):

You have lived here in Brainerd all of your life then, except when you were off to St. Paul, Minnesota?

Anderson: [\(03:23\)](#):

I still maintain a home here. That's several years I was in the banking business in Nashville, Minnesota. But I lived in Grand Rapids, and also I lived in Buffalo Lake, that was a period about four years after me serving as governor.

Gower: [\(03:43\)](#):

Oh, sure. So you grew up here in Brainerd. Went to the public schools there and so on?

Anderson: [\(03:50\)](#):

Yes, I graduated from the Brainerd High School in 1928. I attended the local schools here. I spent three years in the elementary grades here in Brainerd. Also, I spent three years at the St. Mathias Choral School here, just south of Brainerd.

Gower: [\(04:12\)](#):

Was this a--

Anderson: [\(04:13\)](#):

Our folks had a farm too one time. I lived at the farm for a short time, then we moved back to Brainerd.

Gower: [\(04:18\)](#):

Was this St. Mathias, was that a parochial school of Swedish people?

Anderson: [\(04:27\)](#):

No, that was a public school. And it was a predominantly French settlement.

Gower: [\(04:28\)](#):

And it was a public school--

Anderson: [\(04:31\)](#):

There was only about three families there that spoke English. The rest of them spoke French. In that school, most of the youngsters spoke French.

Gower: [\(04:42\)](#):

What was the nationality or ethnic makeup of Brainerd in those years when you were growing up?

Anderson: [\(04:51\)](#):

Well, there were a lot of Swedish people, Finnish, Norwegian, Danish, German, French. Quite a cross section.

Gower: [\(04:59\)](#):

Oh, I see. It wasn't distinctively Scandinavian or German, or something like this?

Anderson: [\(05:06\)](#):

No, no, no. It was predominantly, I imagine most of the church were predominantly Lutheran, but there was a large Catholic group here too.

Gower: [\(05:14\)](#):

Are those people mostly German Catholics? Such as in St. Cloud?

Anderson: [\(05:20\)](#):

No. There was German and Polish, French. Irish, a lot of Irish.

Gower: [\(05:26\)](#):

Oh. So it was many different groups represented there?

Anderson: [\(05:33\)](#):

Definitely. Very much so, yes.

Gower: [\(05:42\)](#):

Oh, sure. How big was Brainerd back then, in those years when you were a young boy?

Anderson: [\(05:47\)](#):

It was about 10,000. Population of Brainerd hasn't varied too much. It's the surrounding area that's grown.

Gower: [\(05:58\)](#):

Oh, I see.

Anderson: [\(05:58\)](#):

That part of the area has grown.

Gower: [\(05:59\)](#):

Okay. Then what did you do after you graduated from high school?

Anderson: [\(06:03\)](#):

Well, I started to go to the University of Minnesota. I wanted to take up medicine. But that was in 1929 and the Depression came along and I had to come back home and go to work. I couldn't see my way clear to go to school. Eventually I couldn't go to school.

Gower: [\(06:23\)](#):

Sure. What did you do then when you came back to Brainerd?

Anderson: [\(06:27\)](#):

I returned and started working again for a man I worked for, for some time. A magazine wholesaler, newspaper distribution for northern Minnesota and central Minnesota.

Gower: [\(06:41\)](#):

You'd worked for him before you graduated from high school?

Anderson: [\(06:44\)](#):

Yes. I started out as a newspaper carrier.

Gower: [\(06:46\)](#):

I see.

Anderson: [\(06:47\)](#):

And then I worked into the business.

LeDoux: [\(06:50\)](#):

What type of duties did you have in this business?

Anderson: [\(06:53\)](#):

Well, I eventually became manager. And upon his death, I became the owner.

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

This is throughout northern Minnesota?

Anderson: [\(07:01\)](#):

Northern and central Minnesota, yes.

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

When was this that you became the owner?

Anderson: [\(07:07\)](#):

He died in December 1934, so it'd be 1935.

Gower: [\(07:14\)](#):

When did you get started in politics?

Anderson: [\(07:17\)](#):

That was in 1937. Well, no, 1936, I think it was when I became chairman of the Young Republicans here in Crow Wing County.

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

That's how you started out?

Anderson: [\(07:29\)](#):

That's right.

Gower: [\(07:29\)](#):

As the chairman of the Young Republicans?

Anderson: [\(07:32\)](#):

I became interested and Harold Stassen was state chairman of the Republican Party at that time, or Young Republicans. George Etzell was the 6th District chairman and I started working with them.

Gower: (07:46):

How did George Etzell spell his name?

Anderson: (07:49):

E-T-Z-E-L-L.

Gower: (07:50):

Okay.

Anderson: (07:52):

He's from Clarissa. He was National Republican [inaudible 00:07:55] many years. When I was governor, he was National Committee [inaudible 00:08:00].

Gower: (08:02):

Had you been interested in politics before that?

Anderson: (08:05):

Well, guess I was interested. I followed it, but I just became interested.

Gower: (08:09):

Was your family, was your father politically active?

Anderson: (08:12):

No, no.

Gower: (08:13):

So there hadn't been anything in the background like that?

Anderson: (08:16):

No, just my own.

Gower: (08:17):

Yeah, your own interest sparked there in the middle of the 1930s. Okay then. What was the next step there in your political career then?

Anderson: (08:32):

Well then, in 1938, I filed for Lieutenant Governor. And that was when we had the open primaries. There was three people that filed and I was successful with the nomination.

Gower: (08:48):

Who were the other people that were running? Do you recall?

Anderson: ([08:53](#)):

Fellow by the name of George Johnson and Russ Switzer.

Gower: ([08:59](#)):

You got the nomination though?

Anderson: ([09:03](#)):

Yes.

Gower: ([09:03](#)):

On the Republican ticket. And Stassen-

Anderson: ([09:05](#)):

But I had to wait for the vote of the candidacy board for the official votes.

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

Oh, it was a close election?

Anderson: ([09:12](#)):

It was only 1,000 votes out of 200-300,000. I've forgotten the figure.

Gower: ([09:20](#)):

Oh, I see, sure. And Harold Stassen was the gubernatorial candidate then?

Anderson: ([09:26](#)):

He was 31. I was 26.

Gower: ([09:31](#)):

Yeah. Right.

Anderson: ([09:32](#)):

And Lawrence Small was elected Speaker of the House in 1938, '39 session, and he was 28.

Gower: ([09:40](#)):

And he was from St. Cloud?

Anderson: ([09:41](#)):

That's right.

Gower: [\(09:44\)](#):

Did you know Stassen before? Well, you knew him when you became chairman of the Young Republicans group there?

Anderson: [\(09:51\)](#):

Yes. I got acquainted with him then.

Gower: [\(09:52\)](#):

That's when you became a political party.

Anderson: [\(09:54\)](#):

He was the Dakota County attorney at the time.

Gower: [\(09:56\)](#):

You hadn't known him before that though?

Anderson: [\(09:58\)](#):

No.

Gower: [\(10:02\)](#):

Were you involved very much in his campaign then in 1938?

Anderson: [\(10:07\)](#):

Oh, yes. The Young Republicans were very active in that campaign. That's when Elmer Benson was governor and there was quite an appeal on the state politics. He had succeeded Floyd Olsen, and there was a mood for a change I guess. The Young Republicans were interested in young people, were interested in changing the political system.

LeDoux: [\(10:31\)](#):

What were some of the issues of that campaign as you recall?

Anderson: [\(10:39\)](#):

Oh, political patronage and--

LeDoux: [\(10:43\)](#):

Was Benson pretty much the issue?

Anderson: [\(10:47\)](#):

Well, Benson was. He was pretty radical at the time. Sometimes some of the things he stood for now were adopted. But he was pretty radical at the time.

Gower: ([10:58](#)):

Was--

Anderson: ([11:01](#)):

Mainly the political system, political path was set up and people just said they had enough and wanted a change. Because they had been in power for some time, and the pendulum swung the other way.

Gower: ([11:15](#)):

Now was this campaign a campaign that involved, well, let's see how I can word this. Was there quite an independent element involved in here as well as the regular Republican party people there, working for Stassen?

Anderson: ([11:37](#)):

Yes, I think independent group were behind Stassen. He had an all-party committee, supported him. The conservative end of the party were backing Martin Nelson, who'd been an omni two years before that. Later on, I appointed him to the Supreme Court.

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

Oh. The reason I brought, you know we've interviewed Fred Hughes.

Anderson: ([12:04](#)):

Yes.

Gower: ([12:04](#)):

And that was the impression I got from him, that there was quite a bit of activity that was sort of outside of the regular channel of the party here.

Anderson: ([12:14](#)):

And most of that group were supporting Harold Stassen. And the other group--

Gower: ([12:17](#)):

Yes, that's what I meant.

Anderson: ([12:21](#)):

That's right. But Fred Hughes was part of it when I became active. He was on the young Republican group too.

Gower: ([12:24](#)):

Yeah, right. Okay, so then you became Lieutenant Governor in 1930...

Anderson: ([12:29](#)):

Back in '38, it became '39.

Gower: ([12:32](#)):

Took over in 1939, okay. And you had never been in any public office before that?

Anderson: ([12:40](#)):

No, I had never presided over a meeting. I had to preside over the state's--

Gower: ([12:44](#)):

Yeah, how did that go with you there? Did you pick up that pretty quickly and so on?

Anderson: ([12:50](#)):

Yes, I studied the rules. I had the advice and support of the leaders. I listened to them until I caught on. Very easy.

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

And the Republicans controlled both Houses of the Legislature?

Anderson: ([13:04](#)):

Well, it was conservatives. It was non-partisan at the time, but--

Gower: ([13:04](#)):

Liberals.

Anderson: ([13:04](#)):

--they weren't considered Republicans.

Gower: ([13:04](#)):

No.

Anderson: ([13:04](#)):

But that--

Gower: ([13:11](#)):

It was a conservative group though.

Anderson: ([13:12](#)):

That's right.

Gower: (13:12):

Yeah. Group called conservatives.

Anderson: (13:15):

Yeah.

Gower: (13:16):

Okay, and then you ran for office again in 1940, for Lieutenant Governor?

Anderson: (13:23):

Yes, and I was reelected.

Gower: (13:26):

And then in 1942 you did not run again?

Anderson: (13:29):

I ran but Harold Stassen, Harold announced he was going to resign, accept a commission in the Navy and he supported Ed Thye to run for Lieutenant Governor. We had quite a bitter battle but Thye's won.

Gower: (13:46):

This was in the primary then?

Anderson: (13:48):

Yes.

Gower: (13:49):

Oh, I see. Was this a political matter here that brought about Thye's being pushed by Stassen? Was there a difference between you and Stassen politically somewhat?

Anderson: (14:10):

Not so much, but he felt, I don't know what he felt but anyway [inaudible 00:14:15] Ed Thye.

Gower: (14:17):

Was Thye older than you?

Anderson: (14:18):

Yes, considerably older, yes. He was about 50 I think at the time.

Gower: (14:22):

It might have been an age factor, do you think?

Anderson: ([14:25](#)):

Could have been, yes, because I was only 30 at the time.

Gower: ([14:31](#)):

Yeah. And was Thye from Dakota County also?

Anderson: ([14:34](#)):

Yes. He was a farmer on Dakota County. He was Commissioner of Agriculture at the time.

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

So they'd known each other maybe somewhat before that?

Anderson: ([14:41](#)):

Oh, yes. Because they'd worked together in Dakota County politics.

Gower: ([14:48](#)):

So then you were out of politics for a bit there?

Anderson: ([14:53](#)):

Two years.

Gower: ([14:54](#)):

Because you'd been--

Anderson: ([14:56](#)):

Ed Thye ran for Governor. I ran again for Lieutenant Governor and I was elected. So I served under Thye as Lieutenant Governor.

Gower: ([15:07](#)):

Sure. This was beginning in 1945 that you took over?

Anderson: ([15:13](#)):

Yeah, election was '44.

Gower: ([15:13](#)):

Election was '44. Okay. And then you were Lieutenant Governor for the rest of the time until 19--
- Were you elected in governor in 1952, is that it?

Anderson: ([15:28](#)):

See, Ed Thye ran for office in '44 with [inaudible 00:15:32], '44. And then '46, he ran for the United States Senate.

Gower: [\(15:45\)](#):
United States Senate.

Anderson: [\(15:46\)](#):
Against Henrik Shipstead. He was elected.

Gower: [\(15:49\)](#):
In 1946?

Anderson: [\(15:51\)](#):
Yes. So in 1948, get my dates right now--

Gower: [\(16:04\)](#):
When was the Youngdahl elected for the first time?

Anderson: [\(16:28\)](#):
He was first elected in 1946.

Gower: [\(16:29\)](#):
Youngdahl?

Anderson: [\(16:30\)](#):
Yes.

Gower: [\(16:31\)](#):
Because Thye had decided to run for the Senate.

Anderson: [\(16:34\)](#):
That's right.

Gower: [\(16:37\)](#):
Against Shipstead then, yeah.

Anderson: [\(16:39\)](#):
And then I still continued to run for Lieutenant Governor under Youngdahl. He was elected in '46 and '48 and '50. And then in September 27th, 1951 he resigned to become a federal judge in Washington and then I became governor.

Gower: [\(16:56\)](#):
You took over as Governor.

Anderson: ([16:57](#)):

That's right.

Gower: ([16:57](#)):

Sure. And then, you were elected as governor in 1952?

Anderson: ([17:02](#)):

That's right.

Gower: ([17:07](#)):

What did you think were some of the most important matters that you were concerned with during those years in politics when you were Lieutenant Governor? Anything that sticks out in your mind there?

Anderson: ([17:26](#)):

Well, the main issues at the time it was the government or mental health situation, improving our institutions. But as I look back, the things we-- Kind of quiet at that time as compared to today, politics or administration.

Gower: ([17:48](#)):

Yeah.

Anderson: ([17:55](#)):

Budget wasn't as great as it is today.

Gower: ([17:58](#)):

Did the conservatives control the Legislature all the time pretty much [inaudible 00:18:04]?

Anderson: ([18:04](#)):

Yes, yes, they do.

Gower: ([18:07](#)):

So there would be quite a bit of cooperation between the governor and the legislature?

Anderson: ([18:13](#)):

There was, but we had our problems. I mean, I, Govenors Thye, Youngdahl, and Stassen. I think we were all more liberal as far as my manners were concerned, and a lot more program than conservative Legislature wanted to give us, so our funds dropped [inaudible 00:18:33].

Gower: ([18:35](#)):

What year--

Anderson: ([18:36](#)):

By and large, we got along pretty good.

Gower: ([18:38](#)):

Now when you ran for Governor in 1952, did you have some opposition? Was it in a primary situation again then that you had to get the nomination?

Anderson: ([18:51](#)):

1952, yes. Staff King, a long-time auditor--

Gower: ([18:55](#)):

Oh.

Anderson: ([18:56](#)):

Ran against me.

Gower: ([18:57](#)):

Oh, really?

Anderson: ([19:00](#)):

But in primaries I carried every county that one. It was Hubbard County.

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

Oh.

Anderson: ([19:06](#)):

[inaudible 00:19:06].

Gower: ([19:06](#)):

Every county in the state except one?

Anderson: ([19:08](#)):

Staff King was one of our top vote getters until that time.

Gower: ([19:13](#)):

Who was your opposition in the general election?

Anderson: ([19:17](#)):

1952?

Gower: [\(19:17\)](#):

Yeah.

Anderson: [\(19:18\)](#):

Orville Freeman.

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

Orville Freeman, okay. Now Freeman had just sort of come into the political arena, what, in the late 1940s there?

Anderson: [\(19:30\)](#):

Yes.

Gower: [\(19:31\)](#):

He was a young Democratic Farmer Labor--

Anderson: [\(19:33\)](#):

He was chairman-

Gower: [\(19:34\)](#):

--person-

Anderson: [\(19:34\)](#):

--of the DFL party at the town.

Gower: [\(19:37\)](#):

Was he holding any office at the time that you ran?

Anderson: [\(19:41\)](#):

No, he was just a party worker.

Gower: [\(19:44\)](#):

How did that election go there in 1952?

Anderson: [\(19:48\)](#):

I won by a landslide. I received the largest votes, that stood up for about 25 years.

Gower: [\(19:57\)](#):

Oh. In 1952? Now this was tied in with Eisenhower's running for president that year and so on too?

Anderson: ([20:08](#)):

Yes. Eisenhower ran at that time, although I received just a few more votes than Eisenhower, about 1000 votes than Eisenhower received.

Gower: ([20:16](#)):

During the [inaudible 00:20:17]?

Anderson: ([20:17](#)):

Yes.

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

You think that your support was because you'd been in the office for all those years and you were pretty well known throughout Minnesota and so on there? How would you account for that landslide there, victory?

Anderson: ([20:37](#)):

Well, I hope to think people thought I was doing a good job.

Gower: ([20:41](#)):

Sure.

Anderson: ([20:41](#)):

The history of Minnesota politics is that Lieutenant Governors will succeed at the governorship. At the time they run for reelection, they're always reelected.

Gower: ([20:55](#)):

Oh, is that right? That's happened every time?

Anderson: ([20:58](#)):

Yes.

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

Oh, so Perpich supposedly should have a pretty good chance, historically?

Anderson: ([21:05](#)):

Historically, yes.

Gower: ([21:11](#)):

Oh, I see. I didn't realize that. Then when you were Governor, that was for the one term, right?

Anderson: ([21:17](#)):

I served an unexpired term of--

Gower: [\(21:19\)](#):

Yeah, that's right, sure.

Anderson: [\(21:20\)](#):

Which was almost two years.

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

And then elected and brought [crosstalk 00:21:23]-

Anderson: [\(21:23\)](#):

In two years, yes.

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

Were there any real significant things, issues and so on, that stood out in your mind from those years? Is it a fairly--

Anderson: [\(21:41\)](#):

Well, you mean--

Gower: [\(21:42\)](#):

Quiet time?

Anderson: [\(21:42\)](#):

--during the Eisenhower years, state government or federal government were operating on a pretty, shall we say, smooth. There wasn't the controversy that there was today. So aside of financial matters and reduction of budget, budget is giving you a lot of money that the Governor or President wanted. Things were running on pretty smoothly.

LeDoux: [\(22:22\)](#):

I had just one question here concerning your term as governor. During those years there was quite an emphasis on loyalty oaths, on checking on personnel in government. As governor, did you get any pressure, or you felt like you were under the obligation to put more scrutiny on state employees?

Anderson: [\(22:49\)](#):

No, we didn't have that here in Minnesota.

LeDoux: [\(22:51\)](#):

There's no mood of that at all?

Anderson: [\(22:54\)](#):

No, no, no.

Gower: ([22:58](#)):

In the election there of 1938, one of the charges against Benson was that he was linked to communists, is that right?+

Anderson: ([23:15](#)):

That was, use the term broadly I guess, that could be said--

Gower: ([23:20](#)):

Yeah, that was the charge that was made anyway. But when you get into the 1950s, this was not an issue in Minnesota?

Anderson: ([23:28](#)):

No, I think everything was elaborated on, out of proportion than it really was.

Gower: ([23:32](#)):

Sure. This was more of a national issue and maybe it some states it might have been played out more but not here in Minnesota.

Anderson: ([23:48](#)):

Especially in Wisconsin it was, yes.

Gower: ([23:49](#)):

Yeah, right, sure. Oh, incidentally it seems to me that, Fred Hughes, Mr. Fred Hughes, seems to me that I recall he was saying that there was a certain individual, can't remember the name of that person now, who Hughes thought was a very likely person to be candidate for governor, but this person was Jewish. And Mr. Hughes felt that there was a certain amount of anti-Semitism in Minnesota. This was in the last part of, I guess, the early 1940s. And therefore, this man was not given the support. Does that ring any bell with you at all?

Anderson: ([24:42](#)):

Doesn't ring any bell, no.

Gower: ([24:46](#)):

Oh, I see. I see. Now then, in 1954 you ran against Orville Freeman for governor again. Is that--

Anderson: ([24:53](#)):

That's right, yes.

Gower: ([24:59](#)):

Okay This time, Freeman won the election, is that right?

Anderson: ([25:01](#)):

Yes.

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

In 1954. How do you account for that turnabout there?

Anderson: [\(25:09\)](#):

Well, I think there was a Democratic trend in this whole area, throughout the country, not only Minnesota but North and South Dakota. Just one of those things that happen every so often. That happened.

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

Was your campaign any different in 1954 than it had been in '52 or [inaudible 00:25:33]?

Anderson: [\(25:35\)](#):

Oh, I don't think it's too much different, but--

Gower: [\(25:44\)](#):

What about the DFL campaign? Was it any different in '54 than the two years before?

Anderson: [\(25:52\)](#):

Oh, yes. They made a lot of political charges which were untrue but-- Miles Lord was my Attorney General. He made a lot of charges, so forth and so on, made them sound worse than they were.

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

What was the margin there of victory for Freeman?

Anderson: [\(26:23\)](#):

I've forgotten the figures, but it wasn't, it was just a few percentage points.

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

Oh, it was quite close then?

Anderson: [\(26:27\)](#):

Yes, yes.

Gower: [\(26:28\)](#):

Compared to the two years before there.

Anderson: [\(26:31\)](#):

But there wasn't the turnout of voters at that time there was the time before.

Gower: [\(26:36\)](#):

Oh, is that right?

Anderson: ([26:37](#)):

Yes.

Gower: ([26:38](#)):

The number of voters was down quite a bit?

Anderson: ([26:40](#)):

Yes.

Gower: ([26:41](#)):

Oh, gosh.

LeDoux: ([26:42](#)):

How would you characterize that campaign against Freeman as you remember it? You mentioned there were political charges that were leveled against your administration. How would you characterize their campaign? Was it one of leveling charges which you said were largely unfounded? Or were there certain issues that were very prominent that took precedence?

Anderson: ([27:05](#)):

No, it was a typical campaign of those out against those are in, that's just part of the game. Make a lot of statements and allege certain things.

Gower: ([27:17](#)):

How did you feel about that campaign? Did you feel a little bit bitter about the way the campaign was carried on by the opposition?

Anderson: ([27:31](#)):

Well, I've been in politics for quite a while and this goes with the game. But, no, I didn't feel bitter. It was kind of hard to take the defeat.

Gower: ([27:42](#)):

Yeah, that's [inaudible 00:27:44].

Anderson: ([27:44](#)):

But after my defeat, I cooperated with Freeman. I appointed his man. He suggested Hart, after I own this commission of administration, right, immediately after I was defeated so he could get an early start on running the state government.

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

I had one other question regarding campaigning. From your experiences running as Lieutenant Governor and Governor, what contrast would you draw to campaigning then and campaigning in the '70s, from what you've observed?

Anderson: [\(28:21\)](#):

Well, then it was pretty much of each man was on his own, both parties. You ran on your own. There was a question of-- Republicans didn't endorse anybody. Every person was on his own, up to him to get to the [inaudible 00:28:38], volunteer committee and get the votes.

Anderson: [\(28:41\)](#):

Now it's pretty much a party structure there. Endorse candidates at the precinct which at the county and state level. Whoever gets the endorsement that's their candidate. In those days it was the open primary on both parties.

LeDoux: [\(28:56\)](#):

Do you see the media as being one of the factors in modern day campaigning?

Anderson: [\(29:05\)](#):

Oh, definitely. See, when I ran for governor in '54 that's when the TV would just be coming in. Unless you came over on TV, it went and had a great effect on you. And I think that affected the campaign a lot too.

LeDoux: [\(29:23\)](#):

Did you make any TV spots?

Anderson: [\(29:25\)](#):

I maybe made quite a few. But, of course, Freeman, his war record. Lord, they put on a very effective TV campaign. I think that had a lot to do with it. We hadn't become familiar with the technique of campaigning on television. It was entirely different. A candidate nowadays has to come over to the TV and have that charisma as it comes over on TV. It does sway a lot of voters.

Gower: [\(30:02\)](#):

Did you like campaigning?

Anderson: [\(30:07\)](#):

Well, I like to get around, yes. I wasn't the typical political orator, never claimed to be. And that's probably one of the reasons perhaps we defeated too.

Gower: [\(30:26\)](#):

We've interviewed mostly it's been legislators.

Anderson: [\(30:29\)](#):

Oh, I see.

Gower: (30:30):

But we've run into some people who said they just don't like campaigning at all. That's the worst part of it for them.

Anderson: (30:35):

No, it's not easy.

Gower: (30:39):

Yeah, that's what they said. It's difficult. Whereas then we've run into others who said they really enjoyed that, getting around and so on.

Anderson: (30:47):

Well, I used to enjoy going around and meeting with people, the personal contact rather than the necessary radio, TV persons you had to meet. That's rather difficult for someone who's isn't a glib speaker.

Gower: (31:02):

Sure, right.

LeDoux: (31:03):

You think it's becoming a little bit more depersonalized as far as you're not making as much personal contact, you're doing it through a medium or something?

Anderson: (31:09):

Yeah, that's right. Nowadays you see the candidates going by airplane from one TV station to another and making a press conference. The images comes over TV, that's very important today.

Gower: (31:25):

John, how's that tape doing there?

LeDoux: (31:30):

Maybe one more question, then we should switch it over.

Gower: (31:36):

Okay. Have you run for political office other than mayor of Brainerd since 19[crosstalk 00:31:42].

Anderson: (31:41):

Well, then when I came back after 1955, then I think it was either '56 or '57-- It was '58 I lived at Nisswa at the time and the people of Nisswa wrote me in as mayor, and I served two terms there as Mayor of Nisswa.

Gower: (32:04):

Sure. But you did not run for a state-run office again?

Anderson: (32:12):

Oh, yes. Yes. Got to get my dates straight here. '56 I ran for Secretary of State, against Joe [inaudible 00:32:27].

LeDoux: (32:27):

This tape will be continued on the other side.

Anderson: (32:34):

[inaudible 00:32:34].

Gower: (32:33):

You ran for Secretary of State in 1950--

Anderson: (32:36):

1956.

Gower: (32:38):

'56 against Joe Donovan?

Anderson: (32:39):

Yes.

Gower: (32:40):

Donovan won the election.

Anderson: (32:42):

Yes. He was running for reelection. He had been elected in 1954 along with Freeman.

Gower: (32:50):

Did you play any part in any of these campaigns later, like with Elmer Anderson or Harold LeVander or any of those Republican [crosstalk 00:33:03].

Anderson: (33:03):

Well, very little. I attended party functions and everything, but I haven't been too active in party politics since then.

Gower: (33:10):

Oh, you haven't been? But you were the Mayor of Nisswa, you said, for-

Anderson: (33:18):

For two terms.

Gower: (33:19):

--two terms. And then, now you live here in Brainerd now, is that it?

Anderson: (33:23):

See, then I sold our place at the lake and went into the banking business and was gone for this other area for four years. And then I come back and moved to Brainerd.

Gower: (33:27):

This was?

Anderson: (33:27):

In 1969.

Gower: (33:28):

1969. And then, when did you start in as Mayor of Brainerd.

Anderson: (33:42):

That was two years ago, [inaudible 00:33:46]. I was just elected last December to my second term.

Gower: (33:50):

Oh, I see. How did you get started as being involved in becoming Mayor of Brainerd? Did some people come and talk to you and ask you to run for it, and so on?

Anderson: (34:02):

Well, several people suggested it to me and I felt pretty, I don't know if confident, but I think a lot of them live in Brainerd. My folks came here, they were good parents, in 1897. I felt this community and done a lot for me, and I'd like to serve as the mayor.

Gower: (34:33):

Did you have opposition in those races, both--

Anderson: (34:35):

The first one, one of the alderman had announced that he was going to run before he knew that I was going to run. He continued in the race but I defeated him quite handily.

Gower: (34:48):

And then you had no opposition in December?

Anderson: [\(34:51\)](#):

No, nobody filed against me, no.

Gower: [\(34:56\)](#):

Now you've had these at least one very controversial here, this fluoridation issue. Were you involved in this before you--

Anderson: [\(35:08\)](#):

No, I wasn't.

Gower: [\(35:09\)](#):

--came here?

Anderson: [\(35:09\)](#):

No, I wasn't before but that has been a burning issue here for the last 20, 25 years.

Gower: [\(35:18\)](#):

Yeah, right.

Anderson: [\(35:19\)](#):

And it's a question of home rule. I mean, people felt they should have that title to the option. They voted several times not to have it, and just got to be an issue in there. Not [inaudible 00:35:29] arguing one of the mayors of fluoride one way or the other, but they just felt that the community should be entitled to their preference. So they voted against it; they should be entitled to not have it.

Gower: [\(35:39\)](#):

How does that stand right now? What's the situation now?

Anderson: [\(35:41\)](#):

Well, the last session, not this session but a year ago, the closing days of the session there, they authorized a commission to be appointed to study the effects of fluoridation in water. The Governor Perpich just appointed a commission to study that and report back at the next session of the Legislature. In the meantime, Brainerd didn't have to put fluoride in the water.

Gower: [\(36:10\)](#):

Before that, to mention that a bill was passed setting up the commission. Then there had been some court rulings that said Brainerd would have to start at a certain time, was that it?

Anderson: [\(36:20\)](#):

That's right.

Gower: [\(36:23\)](#):

But the deadline had not been reached?

Anderson: [\(36:23\)](#):

No.

Gower: [\(36:27\)](#):

So it's still Brainerd has not had to get any fluoridation at any time then?

Anderson: [\(36:34\)](#):

No, they thought legally they would use every means they could legally to stop them and go to the courts. And so far, we've been successful.

Gower: [\(36:43\)](#):

Is there a deadline on this commission for its report?

Anderson: [\(36:43\)](#):

There's a report, I think, in March of next year, I think, in the session of the legislature.

Gower: [\(36:45\)](#):

March 1979?

Anderson: [\(36:46\)](#):

Yeah.

Gower: [\(36:46\)](#):

Was that bill the work of Borden and Samuelson?

Anderson: [\(36:46\)](#):

Samuelson. Just through their efforts that this commission is set up. They deserve all the credit for it. I'm sure they might have passed because of their friendships and whatnot, with their fellow legislators.

Gower: [\(37:20\)](#):

Yeah, right. Okay, then, what was this we read in the newspapers about some nightclub here or something? I don't know whether that was all distorted in the newspaper account. You vetoed some bill, was that it?

Anderson: [\(37:39\)](#):

Anti-nudity ordinance, which was patterned after the St. Paul ordinance, which is supposed to prohibit, and it's very explicit. And the Brand Dispatch announced that they would not publish it.

Brainerd Dispatch is our legal newspaper and they would not publish the ordinance if it were passed. And I said that I would not lend my name to it under those circumstances.

Gower: [\(38:01\)](#):

To not be published, you mean?

Anderson: [\(38:04\)](#):

That's right, yes.

Gower: [\(38:04\)](#):

Oh, I see.

Anderson: [\(38:06\)](#):

And then I also said that it would create more problems than it would solve because that's what's happening in St. Paul, and I thought that Brainerd should wait and see how St. Paul ordinance would work out. It would create more problems than it would solve, weekly in [inaudible 00:38:34] one battle after another.

Gower: [\(38:35\)](#):

Now was that passed by the City Council of Brainerd then?

Anderson: [\(38:37\)](#):

It was passed by the City Council of Brainerd. I vetoed it, and they sustained my veto.

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

Oh, they sustained your veto.

Anderson: [\(38:46\)](#):

And we have seven members of the consular and they needed five votes out of the seven. But only got to four on the seven. Three of them, three voted to sustain me.

Gower: [\(38:54\)](#):

Oh, yeah. Did you get very much criticism because of this stand?

Anderson: [\(39:07\)](#):

Oh, yes. I got criticism from a large, militant group. But by and large, I think the system's proven my action.

Gower: [\(39:21\)](#):

Was this bill, is that what you call it, a bill?

Anderson: [\(39:24\)](#):

Ordinance.

Gower: (39:25):

Ordinance, was this ordinance brought about by cause of this militant group do you think primarily?

Anderson: (39:33):

Yeah, it's a certain militant group in town.

Gower: (39:36):

But you feel that the majority of people supported you on that probably?

Anderson: (39:46):

On the basis that I vetoed it, yes. Because as I said, it would create more problems than it would solve. Although I don't approve of the place.

Gower: (40:02):

Is that place right in Brainerd?

Anderson: (40:04):

It's right down the street, about a block from here.

Gower: (40:06):

Oh, so it's right in downtown?

Anderson: (40:12):

It's been operating now for 10, 15 years.

Gower: (40:14):

Oh, I didn't know that.

Anderson: (40:14):

And the place has been operating and you decide to put it out of business you better be standing on pretty firm legal ground. And that's [inaudible 00:40:20] what point?

Gower: (40:20):

Was it operating in the same way all through that period?

Anderson: (40:23):

Yes.

Gower: (40:25):

Oh, I see. I didn't realize that. I thought it had just started there recently. You have a two-year term as Mayor, is that it?

Anderson: [\(40:35\)](#):

Two-year term, yes.

Gower: [\(40:39\)](#):

You might be interested in running again then, two years from now?

Anderson: [\(40:44\)](#):

Well, we'll look at that two years from now.

Gower: [\(40:45\)](#):

John, what else do you have? Anything else there?

LeDoux: [\(40:48\)](#):

Backtracking, I don't believe we asked about when you were married.

Gower: [\(40:53\)](#):

No, we didn't ask that at all.

LeDoux: [\(40:54\)](#):

Okay, when were you married? How did you meet your wife, first of all?

Anderson: [\(40:58\)](#):

Well, I was married in 1937, 41 years ago, April-- Well, we'll be celebrating our 41st anniversary April 10th. Well, she was a girl that I met here in Brainerd. She worked in Brainerd and then later on she worked for me for a while too. Got acquainted in that way.

Gower: [\(41:27\)](#):

You have how many children?

Anderson: [\(41:28\)](#):

We have three children.

Gower: [\(41:29\)](#):

Three children--

Anderson: [\(41:32\)](#):

Two girls and son.

Gower: [\(41:40\)](#):

Do you think there have been any big changes in Brainerd throughout the years that you've been here?

Anderson: [\(41:49\)](#):

Well, maybe it's a coincidence but I'm very pleased that since I've been mayor it's not entirely through my efforts, but my neighbors, a lot of people in political scene, Brainerd has made great strides in the last few years.

Anderson: [\(42:09\)](#):

We've remodeled our downtown area. Put a few trees in downtown and intend to improve the downtown area with new sidewalks and sewers and so forth. New lighting to make it much more attractive.

Anderson: [\(42:31\)](#):

Just now, just the other day we let a contract for a new Laurel Street bridge which has been in existence since 1898, which have a great influence on Brainerd. \$200 bridge.

Anderson: [\(42:47\)](#):

And we've also just last year, we were successful in obtaining a new housing unit for the elderly, 143 units on the other end of the Laurel Street Bridge.

Gower: [\(43:04\)](#):

How do you spell that name, Laurel.

Anderson: [\(43:07\)](#):

Laurel.

Gower: [\(43:07\)](#):

Laurel? L-A-U-R-E-L?

Anderson: [\(43:10\)](#):

Yeah, that's the main street of Brainerd and it's been the historic street in Brainerd for years, ever since Brainerd was established.

Anderson: [\(43:18\)](#):

And then, April 13th we're going to let bids for a joint Crow Wing County and City of Brainerd Public Safety building which [inaudible 00:43:27] in jail, which will amount to-- It's a building about, we hope, the contracts will be let for around \$2 million. I mean, that's the estimated costs.

Anderson: [\(43:40\)](#):

And then, if that's successful, that's built, which I assume it would be, the old jail will be made a historical society museum. So that's something we've wanted.

Anderson: ([44:02](#)):

Then there's [inaudible 00:44:02] that's in the mill. I'm sure it's going to materialize. That's a multi-million dollar, another shopping center right on the edge of Baxter-Brainerd, about a third of it being Brainerd and two-thirds in Baxter.

Anderson: ([44:17](#)):

But this area is growing and the state demographer says it's the fastest growing area in this part of the state. A lot of people are coming up to Brainerd to retire. You can go around the lakes, you can see the beautiful homes that are being built. So everything's on the upswing as far as Brainerd's concerned.

Anderson: ([44:38](#)):

For years, we had trouble getting new doctors here. Now our medical center, it's developing. We've got quite a number of specialists here. And so Brainerd has been designated by the federal government as a regional medical center.

Anderson: ([44:55](#)):

So everything looks good for the future of Brainerd. We have a new school and a good school system, beautiful athletic field. People are coming to this area, I believe, because you get a young person coming up here, they're interested in schools. Well, we have fine school systems. We have a community college and vocational school.

Anderson: ([45:18](#)):

And if you're older and you want to come up here to retire, we've got all our lakes and lake area, and all the hobbies that you might have, any hobbies you might want to, we have fishing, golf, anything.

Anderson: ([45:36](#)):

And if you're older and you're looking for a home to become established in a certain area, you want to know what the medical facilities are. Certainly we're getting some of the best in the state.

Anderson: ([45:49](#)):

So I'm very optimistic. As I've often said, I'm very [inaudible 00:45:52] at the growth of this area. Certainly it's a pleasure for me to service a mayor at this time. And this growth is quite [inaudible 00:46:01]. Like I reported to Council the other day, I think this night next year and the year after, we're going to have one of the largest building booms that we've had I believe in its history.

Anderson: ([46:14](#)):

So things are looking good here. Now I'm speaking as a mayor should speak.

Gower: ([46:18](#)):

Yeah, right? No, that sounds fine, yeah. Was Brainerd sort of static for many years?

Anderson: [\(46:27\)](#):

It has been but it's just lately it's been taking off.

Gower: [\(46:31\)](#):

It was always a fairly healthy town and so on, I would think, but it's just that it didn't grow a lot. It didn't expand a lot throughout many years.

Anderson: [\(46:39\)](#):

Our paper mill is growing. We just authorized a million dollars in industrial bonds just to help them get some new equipment here. It's owned by the Potlatch people and their main plant is in Cloquet. But to finish it, they send their products here and it's finished here in Brainerd. They're our largest employer. And we have the shops. They've all been made into a reclamation center for the whole Burlington Northern. So that looks good. So industry is growing.

Anderson: [\(47:22\)](#):

Might get back to the downtown area here. When they're planting trees, I suggested that they plant the Norway Pine, because I have a sentimental attachment to Norway Pine, because when I was in 1952 session, or '53 session, that was made the official state tree. I had the honor of signing Norway Pine as official state tree, so it was kind of, should I say-- I was glad to see the city was planting the pine official tree, I think as much as I was on it, sign it into law making it the official state tree. Not just a [inaudible 00:48:17].

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

Sure, right. John, you got anything else?

LeDoux: [\(48:20\)](#):

I just had a couple of other questions. Looking back two years, both as Lieutenant Governor and Governor, what do you recall as being the parts of the jobs that you enjoyed, and which parts did you not enjoy, as both Lieutenant Governor and Governor?

Anderson: [\(48:39\)](#):

Well, Lieutenant Governor was a very pleasant experience. When I was Lieutenant Governor the main duties of the Lieutenant Governor was to preside over the state senate. And the only thing you did or any duties that you performed were at the request of the Governor; whatever he designated you to do, you would do. You represent him, or whatnot, what have you.

Anderson: [\(49:16\)](#):

So you were able to be next-in-command but you didn't have any of the responsibilities. Socially, it was very pleasant, very pleasant presiding over the state senate and meeting all the senators. But you didn't have responsibility. In that sense it was a very, very, very pleasant job.

Anderson: ([49:37](#)):

Being governor, of course, is a big responsibility. It isn't the day-to-day that it was so much [inaudible 00:49:49] person, but the fact that you could never escape the responsibility. You knew that you were there and if something did happen, you were there. You always had that thought in the back of your mind and responsibility was on your shoulder.

Anderson: ([50:15](#)):

But I suppose the most difficult job or wasn't exactly pleasant was your budget hearings when you had to listen to all the requests of all the institutions, and go over them and there isn't enough money to go around, so you had to say, "No," plenty more times than you'd rather say yes. But the money just goes so far.

Gower: ([50:47](#)):

Were there any of these leaders that you thought were especially outstanding, like Harold Stassen or Luther Youngdahl, these people that you worked with?

Anderson: ([50:56](#)):

Well, I think I don't want to draw comparisons but I will say Harold Stassen, he was an exceptional leader. And I think he had the qualifications to become president, and I think he would have become president if he had stayed around Minnesota and probably run for senator or something like that. But he was a great administrator. But was too anxious to run for president probably, ran too soon.

Gower: ([51:41](#)):

Do you have another question?

LeDoux: ([51:46](#)):

Yeah. How do you see the governorship? Do you see it as having changed over the years from the years you were governor?

Anderson: ([51:54](#)):

Well, it's changed very much. Before, more so than it is now, it used to be a position of honor. It still is, of course, but now there's lots of work to go with it, all these-- It's so much detail. Government has become so complex. There's much paperwork, it just gets you down. So you see, so Perpich is trying to do some of the paperwork. More power to him, but it's difficult to do with all your federal regulations. Federal government has more and more regulations that the state has to live up to, the county, the state or the city. So it's much more difficult now. Now, it's just a lot of hard work.

Gower: ([52:40](#)):

When do you think this started, this trend towards more difficulties? It was after you were governor, is that what you mean?

Anderson: ([52:41](#)):

I think, yes. It started, oh, I think maybe about six to eight years, 10 years maybe after I was governor. Gradually got more and more dependent on the federal government and all the regulations.

Gower: ([53:08](#)):

Anything else there, John?

LeDoux: ([53:17](#)):

No, I have no questions left.

Gower: ([53:22](#)):

Okay--

LeDoux: ([53:23](#)):

Is there anything that we haven't asked that you wanted to get into, regarding your career or your background?

Anderson: ([53:39](#)):

No, other than it's been a great honor for me and a pleasure to serve as governor. That's one of the few, not very many men in history of this state receive this honor. It's not to be taken lightly. I appreciated it and feel very humble with the decision the state saw fit to elect, pick me the governor, because it's been a great experience. It certainly didn't leave me a wealthy man but I wouldn't trade all the wealth in the world for the experience and the friendships and the people that I got to know, and the chance to see the state, the great state it is.

Anderson: ([54:36](#)):

It is a great state. A mixture of all nationalities, and that's what's made it great. I think that's true of any community too. I think a community that's a mixture of nationalities, different religious groups, is a much better and much stronger community than one that's strictly dominated by one group or the other.

Gower: ([55:09](#)):

Thank you.

Anderson: ([55:09](#)):

Kind of rambling here. I hope you'll get something--

Gower: ([55:11](#)):

No, that's fine. Yeah. Okay, very good. This concludes this interview.