

**Interview with Edwin Swanson**

**May 15, 1978**

**Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection**

**St. Cloud State University Archives**

**Interviewed by Cal Gower and John LaDoux**

**Gower (00:01):**

This is an interview conducted by Calvin Gower and John Ladoux. Today is May 15th, 1978, and we're interviewing Mr. Edward?

**Swanson (00:15):**

Edwin.

**Gower (00:16):**

Edwin, Swanson. What's your middle initial?

**Swanson (00:20):**

O. Oscar.

**Gower (00:20):**

Okay. Edwin Oscar Swanson, a resident of Freedhem. Is that the way to pronounce it, Freedhem? Minnesota. Okay, Mr. Swanson, would you tell us where your parents came and so on there.

**Swanson (00:40):**

From Sweden.

**Gower (00:42):**

When did they come over to the United States?

**Swanson (00:44):**

Well, they were up in Kittson County first for a few years up there. I suppose they come in 1898.

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

Oh, they came first to Kittson County, from Sweden?

**Swanson** ([00:56](#)):

Yeah.

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

Why did they come here, do you know?

**Swanson** ([00:58](#)):

To get away from being in the army, I guess.

**Gower** ([01:03](#)):

Oh, I see.

**Swanson** ([01:04](#)):

That was the main thing.

**Gower** ([01:05](#)):

So, it was not so much the economic possibilities.

**Swanson** ([01:09](#)):

They didn't have no relation here.

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

They had no relations here. Oh, I see.

**Swanson** ([01:14](#)):

They just came.

**Gower** ([01:17](#)):

Should we turn this on? Were your parents married when they came over here?

**Swanson (01:22):**

No.

**Gower (01:24):**

But they came over together?

**Swanson (01:26):**

They both settled here in Freedhem and then built a house and then dad went up and got married.

**Gower (01:33):**

Oh, I see.

**Swanson (01:33):**

Up in Kittson County.

**Gower (01:36):**

Up in Kittson County. When did they come down here to Freedhem?

**Swanson (01:41):**

1902.

**Gower (01:41):**

1902. [crosstalk 00:01:43] Now had they [crosstalk 00:01:46]-- But they knew each other in Sweden, and they came over here together.

**Swanson (01:49):**

Oh, yes, they came over here together.

**Gower (01:49):**

Sure, and they intended [crosstalk 00:01:52]--

**Swanson (01:53):**

[inaudible 00:01:53] oldest one, he stayed up there younger one [inaudible 00:01:55], he went to Minneapolis.

**Gower (01:59):**

This was your dad and his brother?

**Swanson (02:01):**

Yeah.

**Gower (02:01):**

Okay.

**Swanson (02:01):**

Yeah, that's where the Swanson brothers come from.

**Gower (02:04):**

Okay. But otherwise, they didn't know anybody when they came over here?

**Swanson (02:11):**

No.

**Gower (02:14):**

Did they have any-- We've talked to a man from the Calvary Baptist Church in St. Cloud, which was a Swedish Baptist Church, did your folks-- Were they members of the--

**Swanson (02:14):**

No.

**Gower (02:31):**

--regular Lutheran Church there?

**Swanson (02:32):**

Lutheran Church. I guess so because they started the Lutheran Church here.

**Gower (02:36):**

They started the Lutheran Church here. So, this had nothing to do with their leaving--

**Swanson (02:41):**

No.

**Gower (02:41):**

--Sweden at all.

**Swanson (02:42):**

Well, there was another uncle, he lived where [inaudible 00:02:45], that was my uncle, [inaudible 00:02:49]. And he was up here. And then he wrote down to the one in Minneapolis and told them he thought that'd be a good place to start a store. Here.

**Gower (03:01):**

Oh, so there were a number of Swanson that came here--

**Swanson (03:01):**

Three of them.

**Gower (03:03):**

--then. These three brothers?

**Swanson (03:04):**

Yeah.

**Gower (03:06):**

Oh.

**Swanson (03:06):**

And another one come back in 1911, but that's a long time.

**Gower (03:09):**

Did those three brothers come at about the same time?

**Swanson (03:14):**

Well, Charlie come first.

**Gower (03:16):**

That was your dad?

**Swanson (03:17):**

No, that's my uncle. And then I think Oscar-- My dad went down to Minneapolis and then he bought a team of horses in Minneapolis and drove up here. And then he built that--where the house is now. It's right across the road.

**Gower (03:35):**

Where he had the [inaudible 00:03:36].

**Swanson (03:35):**

No. This one.

**Gower (03:35):**

Oh, right across here. Oh.

**Swanson (03:35):**

That's the store and the house. Had the store in the front and the house in the back.

**Gower (03:44):**

Oh yeah. Sure. Okay.

**Swanson (03:50):**

And then they started to-- Then he got married in 19-- Sometime in March [inaudible 00:03:56],  
in 1902.

**Gower (04:01):**

In 1902. And you were born, when?

**Swanson (04:02):**

August, the 8th, 1903.

**Gower (04:04):**

August 8th, 1903 and you were born here in Freedhem?

**Swanson (04:09):**

Right across the road.

**Gower (04:10):**

Right across the road.

**Swanson (04:12):**

[inaudible 00:04:12]

**Gower (04:14):**

Okay. And did how many brothers and sisters did you have?

**Swanson (04:17):**

One brother and four sisters.

**Gower (04:22):**

Four sisters.

**Swanson (04:24):**

Yeah, [inaudible 00:04:24] is one sister.

**Gower (04:25):**

Right.

**Swanson (04:26):**

And then there was one down by [inaudible 00:04:29] Center. And one in Denver, Colorado.

And the youngest one was in San Diego, but she's dead. That's the baby.

**Gower (04:40):**

Now, why did your folks settle here at Freedhem?

**Swanson (04:44):**

Well, that was because the other--

**Gower (04:46):**

Because the other brother was there?

**Swanson (04:48):**

Yeah. And he wrote down to them [inaudible 00:04:50] start a store.

**Gower (04:50):**

Now, why did the brother settle here? The other brother?

**Swanson (04:50):**

I don't know.

**Elle Swanson (04:55):**

[inaudible 00:04:55] knows.

**Swanson (04:56):**

I wouldn't know, but I guess he was-- Land was cheap and--

**Gower (05:00):**

But this was not a settlement of Swedish people only?



**Swanson (05:03):**

Well, pretty close. [inaudible 00:05:05]

**Gower (05:06):**

At the beginning?

**LaDoux (05:06):**

No, Adelaide had written in her letter that at one time the first people who came here were from the east, from New England. There were a few here before [crosstalk 00:05:17]--

**Swanson (05:16):**

Well, not right around here that I know of.

**LaDoux (05:20):**

Now her--

**Swanson (05:21):**

The French started to come in here.

**LaDoux (05:24):**

The French?

**Swanson (05:25):**

But they didn't like it because it was too much work.

**Gower (05:29):**

What was the name of that family? Of those families that--

**LaDoux (05:32):**

Paddock.

**Swanson (05:33):**

Paddock. He was from--

**Elle Swanson (05:35):**

He was from New England.

**Gower (05:35):**

New England, yeah.

**LaDoux (05:36):**

There was one other they mentioned--

**Gower (05:38):**

And another related to the Paddocks.

**LaDoux (05:39):**

--that were here reasonably early, so that's why she had mentioned that.

**Swanson (05:43):**

Well, they lived a mile down there.

**LaDoux (05:46):**

And there were French in here also?

**Swanson (05:46):**

No, they didn't stay.

**LaDoux (05:46):**

They didn't---

**Swanson (05:48):**

[inaudible 00:05:48] seen all the routes and--

**LaDoux (05:48):**

Pardon me?

**Swanson (05:48):**

They saw all the routes. And you know what that means? Hard work.

**LaDoux (05:47):**

When was this about? 1890 sometime?

**Swanson (05:47):**

No, I suppose it was around 1900.

**Gower (06:04):**

You know with that name, Ladoux he's French, so you have to be careful.

**Elle Swanson (06:11):**

Yes, I know [crosstalk 00:06:11]. I was thinking [crosstalk 00:06:11] like him.

**Swanson (06:18):**

Well, that was their own business. Whether they liked it. They didn't have to like it, but [inaudible 00:06:20] the Germans were there more now brought up in the old country with-

**Gower (06:24):**

With rocky fields.

**Elle Swanson (06:25):**

Well lot of this [crosstalk 00:06:26]--

**Gower (06:26):**

Okay, that'll be diplomatic [crosstalk 00:06:26]--

**Elle Swanson (06:25):**

--that came here, came from a province in Sweden. We were there in '75. And we drove through that province. It's called Småland, it really means small land. And I was so surprised when we drove through there on the bus. It was rocks and trees, very little good farming land at all.

**Swanson (06:50):**

Just [inaudible 00:06:50] [crosstalk 00:06:50] Small fields, stone [crosstalk 00:06:57] and stone fences.

**Gower (06:57):**

Sure, so that would probably be one reason they'd stay here.

**Elle Swanson (07:00):**

It is. Many of the Swedes [crosstalk 00:07:01] were from Småland.

**LaDoux (07:03):**

Sure. Is this whole area pretty much like that, all [crosstalk 00:07:06]--

**Swanson (07:06):**

Well, it's Germans.

**Elle Swanson (07:08):**

No, he means [crosstalk 00:07:10]--

**LaDoux (07:09):**

As far as the farming type land, was it all--

**Swanson (07:13):**

Yeah, it was four miles west and about the same east.

**Gower (07:16):**

Pretty rocky.

**Swanson (07:17):**

Yeah, and then on the other side, that four miles was all sand.

**Gower (07:21):**

Now your dad started the store then?

**Swanson (07:23):**

My dad and my brother.

**Gower (07:25):**

In 1902?

**Swanson (07:28):**

Yeah.

**Gower (07:28):**

And it was in that building across the road and it was the living quarters in the front and--

**Swanson (07:32):**

In the back.

**Gower (07:34):**

In the back and the store in the front.

**Swanson (07:34):**

Yeah.

**Gower (07:34):**

Okay.

**Swanson (07:39):**

And then in 1911, then my mother died.

**Gower (07:40):**

Your mother died. Oh.

**Swanson (07:41):**

And then my uncle come from the old country.

**Gower (07:45):**

That was the fourth brother.

**Swanson (07:47):**

Fourth brother. My fourth uncle. He come and then he was cook.

**Gower (07:51):**

Oh, for your family.

**Swanson (07:53):**

For the family. And we all stayed together except the baby. She was taken out across the river in [inaudible 00:07:58]. By the name of Nielson's took her.

**Gower (08:02):**

Your uncle was a bachelor then?

**Swanson (08:04):**

Yeah, he was a bachelor.

**Gower (08:04):**

And was he a bachelor all of his life?

**Swanson (08:08):**

All of his life. And he raised five kids.

**Gower (08:10):**

Five kids are in your family. Right.

**Elle Swanson (08:11):**

Would you boys drink a cup of coffee?

**Gower (08:16):**

Were you going to have some anyway or--

**Elle Swanson (08:19):**

No, but I'll just cook.

**Gower (08:20):**

Well, we had some coffee down there. So--

**Elle Swanson (08:22):**

Oh, you did?

**Gower (08:23):**

Yeah, so, I think we'll be fine. Thanks.

**LaDoux (08:25):**

That's fine.

**Elle Swanson (08:28):**

We don't usually drink coffee, but we'll [crosstalk 00:08:28]--

**Swanson (08:31):**

Because then he [crosstalk 00:08:31], he raised us five kids. And we had us-- six kids then, had half of the store and half of the 80 acres down there.

**Gower (08:45):**

Oh, you were farming and running the store both there?

**Swanson (08:50):**

Yeah, we had 80 acres. Charlie, he sold Oscar and Dad of about 160, see Sheldon owned that 160. [inaudible 00:08:56], grandfather, I guess it was.

**Gower (09:02):**

Now, what was your store like there? Was it a general store?

**Swanson (09:11):**

General merchandise. Everything--

**Gower (09:12):**

Had some clothing and groceries--

**Swanson (09:16):**

[inaudible 00:09:16]

**Gower (09:17):**

Oh, and then groceries-

**Swanson (09:18):**

And socks and groceries hardware.

**Gower (09:20):**

Oh, some hardware.

**Swanson (09:20):**

Oh yeah. Hardware, drapes.

**Gower (09:22):**

So on. Yeah. And you [crosstalk 00:09:24] sold essentially to the people right in this area, the farmer and the people right in here.

**Swanson (09:30):**

Mostly [inaudible 00:09:30] farmers, then there was no town here, nobody wanted it. Then I get to start the creamery back in that time [inaudible 00:09:38] buttermaker.

**Gower (09:38):**

Yeah. And the creamery was a cooperative creamery, right? That's what your sister's husband was saying.



**Swanson (09:47):**

Yeah.

**LaDoux (09:48):**

Did you go to the country school out here then? [inaudible 00:09:53]

**Swanson (09:54):**

We walked to-- It was down [inaudible 00:09:56] just about, oh I suppose, 30 [inaudible 00:10:02] east of his house. We'd carry water from Paddock's house to [inaudible 00:10:09] to drink.

**Gower (10:11):**

And how far did you go in school?

**Swanson (10:12):**

Eighth grade.

**Gower (10:12):**

Eighth grade.

**Swanson (10:13):**

We didn't [inaudible 00:10:16] at school either, [inaudible 00:10:18].

**Gower (10:20):**

Then you were working with your dad during the same time on the land?

**Swanson (10:27):**

Yeah, well, Dad died 1914, Mother died 1911.

**Gower (10:31):**

Oh, he died in 1914, I didn't realize that.

**Swanson (10:34):**

Mother died 1911, I was eight years old. And then dad died in 1914 and I was 11 years old.

**Gower (10:41):**

Why did they die? Did you know what the--

**Swanson (10:45):**

My dad died from cancer.

**Gower (10:47):**

Oh, he did have cancer.

**Swanson (10:48):**

My mother died from-- What would you call it?

**Elle Swanson (10:52):**

Yeah, miscarried.

**Gower (10:53):**

In child-- Oh.

**Swanson (10:54):**

Childbirth.

**Gower (10:55):**

Oh, I see. So that's why this uncle was raising you then. Sure.

**Swanson (11:01):**

Yeah, there was nobody here.

**Gower (11:02):**

Right.

**Swanson (11:05):**

[inaudible 00:11:05]

**Gower (11:08):**

So, then what did you do after you go through with the eighth grade?

**Swanson (11:11):**

Well, we still kept on farming and worked at the store and farmed right along till 1929, then I got married.

**Gower (11:20):**

And this was you and your uncle and your-- Was it one brother?

**Swanson (11:26):**

All of us. All of us.

**Gower (11:26):**

And the girls too?

**Swanson (11:26):**

Kids and all. All of us.

**Gower (11:28):**

It was a family enterprise.

**Swanson (11:30):**

Yeah.

**LaDoux (11:31):**

What was your schedule typically? Would you farm part of the day and then during the evening go in the store? When did you work usually in the store?

**Swanson (11:42):**

No, there was sour cream them days. Monday, Wednesday and Friday was cream day.

**Gower (11:48):**

Sure, your farm was a dairy farm.

**Swanson (11:50):**

Everybody [inaudible 00:11:51] to the creamery. We had to [inaudible 00:11:54], we only had two cows.

**Gower (11:55):**

Oh, you only had two cows. [crosstalk 00:11:58] So you didn't have a big enterprise then.

**Swanson (12:00):**

No. [inaudible 00:12:02] we had to stay home and work in the store on them three cream days.

**Gower (12:07):**

Oh, I see because then the people would be in town and then they'd want to buy their goods [crosstalk 00:12:11] and so on, sure. Right.

**Swanson (12:12):**

And then after dinner when everybody went home, there was nobody coming.

**Gower (12:16):**

Then you'd go out-

**Swanson (12:17):**

Then I went to school. And then in the summertime, we'd go out to farm. But on cream days we stayed in the store. And then we dissolved partnership in '29.

**Gower (12:31):**

In 1929 you got married.

**Swanson (12:32):**

Yeah, and then I bought all the other five kids their share of the farm, 80 acres. My uncle he bought all of our shares out of the store.

**Gower (12:32):**

Oh, I see.

**Swanson (12:39):**

So, then I owned 20 acres here, that was my uncle's. He owned that himself and then he [inaudible 00:12:58] and then I owned 120 acres.

**Gower (12:59):**

Could I ask you one question about that, was this set up in a legal paper and so on that it was-- Or was it just [crosstalk 00:13:08] an informal arrangement.

**Swanson (12:59):**

I think so. That's all--

**Gower (13:08):**

Just an informal arrangement. But you did buy out your uncle and the land and then he purchased the store business?

**Swanson (13:18):**

He purchased the store.

**Gower (13:19):**

Sure.

**Swanson (13:20):**

And the I farmed too from '29 till '43. And then Oscar, he had a heart attack and then he had to quit.

**Gower (13:31):**

In the store.

**Swanson (13:32):**

And then I sold the farm and bought the store.

**Gower (13:38):**

And your sisters had left the area?

**Swanson (13:40):**

Yeah, they were all gone. Everyone was married.

**Gower (13:43):**

And your brother also.

**Swanson (13:44):**

Yeah, he was married a little before I was. And he had left home.

**Gower (13:53):**

What was it like farming in the 1930s here?

**Swanson (14:00):**

Tough. Boy, I tell you, it wasn't just a depression, but it was rough for about three years.

**Gower (14:08):**

Bone dry for about three years.

**Swanson (14:08):**

Gosh.

**Elle Swanson (14:08):**

And grasshoppers.

**Gower (14:11):**

Oh, and grasshoppers too? Well, they came partly with the dryness [crosstalk 00:14:14]--

**Elle Swanson (14:14):**

Yes, [inaudible 00:14:14] with the dryness.

**Swanson (14:15):**

Oh, my goodness. It was terrible. I had to--

**Elle Swanson (14:20):**

I remember one day, we were eating dinner at noon, and we stood on the back porch we had built there, and we had an oats field south of the house. And you know we could see that oat fields going down. The grasshoppers were that big. We could really actually see it.

**Gower (14:35):**

Hm, boy. Yeah, that's fantastic.

**LaDoux (14:37):**

How did the store fair during those years?

**Swanson (14:42):**

Well, we had pretty good business only too much credits. And somebody still got [inaudible 00:14:53] shed.

**Gower (14:53):**

A lot of the people either couldn't or wouldn't pay.

**Swanson (14:56):**

Well, they couldn't, I suppose. We lost a lot when we quit, too. But we're just a little different.

**Gower (14:59):**

Did it improve then, the farming when you got into World War II?

**Swanson (15:10):**

Well, then in the '40s when it started to rain. And then when Roosevelt come, the president, then they started giving subsidies. Buy cattle. Because I sold a cow-- The first cow I sold, I got 90 bucks for it when I started farming. I paid 100 for it and sold it for 90. The next one I sold, I got 16 for it. That as \$100 cow.

**Gower (15:42):**

This was in the 1930s?

**Swanson (15:44):**

In the '30s, yeah. And then the next one I got, what was it's? 12 for it. And the third one I sold I got five.

**Gower (15:53):**

Boy, the prices just kept going right on down.

**Swanson (16:00):**

Yeah. But that's all you could do. And then Roosevelt come in and then we had a-- We didn't have no hay or grass. I don't know where I got a heffer and calf . Well, I sat on a shotgun box or a milk stool, and I could look right over the cows back. That's how big the cow was.

**Gower (16:20):**

Just couldn't grow because of the lack of food and--

**Swanson (16:20):**

Well, there was nothing to eat.

**Gower (16:24):**

Yeah.



**Swanson (16:24):**

And the day I did buy her and he gave me 25 bucks for her. Because he couldn't give any less.

**Gower (16:27):**

Oh. This is with the--

**Swanson (16:33):**

That was the government-

**Gower (16:34):**

--agricultural adjustment [inaudible 00:16:35]. Yeah.

**Swanson (16:36):**

And then I sold the calf for \$10 and the cow I took to Little Falls and they shot her and dumped her in a pit and covered her up.

**Gower (16:46):**

That was in 1933 apparently because--

**Swanson (16:49):**

Yeah. And the calf, I had to kill that myself and haul her down, in the slew down here, buried it.

**Gower (17:00):**

Okay. Now you quit farming though in 1943?

**Swanson (17:03):**

Yeah.

**Gower (17:05):**

Did you sell your farm then?

**Swanson (17:08):**

I rented it for one year, then I sold it.

**Gower (17:13):**

And how did your store business go then in the '40s and '50s?

**Swanson (17:15):**

Well, it was-- It made a living.

**Gower (17:22):**

But you sold out when then? Your store?

**Swanson (17:25):**

Four years ago.

**Gower (17:26):**

Four years ago. 1974.

**Swanson (17:28):**

Yeah. Sold out in 1973 at first. And [inaudible 00:17:31] and then the man that bought it, the lady was going to run it. And they hadn't quite been there a month and then she got killed in a car accident. And that father had about four kids, I guess, and he was alone. He tried to work [inaudible 00:17:55] anything he could do. So, I took it back. Gave him back some of his money he paid down and started over again. That was into the next June, then I sold it again.

**Gower (18:09):**

Sold it again. Let's see, did we get your birth date on here? I'm not sure we got that.

**LaDoux (18:13):**

August 8th, was it?

**Swanson (18:13):**

Yeah.

**Gower (18:14):**

Oh, August 8<sup>th</sup>--

**Swanson (18:14):**

1903.

**Gower (18:17):**

1903. So we did get it. Okay. Fine. Now, are you involved in the church here than in Freedhem?

**Swanson (18:25):**

Well, yeah.

**Gower (18:26):**

From the time you were a young boy, on?

**Swanson (18:28):**

Yeah, I was very equipped. I was treasure board for many years.

**Gower (18:35):**

And this was a regular Swedish Lutheran Church?

**Swanson (18:37):**

Yeah. [inaudible 00:18:39] To start with, I was confirmed in Sweden. But then after that it was all in English. My wife used to teach Sunday school for-- How many years?

**Elle Swanson (18:37):**

35 years.

**Gower (18:54):**

35 years you taught Sunday school.

**Swanson (18:57):**

She was still Sunday school teacher when they [inaudible 00:19:02].

**Gower (19:02):**

Did they disband it primarily because the number of people was going down so much?

**Swanson (19:08):**

Well, their minister didn't want to come out.

**Elle Swanson (19:08):**

Well, he had four pastors.

**Gower (19:16):**

The minister had four churches to serve?

**Swanson (19:27):**

Yeah. I don't know if it's-- I [inaudible 00:19:28] once drive out 12 miles or all the rest drive in 12 miles.

**LaDoux (19:29):**

How many people were left from the church folded then?

**Swanson (19:31):**

I don't know, must have been about--

**Elle Swanson (19:32):**

Maybe 30--

**Swanson (19:34):**

30 members.

**Elle Swanson (19:35):**

35 or something and we could-

**Swanson (19:37):**

Well, of course it was--

**Elle Swanson (19:38):**

But there were no little children. We were all older people. There were about three, four little children in Sunday School. Well, why continue on, you know, we can't keep up with that.

**Gower (19:48):**

Yeah, right, no that makes it difficult.

**Elle Swanson (19:55):**

So, '66 then [inaudible 00:19:57].

**Gower (19:57):**

Oh, 1966 is when they church closed, or stopped having services.

**LaDoux (20:04):**

Do you recall what happened at all for example, to the registers? The parish records and all that?

**Swanson (20:10):**

That all went to Little Falls.

**LaDoux (20:12):**

They all went to Little Falls.

**Gower (20:14):**

This was part of a-- What do they call the overall organization of the church?

**Elle Swanson (20:22):**

The Augustana Synod.

**Gower (20:24):**

Augustana Synod.

**Elle Swanson (20:30):**

That we belonged to then. But now they've combined with other [inaudible 00:20:31].

**Gower (20:30):**

Oh, but that's what it was, and the church down there was--

**Elle Swanson (20:30):**

Yeah, the Swedish church was called the Augustana.

**Gower (20:31):**

Sure. Okay. What was the size of the church would you say back like when you first started going there and so on? Was it-

**Swanson (20:46):**

Well, I don't know-

**Gower (20:46):**

--a lot bigger congregation do you think, or--

**Swanson (20:49):**

I don't know if there were very members, I don't know at all because when I was young, I didn't care how many members--

**Elle Swanson (20:56):**

Didn't pay attention to it

**Swanson (20:57):**

We went to Sunday School, and [inaudible 00:21:01] and when they had a picnic, we got a picture in there, a church picnic.

**Gower (21:06):**

A church picnic.

**Swanson (21:07):**

[inaudible 00:21:07] [crosstalk 00:21:07] It's in the top drawer there. I don't know all them people get here because there were no cars. No [inaudible 00:21:21] horses and walk, but that time must be 100 people on that picnic. Just looking at it. [inaudible 00:21:29], but [inaudible 00:21:29] quite a bunch. [inaudible 00:21:35]right about where the house is here, was a [inaudible 00:21:40].

**LaDoux (21:43):**

Now this-- The Evangelical church, did that split off from the regular Lutheran church here?

**Swanson (21:52):**

No, that started back in-- I don't know whether that started after [inaudible 00:22:01] before or--

**Elle Swanson (21:52):**

Which?

**Swanson (22:02):**

The mission church?

**Elle Swanson (22:03):**

Well, they really started a half a year ahead of us.

**LaDoux (22:08):**

They started ahead of--

**Elle Swanson (22:10):**

A little bit. Just a little bit.

**Gower (22:12):**

This was the-- Now what was the official title of that church?

**Swanson (22:16):**

Free--

**Elle Swanson (22:16):**

Well, they call it the Free Evangelical, I guess.

**Gower (22:19):**

Free Evangelical church?

**Elle Swanson (22:23):**

Of Freedhem.

**Gower (22:24):**

Pardon me? Of Freedhem.

**Elle Swanson (22:24):**

Of Freedhem.

**Gower (22:24):**

Oh.

**Elle Swanson (22:27):**

Now these were taken at one of those picnics.

**Gower (22:36):**

Oh yeah, that's a lot of people [crosstalk 00:22:37].

**Elle Swanson (22:36):**

Yes, I think he does. He's got some aunts or something out there.

**LaDoux (22:40):**

He's mentioning that-- You had written a history of the Evangelical--



**Swanson (22:44):**

I think it's right there.

**LaDoux (22:46):**

Is it possible to take a look at [crosstalk 00:22:47].

**Elle Swanson (22:46):**

Oh yes, you can.

**Gower (22:46):**

Right next to you?

**Elle Swanson (22:51):**

It's down in the museum. Everything is in the museum.

**Swanson (22:55):**

No, next to me. [inaudible 00:22:58] right in there, that's [inaudible 00:23:01] and us, we grew up together. We were always together.

**Gower (23:09):**

Yeah, let's see, he said that his parents came--

**Swanson (23:14):**

1908 it would have been.

**Gower (23:15):**

In 1908. Right. So, your folks were here sooner.

**Swanson (23:20):**

Oh yeah. Sooner. And he bought my uncles-- Charlie's place. That was his place. And then [inaudible 00:23:31] 80 acres because we had the other 80. And then he, Charlie, uncle, he bought this 40 here. And moved from there to over here.

**Gower (23:40):**

Now did [crosstalk 00:23:40]--

**Elle Swanson (23:40):**

He built that house.

**Gower (23:40):**

Pardon me?

**Elle Swanson (23:40):**

Charlie Swanson built that house over there.

**Gower (23:44):**

Now, did you see a change occurring here in this general area as time went along, more people, more Polish people and some German people and so on?

**Swanson (23:58):**

Well, the German and the Swede's are about half. Quite a few Germans started here.

**Gower (24:02):**

Oh, they were here from the beginning.

**Swanson (24:07):**

There was quite a few Germans. And a few Norwegians. But now there's a lot of [inaudible 00:24:15].

**Gower (24:14):**

But it was, would you say that the town was quite-- I mean was it pretty much a Swedish village here, do you think, at the--

**Swanson (24:31):**

Most of them.

**Gower (24:31):**

--at the beginning.

**Swanson (24:32):**

I [inaudible 00:24:32] about at least 75%--

**Gower (24:32):**

Oh.

**Swanson (24:32):**

... Swede because [inaudible 00:24:35] quite a few Swedes to keep the church going.

**Gower (24:37):**

Yeah, right.

**Swanson (24:38):**

I remember it [inaudible 00:24:39], it had to be Swede because that's all they talked.

**Gower (24:41):**

Right.

**Swanson (24:44):**

It was the [inaudible 00:24:46]

**Gower (24:46):**

Didn't understand what was going on there. And then gradually this has changed, so [crosstalk 00:24:55] it's not so Swedish.

**Elle Swanson (24:58):**

No, no, definitely not.

**Swanson (25:01):**

[inaudible 00:25:01] I thought I was Sweden, but I wasn't. I went to the old country, I couldn't talk at all.

**Gower (25:07):**

You couldn't speak any Swedish at all?

**Swanson (25:11):**

No, sir.

**Gower (25:12):**

Not in the dialect of--

**Swanson (25:13):**

No sir, I was stuck, and they couldn't understand me and I couldn't understand them. It was just [inaudible 00:25:17] and French.

**Elle Swanson (25:19):**

I did quite a bit talking over there.

**Gower (25:20):**

Oh, you did.

**Elle Swanson (25:20):**

Yeah. They did understand me, and [crosstalk 00:25:21]--

**Swanson (25:27):**

If I could say, oui, oui, that would be yes. So [crosstalk 00:25:27]--

**Elle Swanson (25:26):**

I don't know why he couldn't because we were both confirmed in the Swedish language. But I don't know why he got away from it.

**Swanson (25:32):**

[inaudible 00:25:32] down the river.

**Elle Swanson (25:34):**

I got along with good over there.

**Gower (25:37):**

Did you continue to speak Swedish in your home at all?

**Swanson (25:37):**

We do.

**Gower (25:37):**

You do?

**Swanson (25:41):**

We had to speak Swede to the [inaudible 00:25:44], it was the last one come when mother died.

And he never learned to talk English.

**Gower (25:50):**

Oh, he didn't.

**Swanson (25:50):**

But we mixed it up so terribly, see.

**Gower (25:53):**

Sort of a combination of English, Swedish [crosstalk 00:25:56]--

**Swanson (25:56):**

[inaudible 00:25:56] when you got over to the old country, you would mix it up and then you didn't know what you were talking.

**Gower (26:03):**

Yeah, that would be confusing.

**Swanson (26:04):**

And they talked pure Swede. And [inaudible 00:26:06]

**Elle Swanson (26:05):**

Well, I think our folks had it pretty well mixed up too, the Swedish and English.

**Gower (26:15):**

Oh, they already had back there, you think?

**Swanson (26:17):**

No, when they come--

**Elle Swanson (26:19):**

No, when they lived here.

**Swanson (26:20):**

Yeah.

**Gower (26:20):**

Yes.

**Elle Swanson (26:20):**

Yeah.

**Gower (26:22):**

But you're talking about way back in the early 1900s.

**Elle Swanson (26:25):**

Oh yeah, they had the real Swedish, but after they lived here a while, they had English pretty well mixed in.

**Swanson (26:34):**

Well, they had to, because they had to talk some English so they could get along.

**Gower (26:34):**

Sure.

**Swanson (26:42):**

I've only had one Swede preacher come down here. He came up to the store and he was talking about the Swedes here and he says, [foreign 00:26:53], and [inaudible 00:26:54], that ain't Swede.

**Elle Swanson (26:42):**

That's English.

**Swanson (26:55):**

That's half English, with a "ja" on the end. See?

**Gower (27:00):**

Oh, [crosstalk 00:27:01]--

**Swanson (27:00):**

And he said he didn't do that. But he'd done it right there. Mixing in Swedish and [inaudible 00:27:05].

**Elle Swanson (27:06):**

And he used the word mixer.

**Gower (27:06):**

Nixer.

**Swanson (27:07):**

Yeah.

**Elle Swanson (27:08):**

Mixer.

**Swanson (27:11):**

He put mix and then he put ER on the end and called it Swede. And that [inaudible 00:27:18].

Now orchards, we just say orchards and [inaudible 00:27:23] do that, but all the Swedes and oranges is [foreign 00:27:27]. That's an orange in Swede.

**Gower (27:31):**

[foreign 00:27:31]

**Swanson (27:33):**

[foreign 00:27:33]

**Gower (27:33):**

How did they spell that?

**Swanson (27:38):**

I don't know that. How would you [inaudible 00:27:39]?

**Elle Swanson (27:40):**

I don't know, I suppose A-P-E-L-S-E-N-E-R. Apelsener.

**Gower (27:46):**

Oh, something like that, sure.

**Elle Swanson (27:46):**

Because every letter sounds-- They aren't like we are, PH is F, but they don't have that. [crosstalk 00:27:57] If it's F, it's F. You know, they don't have [inaudible 00:28:03].

**Gower (28:05):**

Now, what was your maiden name?



**Elle Swanson** ([28:08](#)):

Johnson.

**Gower** ([28:09](#)):

Johnson. When did you come here to Freedhem?

**Elle Swanson** ([28:12](#)):

Well, I was born here. I was born two miles west here.

**Gower** ([28:15](#)):

Oh, and what about your folks, had they come from Sweden?

**Elle Swanson** ([28:19](#)):

Yes, they both did, but they were married in Colorado.

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

Oh, they had found--

**Elle Swanson** ([28:25](#)):

They didn't know each other in Sweden. They both came from different provinces in Sweden.

**Gower** ([28:33](#)):

And you lived here, you grew up here? And went to the school over down there too?

**Elle Swanson** ([28:37](#)):

I think they came around 1901, my folks did, from Colorado. And I was born in 1903.

**Gower** ([28:44](#)):

Did they come to-- Do you know why they came here? Did they know some people?

**Elle Swanson (28:49):**

Well, yes. For one thing, my father had a brother that was here. And he came from Colorado. But my mother had rheumatism, they called it rheumatism in Colorado, and the doctor told her to change climates. The climate was too high or something--

**Gower (29:07):**

Sure, the altitude.

**Elle Swanson (29:07):**

--not good for her. She came here and she got quite a bit better.

**Gower (29:12):**

Oh.

**Elle Swanson (29:14):**

That was really one of the main reasons, I guess. And Adelaide lived just across the pasture from us. So, we had a nice little path running across from one house to the other.

**Swanson (29:28):**

Right, [inaudible 00:29:28]

**Elle Swanson (29:30):**

I slept over there half the time. And she slept the other half at our house, I guess.

**LaDoux (29:35):**

What was your first name then?

**Swanson (29:35):**

Elvira.

**LaDoux (29:40):**

Elvira.

**Elle Swanson (29:41):**

Mine, yeah. Well, everybody calls me Elle. But I don't know. She calls me that too.

**Gower (29:47):**

Elvira Johnson.

**Elle Swanson (29:48):**

Yeah, that's right.

**Gower (29:51):**

And you got married to Mr. Swanson in 1929.

**Elle Swanson (29:53):**

Yes. Right.

**Gower (29:53):**

Okay.

**LaDoux (29:59):**

I don't think we asked you, do you have any children?

**Elle Swanson (30:02):**

We have one son who lives in Virginia. He's a psychiatric social worker.

**Gower (30:11):**

This is in the town of Virginia in Minnesota?

**Elle Swanson (30:15):**

Yeah.

**Gower (30:15):**

Oh. Yeah. Okay. Did your business change any, your store through the years? How did it change?

**Swanson (30:29):**

Well, it went differently, we didn't sell no more overalls. Didn't sell any shirts--

**Gower (30:36):**

You dropped out of the clothing part entirely?

**Swanson (30:38):**

Yeah.

**Elle Swanson (30:39):**

Well, you had shoes too.

**Swanson (30:39):**

Yeah, we had shoes.

**Elle Swanson (30:39):**

At one time.

**Swanson (30:43):**

At one time. I never did, but Oscar did.

**Gower (30:44):**

And what did you concentrate on then?

**Swanson (30:46):**

Well, just feeds and groceries and hardware.

**Gower (30:53):**

Why did that change?

**Swanson (30:55):**

Well, we couldn't buy overalls as cheap as them--

**Elle Swanson (30:57):**

JCPenney Company.

**Swanson (31:00):**

Penney Company sold them, [inaudible 00:31:02] down there and buy them. We could buy overalls, but-- and they were good, I don't know-- I think it was better off to buy a good one, but you couldn't sell them [crosstalk 00:31:10] buy a cheap one. And then they-- Then we just [inaudible 00:31:17] get out. We sold rubbers [inaudible 00:31:19]. I sold rubbers till I quit, they don't have any now, and they did when I sold out, there was rubber soles, overshoes, my brothers.

**Gower (31:34):**

Did your business improve any time in through there, or was it about steady [crosstalk 00:31:39] all the way through?

**Swanson (31:39):**

About the same.

**Gower (31:43):**

And you decided to sell out there finally because you thought you might want to put less time in on the business.

**Swanson (31:49):**

That's [crosstalk 00:31:50]-

**Elle Swanson (31:49):**

We were getting too old.

**Swanson (31:49):**

Well, I didn't--

**Gower (31:49):**

Sure, right.

**Swanson (31:55):**

I gave it away. I sold it for cheap, no interest, I carried it myself. Just to keep the store here.

**Gower (31:55):**

Sure.

**LaDoux (32:06):**

And all these people won't sell it now.

**Swanson (32:09):**

They want to make some profit. I don't think it will, I don't think they'll sell it. So, I don't know [inaudible 00:32:15].

**Gower (32:15):**

We're about to run out here. Go ahead.

**Swanson (32:21):**

They want more for the building than [inaudible 00:32:23] paid me and plus the inventories. I just sold it to them for 4% interest and I don't think you can get--

**Gower (32:44):**

Was the business, the store there, do you think that it can continue as it has in the past?

**Swanson (32:55):**

I think it has lost a lot. But he has a quite a feed business. See I didn't sell much feed because I was selling feed in the creamery when I run it. And the people that bought here, all [inaudible 00:33:12] creamery, it was easier to buy cream there to pay for it, just putting on the check.

**Gower (33:16):**

By the feed.

**Swanson (33:17):**

Yeah. And there was [inaudible 00:33:21] has to pay for it. [inaudible 00:33:23] sends it away, but [inaudible 00:33:23].

**LaDoux (33:25):**

Were there any other general stores near here in small towns?

**Swanson (33:47):**

Yeah, there was one started up, what year would that be? In about the '20s.

**Elle Swanson (33:49):**

I don't know. It was before we were married. It must have been in the '20s.

**Swanson (33:50):**

And that one started up on the east side of the creamery. But there wasn't [inaudible 00:33:50] and then he sold out to one guy and then that guy sold out another one. I think the last one, he moved everything out. Bank lost [inaudible 00:33:59]

**LaDoux (33:58):**

Is the building still there?

**Swanson (34:02):**

No. They tore that down. That's right where the big tin shed is.

**Elle Swanson (34:08):**

Yeah, where the big tin shed is.

**Swanson (34:12):**

The creamery built that up, they bought [inaudible 00:34:16] from the bank.

**Gower (34:16):**

Now you didn't have any connection with the creamery yourself, did you? Or-- Did you own shares in the creamery?

**Swanson (34:24):**

Yeah, I owned shares when I farmed. I was on the board for quite a few years. But then after that I quit farming and then I sold my shares, because they said they didn't want anybody--... I [inaudible 00:34:40]. Well, I guess you couldn't, the law said-

**Gower (34:43):**

You had to be a dairy farmer to have the shares in that cooperative creamery.

**Swanson (34:49):**

To start with you didn't because first First National Bank had shares in it.

**Gower (34:49):**

Oh, I see.

**Swanson (34:49):**

Plus there was--

**Gower (34:59):**

Now, that creamery closed down about four years ago or something like that? Is that it or--

**Swanson (35:04):**

Well, it must have been longer then. We were closed down when we was in the store.

**Elle Swanson (35:11):**

Yeah, we were still in the store when they--

**Swanson (35:11):**

So it must have been five years ago.



**Gower (35:16):**

Do you think it was primarily because there were fewer dairy cows around here, and so on?

**Swanson (35:16):**

Poor management.

**Gower (35:23):**

Poor management.

**Swanson (35:23):**

That [inaudible 00:35:24].

**Elle Swanson (35:25):**

One man that started the ball rolling and everyone that got after he was there, they got worse and worse. They took money-- That one fellow started the ball rolling.

**Gower (35:38):**

Well, what do these people around here do with their cream and butter and milk and so on now?

**Swanson (35:44):**

Well, they ship it. Trucks.

**Gower (35:47):**

Where do they take it to? Where is the creamery?

**Swanson (35:51):**

Well, some goes to [Peters 00:35:53] and some goes to Kraft.

**Gower (35:54):**

So, you feel that that creamery could still be operating if it hadn't [crosstalk 00:36:00] been for mis management.

**Swanson (36:02):**

No reason at all. They had [inaudible 00:36:04] up their business to keep the [inaudible 00:36:09].

**Gower (36:08):**

Gosh, so that would hurt your town a lot, wouldn't it when your creamery goes down like that?

**Swanson (36:08):**

But it didn't hurt the store because now they got the feed business, it's helped the store.

**Elle Swanson (36:08):**

It helped the store.

**Gower (36:13):**

Yeah, right. Sure.

**LaDoux (36:25):**

As far as small towns around here, were there any other stores kind of competing with some of the farmers or-- There weren't any stores for quite a way around and--

**Swanson (36:35):**

[inaudible 00:36:35] trip [inaudible 00:36:36] six miles from Peters and 10 miles Little Falls. It's four miles.

**LaDoux (36:43):**

So, you'd get customers from about how far away?

**Swanson (36:46):**

Oh, I suppose five, six miles. And, of course, that's about all they wanted to drive a horse. You know they went to Little Falls, but they'd done that probably once a month or something like that. There was a post office here.

**LaDoux (37:05):**

Yeah, that was in your story.

**Swanson (37:07):**

And Oscar was the postmaster. My uncle and daddy was the mail man.

**LaDoux (37:13):**

Oh.

**Swanson (37:14):**

He had to go every week to Little Falls and get the mail and bring mail down there. Once a week.

**LaDoux (37:20):**

Once a week. Did they do like real deliveries or did everyone have to pick it up.

**Swanson (37:26):**

No, everybody picked it up in store. [inaudible 00:37:32] pigeonholes. We'd shove it in from the back. Of course, you couldn't take it from the front either because when they'd come in, they'd have to tell their name and [inaudible 00:37:43] name. And give it.

**LaDoux (37:46):**

And how long did the post office stay there? Did it [crosstalk 00:37:50]--

**Swanson (37:49):**

I don't know. That must have not stayed too long.

**Gower (37:53):**

Your sister's husband said he thought maybe it was only about 15 years, does that sound about right?

**Swanson (38:01):**

No, it's too long.

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

Oh, it wasn't even that long.

**Swanson** ([38:04](#)):

No.

**LaDoux** ([38:08](#)):

What years are we talking about now? Did it close in about 19, what? 15?

**Swanson** ([38:08](#)):

Oh yeah, I think it was close to-- Well, when was the First World War? 14?

**Gower** ([38:08](#)):

That's when it started in Europe.

**LaDoux** ([38:19](#)):

It began in 14. [crosstalk 00:38:19]

**Gower** ([38:20](#)):

The United States [crosstalk 00:38:20]

**Swanson** ([38:21](#)):

Well, then we had royal route then. Because I had [inaudible 00:38:24] I used to buy sailing stamps from the mail man. So, it was-- 15 years with three years would be 1918. So, the mail man used to-- He'd come up the road here on his horses and then they had to-- Some up here, had to walk down this [inaudible 00:38:49]. And then he got a-- The government gave him a-- He bought a bicycle. He left the bicycle here and when he finished, [inaudible 00:38:58] he went up two miles with the bicycles to deliver mail in the mailbox because I remember two miles, but [inaudible 00:39:08], I don't think it was over four boxes.

**Elle Swanson (39:11):**

Well, there was a very short time that the post office was in the house up here.

**Gower (39:17):**

Oh, in addition to being in the store.

**Elle Swanson (39:22):**

Well, no, it was there first, I think.

**Gower (39:30):**

Yeah, but I mean--

**Elle Swanson (39:31):**

But that was a very short time, [crosstalk 00:39:31] but it must have [crosstalk 00:39:31].

**Gower (39:31):**

Now the nearest railroad place is over at Belle Prairie, is that what it was?

**Swanson (39:37):**

That's where we haul freight.

**Gower (39:37):**

That's where you'd-- And that's how far from here?

**Swanson (39:37):**

Seven miles.

**Gower (39:41):**

Seven miles.

**Swanson (39:41):**

Six miles west [inaudible 00:39:45]. Yeah, us kids used to haul crates. Two horses and a wagon,

I still got the wagon--

**Elle Swanson (39:41):**

The rack.

**Swanson (39:55):**

--rack.

**Gower (39:56):**

Oh, from that wagon.

**Swanson (40:04):**

Yeah. I didn't get the wagon, but I got the rack. Yeah, it's quite a--

**Gower (40:10):**

Now, you've lived here all your life. You prefer a small town, or village like this?

**Swanson (40:17):**

Sure, sure. Yes, I must because I've stayed here.

**Gower (40:23):**

Did you ever go into a city much at all and so on?

**Swanson (40:24):**

To live?

**Gower (40:25):**

No, well just even to go and visit much and so on.

**Swanson (40:30):**

Oh yeah, I do. I've been all over the United States.

**Elle Swanson (40:32):**

Oh yes. Since we were married and got older, we've traveled a lot.

**Gower** ([40:35](#)):

Oh. Uh-huh.

**Swanson** ([40:37](#)):

I'm on the telephone board [inaudible 00:40:40]

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

Oh, I see.

**Swanson** ([40:43](#)):

I started in the telephone business, co-op telephone back in '30 or '31? And then I got to be secretary treasurer for Freedhem Rural Telephone Company.

**Gower** ([40:57](#)):

How did that telephone cooperative work? Anybody who wanted to have a telephone would buy shares [crosstalk 00:41:04] in this cooperative, and then you'd use the money from that to--

**Swanson** ([41:09](#)):

To grow. The first year you had to donate some to start.

**Gower** ([41:13](#)):

Yeah, because that wouldn't be enough otherwise.

**Swanson** ([41:16](#)):

So, we only charged them a dollar a month. Had to run the telephone company and six dollars a year for the switching fee, and six dollars a year to run the telephone. That's 50 cents a month.

And when I took it over in '31, see that was built in I think 1911 or 10 or somewhere there, is the one that started [crosstalk 00:41:44]-

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

Oh, it's back that early.

**Swanson (41:47):**

And it was a grounded system.

**Gower (41:49):**

What do you mean a grounded system?

**Swanson (41:50):**

Only one wire. And we talked through the ground with the second wire. Nowadays there's two wires, [inaudible 00:41:56] ground fillers [inaudible 00:41:56]. But that went pretty good. Oh, it was bad, but you could hear. But then when the REA started, then the electricity starts coming in and of course they used the ground and then our telephone went [inaudible 00:42:22]. So, then I started in, I was secretary and treasurer, so I wanted to make a metallic system out of it.

**Gower (42:35):**

I was going to ask you, with the REA then there was a lot of interference with your phone and so you couldn't hear well and so on.

**Swanson (42:43):**

No, you couldn't. So, then I started to ask everybody if they would stay with-- If we would assess each one, \$40. And I said, "We'll start in with Little Falls and we'll build as far as everybody paid \$40. Then we have to quit"

**Gower (43:00):**

And this would be with this metallic system?

**Swanson (43:05):**

Yeah. That's what they called it. Double wires. And I had quite a few of them. There was one guy who came in there. He said, "And why do you want \$40 for it?" He [inaudible 00:43:19] have \$40. Well, I says, his name was Arnold, I said, "Arnold, I got two telephones. I got one in



the house and I got one in the store." I got one vote. I says, "That's the only vote I can guarantee at the annual meeting, and that [inaudible 00:43:34]." And I says, "You can put me out if you don't want me. All you got to do is vote me out." That's how much I got in. And then he left and the longer I talked, or the longer I went, the madder I got. So, I says, "To heck with the double line." I says, "I can holler just as loud as anybody else." So, I quit.

**Gower (43:58):**

Oh, well was there quite a bit of opposition to that double line, or just a few individuals but you got irritated with them?

**Swanson (44:05):**

Well, there was a few of them that didn't want to give it to me. Some wouldn't-- [inaudible 00:44:10] all together. And then REA started. RTA for telephone. And that came in the paper, so I had wrote to Washington, I wanted to get some money. He wrote back and says that they can loan us some money, but you're too small. You've got to have a full time line man. Well, that settled that. There was only 60 holes, and we could hire a full time line man.

**Gower (44:44):**

Was there any-- At any time did any private company try to come in here?

**Swanson (44:49):**

No. No Sirree. [inaudible 00:44:50] they wouldn't take it.

**Gower (44:52):**

Oh.

**Swanson (44:52):**

So, then we got a letter from Brainerd. There was some office manager of the REA, electric.

**Gower (45:03):**

What was his name?

**Swanson (45:04):**

Zunwalt.

**Gower (45:06):**

How did he spell his name?

**Swanson (45:07):**

It was [inaudible 00:45:08], Z-U-N-

**Elle Swanson (45:08):**

Z-U-N-W-A-L-T

**Gower (45:10):**

Oh. Yeah.

**Swanson (45:11):**

And he wrote down and wanted to know if we wanted to join Brainerd. They were saying--

**Gower (45:19):**

They were having their troubles too.

**Swanson (45:23):**

They didn't have enough either.

**Gower (45:24):**

Sure.

**Swanson (45:24):**

So, we went up there. [inaudible 00:45:25] one of the directors went up there. And he says, "You'll have to charge \$40 to join, \$4 a month, four and a half dollars a month every month for switching fees." And I said, "I don't think that's going to go." I says, "I can't even collect one dollar. I've got a heck of a time." Well, I went home, and I went and asked them, and by jingle, they all said, "If we get better service, we'll be willing to do that."

**Gower (46:00):**

Oh, they had changed there then, some of them anyway.

**Swanson (46:03):**

Well, you bet your life a few that wouldn't. And then we went-- Well first we'd done it a little wrong. I didn't know nothing and [inaudible 00:46:14] should have known better, but he didn't. We bought the old telephone company, we paid \$600 for this telephone here, this company, for all the members.

**Gower (46:24):**

This--

**Swanson (46:26):**

Freedhem.

**Gower (46:26):**

--cooperative, own cooperative.

**Swanson (46:28):**

Well, now then we had to-- We didn't have the money. So we went to the bank in Brainerd and borrowed \$600 and we-- It was nine directors on the [inaudible 00:46:45], we called it [inaudible 00:46:45] then, [inaudible 00:46:47] consolidate that [inaudible 00:46:49] and we had to sign a

note, a personal note, the company didn't do it because the company wasn't in it. And if we didn't, we wouldn't have got any money from REA and we knew it. We either had the telephone company but we had to pay \$2,000 each. But then we'd have a telephone company, but that wouldn't do us any good.

**Gower (46:28):**

No, that would have been a little bit of a burden there.

**Swanson (47:02):**

So, then we went to Brainerd, we didn't get paid at all. We [inaudible 00:47:03] 30 miles, 22 miles from [inaudible 00:47:03], lots of trips up there. For nothing. And then we started getting paid, but they wouldn't pay us. We just put it on the book and [inaudible 00:47:34] REA and we got a few dollars. At last, he said, "We'll pay you today. I'll give you a check, but you've got sign the check and hand it back." We had to buy stock in there. So, we got paid, but we didn't get no money. Well, we kept on [inaudible 00:48:01], we got our money from them. I was president then.

**Gower (48:05):**

But this company did okay then?

**Swanson (48:08):**

Well, they--

**Gower (48:09):**

They're still operating.

**Swanson (48:12):**

[inaudible 00:48:12], I'm still on the board.

**Gower (48:13):**

Oh, you're doing okay then.

**Swanson (48:15):**

[inaudible 00:48:15] and we got about what? 4,000 phones. And we got city of Randall, and Motley--

**Gower (48:28):**

So, it covers a large area.

**Swanson (48:34):**

Oh yes, it covers from---- [inaudible 00:48:36] whole list, Freedhem is the last one and that goes down half a mile from 27, that's our last phone. But then the Bell [inaudible 00:48:46] the trick too, and I went to South [inaudible 00:48:50] for a new company. I went to all our old customers first. And that was within a quarter of a mile of Little Falls. And I sold them telephones. Then of course Bell comes out [inaudible 00:49:00] we'll take them out. So, they took, within two miles of Little Falls and there was, four and a half miles this way, that's where the line was, and they took everything west to the river. Then I was going to give them their money back. Like before when we wanted to give them, they wouldn't take it. But now they took it.

**Gower (49:35):**

So, there've been quite a few cooperative things around here in the--

**Swanson (49:38):**

Yeah, well there's--

**Gower (49:39):**

Creamery and the telephone and--

**Swanson (49:43):**

Well, the telephone does pretty good now, we get private lines everywhere. And that's better than Bell. You have people around the country have got party line. You know, they run [inaudible 00:50:01] private line [inaudible 00:50:04]. We [inaudible 00:50:05] eight bucks a month plus tax.

**Gower (50:10):**

It's higher than that in town.

**Swanson (50:13):**

Yeah. And it's [inaudible 00:50:17] double it.

**Gower (50:17):**

Oh, gosh.

**Swanson (50:20):**

So, I don't think they actually want it. To have a private line to--

**Gower (50:27):**

Share. Right. John, you got any other questions here?

**LaDoux (50:35):**

No. Not that I can think of.

**Gower (50:38):**

Okay, anything else you'd like to add here?

**Swanson (50:40):**

No, there is not.

**Gower (50:42):**

Okay. Anything you'd like to add here?

**Elle Swanson** ([50:45](#)):

No, I suppose he's told most of it. [inaudible 00:50:48]

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

Okay. Okay. That concludes this interview.