

**Helen Skov  
Narrator**

**John Esse  
Interviewer**

**February 8, 1977  
International Falls, Minnesota**

Helen Skov            **-HS**  
Ray Skov              **-Mr. Skov**  
John Esse             **-JE**

**JE:** Today is February 8, 1977 on a beautiful day up here in International Falls over by the Loman area. I have the privilege this morning of taping Helen Skov - Mrs. Ray Skov, who was born in Fairland. What year were you born in Mrs. Skov?

**HS:** 1918.

**JE:** The year the big war ended.

**HS:** I ended it (laugh).

**JE:** You were born in the Fairland area?

**HS:** Yes.

**JE:** Where is Fairland from here?

**HS:** It's about 25 miles west of Loman.

**JE:** Were you folks homesteaders?

**HS:** Yes. My father filed on a claim at around 1902.

**JE:** Where did your parents come from originally?

**HS:** My father came from Norway - he was born in Flekkefjord, Norway in 1882.

**JE:** Do you know how to spell that?

**HS:** F-l-e-k-k--e-f-j-o-r-d.

**JE:** So you're Norwegian. Is Ray Norwegian, by the way?

**HS:** Oh yes, he's Norwegian. Three years ago I had the opportunity to go over to Flekkefjord to visit my dad's home.

**JE:** That's great. My granddad comes from Norway and I'd like to go there someday myself. Now, you were born in Fairland in 1918. You must remember the little school house that you went to.

**HS:** I sure do. The first year my brother and I went to school we had to board out. We lived in a little cabin in the yard of the Bennock School and that's where we put in our first year. By the second year another family had moved up near Fairland and they had some children and they would hold school for 5, so we had our own school about a quarter of a mile from our home and that's where I went the next 7 years of schooling - in that little homesteader's shack that was made over into a school.

**JE:** I'm looking at the picture of the building that Ray just gave to me. It's a log cabin type, old roof on the top. Do you recall the name of your teacher?

**HS:** I had several teachers. My first teacher up there was Emma Johnson from Birchdale. Then we had Celia Massey from Little Fork, Mary Wirt from the Falls, Myrtle Olson from our area here - I had several teachers.

**JE:** You named Mary Wirt - would that be any connection with Wirt, Minnesota?

**HS:** She's Mrs. Now. She came from Tennessee.

**JE:** There's about 7 kids on this picture. Was that about the size of the number of kids that were in your school?

**HS:** That was taken years after I was in school; my twin sisters were still in there. Yes - it varied from 5 to maybe 10, 11. I had one sister Hazel that went through all 8 years in that one building and she never had another person in her class. She was the only one in her class the whole 8 years.

**JE:** She was the top of her class.

**HS:** She was the top and the bottom (laugh).

**JE:** When you look back at those days of growing up in the Fairland area, were there a lot of homesteaders?

**HS:** There were many - the whole woods was dotted with homestead shacks.

**JE:** Are there many of those people left anymore?

**HS:** No there isn't, As far as I know, Ray's father and this Oscar Lindball that's in a rest home in Little Fork ate the only two original homesteaders.

**JE:** Did they make much of a living there, or was it raising cows?

**HS:** When they first went up there around 1900, the government was selling land at that time; they could get 160 acre tract. Anyone who filed a claim and stay long enough to prove up on it - that meant putting a house on and making some clearing - that gave them title to the timber as well. Of course, that was known as the Homestead Act. Many of them lived in this cabin just long enough to prove up and down it and then they left. But there was quite a number of them that toughed it out.

**JE:** Was there timber left on this land? What was it like when you grew up - was it burned over, was it cut over, was there timber on there?

**HS:** It was all woods - all timber. And it was cut and put on the rivers and taken out in the drives in the spring.

**JE:** What kind of a building - home - did you have? Did your father build a place?

**HS:** My father built his homestead shack at first and just before - I suppose around 1913 - he put up a better home. It was a log building, but it had a frame building attached to it... That's what he was living in at the time when he was married in 1914. That's the home I grew up in.

**JE:** So your father came up here single and married your mother.

**HS:** He married a gal from southern Minnesota that had never seen the woods. She often recalled her first trip up to the homestead. I believe she came by train to International Falls and there I presume it was boat to Loman. I know from Loman and on it was horseback.

**JE:** How did your folks meet? Was your dad familiar with those people around there in southern Minnesota?

**HS:** When he came to this country he had some cousins in Mora, Minnesota. He went to them and he done field work in and around New Richland, Minnesota, and in that area; my mother lived in New Richland, that's where he met her. Then it was a letter correspondence.

**JE:** Can you possibly imagine this gal sitting down there in southern Minnesota, not knowing what this territory was like, and then coming up here to International Falls and floating down the river to a place called Loman?

**HS:** And when they were on horseback, of course there was more a less of a trail, but part of the road had corduroy - that's where they cut these trees and lay them side by side - of course, the horse would step on one end and the other end would fly up and hit him in the tummy and the horse would lunge; you had to just about go for a ride. And of course, her long skirts were

hanging in the mud and water; she was quite a sight by the time she saw her home. Most people, I suppose, would have turned around and gone back (laugh). But once she was there, she was there to stay. There were many, many homesteaders around, but it was quite rare to see a woman. Earlier before she went up there, there were quite a few women that homesteaded, but most of them have proved out and moved out.

**JE:** Did your father keep that farm - is that farm still in your family?

**HS:** The farm has been in the family up until last year; we sold it. He had the store and I think in 1913 or so we opened up a post office. That is the farm we lived on; we had cattle and done woods work and the store and that was our living.

**JE:** Now, you stayed here, and Ray stayed here, all of your lifetime in Loman?

**HS:** Yes. This is the house we built in '38, the year we were married.

**JE:** It's kind of amazing - did you ever have any desire to get away from the Loman area?

**HS:** No - not really. I'm quite satisfied here. In fact, I was 40 years old before I ever got out of the State of Minnesota. I've sure traveled since then. But really, I'm always glad to get back.

**JE:** When you were in this grade school that I'm looking at here, did this teacher - in other words, she covered all the eighth grades?

**HS:** All eight grades. Several years the teachers boarded at our house - stayed at our house. A couple of years they lived upstairs of that school building.

**JE:** What did you do for a library, or anything like that? Was there any traveling books system around?

**HS:** Each fall there'd be a large box of books come and that was for our school books and that was our library books too. They were exchanged maybe once a year, the library books.

**JE:** Looks like you've got a barrel stove probably in the place.

**HS:** No, it was a box stove. They had a jacket around it and it never did throw out any heat. We'd all sit around the stove with our feet over the jacket trying to keep them warm. Ice would freeze on the floor by the teacher's desk.

**JE:** Can you remember some of the names of the neighbors you had?

**HS:** The families that went to school with us - Nels Mose had children, Paul and they were the main ones that went while I was going to school. Later on there were some new families moved in.

**JE:** What did you do for entertainment?

**HS:** We made our own.

**JE:** Were there dances in the homes?

**HS:** Not as I grew up there wasn't, no. In the pioneer days in that building you're looking at, that was the dance hall. They had parties there then. We didn't have dances.

**JE:** I notice it's pretty flat area around here - you didn't do much sleighing or anything like that did you?

**HS:** Well, the only thing we had to play with in the winter really was a set of skis. We had our skis and we had a sled. We just went out skiing and made our own fun.

**JE:** How did you and Ray meet? Was Ray around here all the time?

**HS:** He was around. He took a job one year measuring land for the government or something - I don't know - anyway he happened to straggle up here and he stayed here ever since (laugh).

**JE:** Amazing how these guys happened to just bounce in once in a while isn't it?

**HS:** I think I knew all of the other family outside of him long before I knew him. His father homesteaded up here near my dad.

**JE:** Now your church over here is Bethany Lutheran Church. Did you go to that church, Helen, when you were young?

**HS:** When we were young we - like I say - I was 14 years old before we ever had a car so we didn't get out to church. Often ministers would come up there and hold church in this little building, this little school house, and then some of the summers two missionaries would come up and hold two weeks' bible school. We was lucky enough to have one teacher that was able to go ahead with Sunday School. The two years she was there we always had our Sunday school. And that was as far as we got in the church.

**JE:** So, a lot of the people really had a very difficult time to get over here to Loman to actually attend church services.

**HS:** Oh yes. I can remember when the travelling ministers used to come around when we were still young. This one afternoon, quite late in the afternoon, this minister came and dad thought, well there's an opportunity to have the twins and Hazel baptized. Just before dark he started out on about a 6 mile hike to round up a sponsor. The ministers walked from place to place in those years.

**JE:** What did you do for a store? You said your dad ran a post office?

**HS:** He had his own store.

**JE:** He had a store too.

**HS:** He had general merchandise.

**JE:** Was that on the highway here?

**HS:** That was at Fairland - right on the homestead. They couldn't get anything up in the summer so it all had to be hauled in so there was barrels and barrels of salt pork - anything that would keep.

**JE:** Do you recall any of the prices - which they probably sold salt pork for?

**HS:** Well, it was cheap. I remember even back in 1936 when he died there was - we sold some cattle to the camp that year and we got 8 cents a pound.

**JE:** You mentioned about selling to camps - how long were those camps around here? When you grew up were there camps in this area?

**HS:** Ja, there were camps up around home.

**JE:** Do you recall anything about these camps at all - did you ever go out blueberry picking and get into those camps when they were empty?

**HS:** No, we didn't do that. We used to go to them once in a while when they were in operation and they always gave us a piece of pie or something that was quite a treat. (laugh)

**JE:** Were camps, Helen, log camps or were they board structures?

**HS:** Board. In fact this house is made out of one that Ray tore down.

**JE:** I notice that you have some things written down here Helen.

**HS:** Well, it was just to remind me of some things. There was one incident - I suppose it would be classed as some of the hardships they went through - there was one lady up here, her name was Mrs. Hamm; she got very, very sick. Some way they got word to Dr. Craig in International Falls, and that would be a good 50, 60 miles away. And he come up there and he said that she had to be taken out - he was sure it was acute appendicitis. So they put out a call - he said they would need at least 12 men. While they were rounding up these 12 men, which didn't take too long, he made a stretcher and they carried this woman 12 miles to Birchdale with a horse and dray coming behind to carry the men as they got tired, and they would rest, And they got to Birchdale and the river was frozen, so they got across to Stranton and then they got her down to Fort Francis and from there to the Falls and into Dr. Craig's hospital and he operated on her. Of course, he was with her the whole walk, you know. She lived and a few weeks later she walked back to her homestead. They stopped at a family named Oakquist and she had got word ahead

then and had a new fresh bunch of men there to carry on and she had coffee and that ready for them when they got there. And that was the first Dr. Craig had eaten since he left International Falls.

**JE:** When was the first time you recall going to International Falls?

**HS:** I was 6 years old I think it was when my mother and us 5 went to visit her home in New Richland and I remember seeing the Falls then, but all we did was get a room and sit there until the train come.

**JE:** So you went back down to New Richland with your mother. I imagine your mother was quite happy

**HS:** I imagine she was.

**JE:** We talk about tough winters, such as this past winter. Do you look upon this as a very tough winter in comparison to the ones you've gone through?

**HS:** No, I don't. I remember that we had real cold weather and we always had an awful lot of snow. So I don't figure that this is any exception. One thing about it, when we grew up there pretty much by ourselves, we never caught any of the sicknesses that most children get like measles, mumps and chicken pox. I was blessed with all that when my own kids got them (laugh). I went through the whole thing. When we were kids we did have scarlet fever and whooping cough and we had to have Dr. Craig out from the Falls when we had whooping cough. All he done was - no, when we had scarlet fever - all he done was leave a bottle of oil and said the stuff my mother was using was just as good. I guess we would have lived even if he hadn't of come.

**JE:** Helen, were there very many Indians around here?

**HS:** No. I don't ever remember Indians.

**JE:** How about the Canadian side? Were there any Indians over there?

**HS:** I don't know. They have their reservation now across the river, but I don't know what it was then.

**JE:** Did you ever get across the river very much and visit the Canadian side?

**HS:** No.

**JE:** Looking at this map on page 28 and 29, it seems like there were an awful lot of homesteads along the rivers.

**HS:** That was where they built was along the rivers - that was the means of travel.

**JE:** What rivers - for the record - did you live on a river?

**HS:** Yes, right on Black River.

**JE:** Is Black River just an independent river by itself flowing into. .

**HS:** Into Rainy River at Loman.

**JE:** And you have of course the Bigfork and the Little Fork rivers going in, What is the Sparrow Trail that's on here?

**MR. SKOV:** I don't know why they made it that name, but the Black River road comes up to there and branches (unclear)

**HS:** The Forestry named that and it's evidentially after one of their foresters. That I don't know. The one that goes across here to Birchdale, that was called the Sandsmark Trail - that was named after my dad,

**JE:** This Sylvia Kohaas - was she a homesteader?

**HS:** They lived 1/2 mile beyond us. They had a family of 12 children.

**JE:** They had a family of 12. What did people do when they had all these children - you know, homestead place - did they just build a bigger house?

**HS:** It's surprising how many you get in a small house. And there was always room for somebody else - they always had room for stoppers. It wasn't like the days today.

**JE:** Here's Mr. and Mrs. Snodgrass. That's a different name.

**HS:** (unclear)

**JE:** Are a lot of these guys single or did they have families?

**HS:** A lot of them when they came in was single, several of them married up here. A few brought in families. That was why the schools varied. Before we started school they had 2, 3 other buildings they used for schools, but they kept the school in the area where the most children were.

**JE:** Helen, I'm looking at a picture of the Snodgrass home, it looks like there's screening on the door. Did you have screen doors?

**HS:** Yes, there was screen doors because the mosquitoes were so terrible in the summer, you had to have something.

**JE:** I imagine this territory had its share of mosquitoes.

**HS:** They were terrible.

**JE:** Your folks had cattle? Did they raise dairy cows at all?

**HS:** We churned butter and sold it at the store. We sold beef. We had a few chickens and supplied customers with eggs.

**JE:** And your dad did logging I suppose?

**HS:** He done some logging, yes.

**JE:** What was food like? Do you remember a lot of canned food, or did your mother do a lot of canning?

**HS:** Yes, we done a lot of canning. Well, like meat - some was smoked; some was fried down in lard to preserve. In the winter we lived on fresh beef.

**JE:** I suppose that's about the only time you could really have fresh beef.

**HS:** We couldn't have it in the summer. Sunday dinner we'd kill a chicken - that was a treat.

**JE:** How about hunting? Were there a lot of ducks or were there deer around?

**HS:** My dad was no hunter, so I have no idea what hunting was. There was a lot of moose when they first come to the country and then the deer moved in and the moose moved out. When my dad first came there was a lot of moose.

**JE:** I suppose as the territory got cut over the moose moved out and the deer came in.

**HS:** It seemed that way.

**JE:** These homesteader shacks, Helen, look pretty much alike in size and so forth.

**HS:** Yes they do.

**JE:** Do you still have your homesteader house on your old place?

**HS:** No - it was taken down.

**JE:** Are there still some old homesteader places around?

**HS:** Well, that picture of the school is one of them. There isn't too many homesteaders left - in fact, most of the fields have grown up and planted with trees,

**JE:** I'm looking at a picture here of Mr. and Mrs. Zig Skov and sons. Is that your dad? (pause) That's you right in the middle there? Sitting on a pile of pine. What were your parents' names?

**HS:** My father was Ole and my mother was Ora.

**JE:** This book goes back a long ways doesn't it?

**HS:** To around 1900.

**JE:** Ray, when were you born?

**MR. SKOV:** 1915.

**JE:** Now Mrs. Skov, you still have some things there that you've written down. Why don't we get that on here?

**HS:** Well, I guess I've covered most of it. Like as children, we were never short of anything to do - the wood box was always empty, so was the water pail, it seems like the slop bucket was always full (laugh). And we cut our own wood with a Swede saw - very bad one. And of course we had chores - cows to milk, butter to churn, cheese to make, raise a large garden and picked lots of berries. After all, it was fun I guess - growing up.

**JE:** Friends were close I would imagine.

**HS:** More neighborly than they are now.

**JE:** Ray, you weren't born in this area?

**MR. SKOV:** Near Mankato.

**JE:** Why in the world did your folks move up in this country?

**MR. SKOV:** Don't ask me - they don't know themselves. (Laugh) They thought cheap land, you know; they figured it was going to boom, but it just never had any market up here.

**JE:** The Mankato area, that's some fine country down there - that's some beautiful farm land.

**MR. SKOV:** They was farming on a big place down there too when they took off for up here.

**JE:** Did you dad - and Helen this is a good question for you too - did your parents ever really think that this was good farm country up here?

**MR. SKOV:** Well, they thought it was going to be.

**JE:** They didn't know much about the weather and the shortness of the climate.

**MR. SKOV:** Well, they should have though because they homesteaded up here.

**JE:** There were a lot of these log companies that were selling and sometimes they made it sound very rosy about beautiful chances and so forth. I think a number of people got taken in by this and came up to this country and thought that this was going to be a good farming territory and it never really proved out to be that way.

**MR. SKOV:** Well, you know, back in the - well, all the time when I was growing up - it seemed like we had a lot of snow then - snow always about 4 feet of snow on the level. We'd ski right over the fences - you couldn't even see the fence posts. We always had good crops them days. But now it's nothing.

**JE:** Getting drier do you think, or what?

**MR. SKOV:** Could be. Tractors instead of horses.

**JE:** Get the natural fertilizer back on the land.

**MR. SKOV:** And the tax is so much.

**JE:** Where did your dad - did your dad homestead then?

**MR. SKOV:** Ja, he was up there at Fairland - one of those on the map - down along the Black River (pause)

**HS:** And his mother lived over in here somewhere.

**MR. SKOV:** Her and one of her sisters and a brother and her dad - I guess they all had homesteads up there.

**JE:** So they didn't just come up here by themselves.

**MR. SKOV:** No. But my dad - him and a couple of his neighbors came up to homestead, down by Mankato.

**JE:** What kind of timber was actually up here? Was it pine, or was it spruce?

**MR. SKOV:** Mostly spruce. There was quite a little pine too. A big part of it was spruce. Poplar and aspen didn't come in until the spruce was cut off.

**JE:** Now you've got mostly popple. Who ran these camps? Was there a company that ran these camps, or were they jobbers?

**MR. SKOV:** It was companies that ran them - they had their foreman's.

**JE:** What companies were operating in this area?

**MR. SKOV:** Backus and Brooks was the biggest.

**JE:** That's International Falls.

**MR. SKOV:** Yes. Then later sold out to Mandel, is the name of the company, then they sold to Boise.

**JE:** How big were some of these camps - well, you worked in a camp?

**MR. SKOV:** No.

**JE:** You never worked in a camp? Did you have a chance to visit these camps?

**MR. SKOV:** A couple of them.

**JE:** How big were these camps - I mean, as far as man-size? It's pretty tough to - not unless you were there at chow time or something like that.

**MR. SKOV:** I was young, I can't remember.

**JE:** All horse work?

**MR. SKOV:** Yes.

**JE:** Sleighs and drays, I suppose?

**MR. SKOV:** Yes.

**JE:** Now, did they haul out logs or did they haul out long stuff?

**MR. SKOV:** No, it was logs and some pulp.

**JE:** Of course, what we call pulp today - we think of popple. What they'd think of pulp back in those days was usually spruce wasn't it?

**MR. SKOV:** Ja.

**JE:** And that, I suppose, went down these rivers like the ones you guys lived on like the Black River.

**MR. SKOV:** I've seen several drives come down the Bigfork River. The highlight of our career was when the wannigan would come down. Us kids would be down there, get filled up on cookies and cake and pie.

**JE:** I want to ask you some questions about the wannigan. How long do you think those things were?

**MR. SKOV:** Well, I suppose somewhere between - it's pretty hard to remember just exactly - but I'd say somewhere close to 24 feet.

**JE:** Did they have the stove right inside?

**MR. SKOV:** Oh yes.

**JE:** Did you ever get inside those wannigans?

**MR. SKOV:** Oh ja.

**JE:** I'm trying to pick your mind on these wannigans so try to remember as best you can, I'm trying to think of what kind of a stove that they had in those wannigans. When you take a look at the old camp ranges, those are big substantial, heavy pieces of equipment. Did they put those big camp ranges in there, or what do those stoves look like?

**MR. SKOV:** As far as I can recall - I'm pretty sure they had - like in the cook shack, they had one of them big ranges. The two wannigans were fastened together with a gangplank between them; the bunkhouse and the cook shack.

**JE:** So the bunkhouse - eating and the sleeping were connected together.

**MR. SKOV:** Ja. Well, they were on two separate.

**JE:** Scows. I suppose all the pots and the pans hanging inside and outside. Did you ever get a chance to get inside that sleeping wannigan? What was that like?

**MR. SKOV:** It was just bunks along the wall - double bunks along the wall.

**JE:** Were those made out of wood?

**MR. SKOV:** Oh ja.

**JE:** So it was just something where you could bed down for the night.

**MR. SKOV:** It was just a straw tick or something like that, the way it looked.

**JE:** Now, those wannigans came down I suppose the Little Fork River and Bigfork River, imagine by the time you get down in this country, Ray, you don't have too many big rocks or snags in the rivers do you?

**MR. SKOV:** Well, they had the bridge down there - the old railroad spur that came down to Loman where they loaded the stuff, It would always jam up above the bridge there, Sometimes

they'd have to use dynamite to bust it loose.

**JE:** So they stopped it from going into the Rainy River then?

**MR. SKOV:** Ja.

**JE:** They must have put a boom across there.

**MR. SKOV:** No, when it got past the bridge it would go right on down and they boomed it down by Loman. But to get it through that narrow channel

**JE:** That's right, you're coming down the river, that's going to turn left and she'll boom down at - right at Loman she'll stop and the river flows that direction. And then they haul it to.

**MR. SKOV:** International Falls. (Unclear).

**JE:** I imagine there was an awful lot of wood that came out of there.

**MR. SKOV:** Oh ja, One time the water dropped right after it jammed up down here and the wood was there for a whole year or better. It was piled way up above the water level. Us kids, we were crawling under, over, around and through them logs every chance we could get down there.

**JE:** I imagine if you get low water - like that film we saw last night with such high water and then all of a sudden she went down - they had a heck of a job. Were there camps around here into the '30s and '40s, or when did, do you think your camp life around this area really ended?

**MR. SKOV:** Well, I don't think there was any in the '40s. See, the last of the drives was the one that came down the Little Fork River. Oh, I guess they had some small camps around I

**JE:** No big company camps. I suppose the last one would be the drive of 1937, really.

**MR. SKOV:** They had some camps - they'd haul the stuff out loaded on flat cars - they'd haul it out with horses and load it on flat cars.

**JE:** What year were you and Helen married?

**MR. SKOV:** '38.

**JE:** Were you married over here in the Bethany Church?

**MR. SKOV:** Ja.

**JE:** And you raised your family here? Is your family still around?

**MR. SKOV:** Well, the oldest boy lives down by Shakopee - he forgot to stop growing.

**JE:** Big kid?

**MR. SKOV:** 6'5" and weighs about 250 pounds. My daughter lives down near Buffalo, Minnesota, and my youngest son is out in California.

**JE:** Any regrets about staying around this country?

**MR. SKOV:** No - I tell ya, sometimes it would be nice to go and look over other country, but we've traveled quite a little in the last few years and every time we get back I can tell with my eyes shut when we cross the Minnesota line - and the sky is bluer, the grass is greener.

**JE:** There were a lot of homesteaders back in those days, did their kids stay around - did their kids move away?

**MR. SKOV:** There's some at the Falls.

**HS:** Most of them moved out.

**JE:** Why, Helen - wasn't there enough to do around?

**HS:** Well, lack of jobs for one thing and schooling for another.

**JE:** Do you think they didn't like the homestead type of life - or did they want more out of life? I'm trying to figure - if you could raise 12 kids as this one couple did and do it well - with all the land that's around here, why not stay?

**MR. SKOV:** There was more than just that one family - I don't know how many - I think (unclear) must have had about 12. I don't know how many Manasa's family had.

**HS:** I guess Mr. Updahl moved away from there - I think one of the children was born here at Loman. He built that house right near the Loman School and I think we went more in farming.

**JE:** Was the land any good?

**MR. SKOV:** Well, for some things. You see, we've got sour ground here and it raises beautiful potatoes. We've got the best potato country in the whole United States as far as I'm concerned.

**JE:** You don't raise potatoes any more.

**MR. SKOV:** No, we just can't do it.

**JE:** Row about grain? Is the season a little bit too short for oats?

**MR. SKOV:** No - Ted Smith over there, he had wonderful oats last year. Have you talked with him yet?

**JE:** No I haven't. I suppose corn is kind of out?

**MR. SKOV:** Of, ja, the season is too short for corn. But years ago we used to raise that Minnesota 13. That was a late corn. But we can't do it anymore. In fact, a lot of times we have trouble raising any sweet corn.

**HS:** The season has changed an awful lot.

**MR. SKOV:** That Minnesota 13 - that was a heavy, damp corn and that was a real late crop.

**JE:** And also by the Baudette area - there's a lot of big farms. I don't know if that's richer land or.

**HS:** You notice your farms follow the river.

**JE:** Ja. All one has to do is take a look at this map and you can see that.

**MR. SKOV:** This swamp here is 70-some miles wide by 70-some miles long and just along the river and that's the only place there's high land.

**JE:** I suppose over the years it builds up and that's where your rich soil is. (pause) Were you much of a hunter?

**MR. SKOV:** I did quite a little of it.

**JE:** Do you like deer hunting?

**MR. SKOV:** I love to hunt.

**JE:** Are there much in the way of ducks in this area?

**MR. SKOV:** No, we aren't in the flyway - Rosseau, then up there east of International Falls. We're in the middle zone - in-between.

**JE:** I notice in some of these pictures you've got big moose, a lot of partridges. I suppose that was before the time everything was cut out and popple grew up. Here's quite a picture here - 10 kids.

**HS:** That's the family that wrote the book.

**MR. SKOV:** They had a couple of them after they moved down to Loman.

**HS:** The oddity of it is, out of those 12 children, the first one to die was the youngest one and last October he was 54. The other 11 are still living.

**JE:** Here's something about Zig Skov - was another early day settler at Fairland, lived there between 1911 and 1915, homesteaded on the Upper Black River. This person doesn't know where it was he met his wife, Viola Crawford. Where did your dad meet.

**MR. SKOV:** He met her up there - she homesteaded up there. He was on the Upper Black and she was on the South Fork.

**JE:** I see. So both of them were homesteaders. Who sold the farm? Did she sell the farm or did he sell the farm? Who moved to where?

**MR. SKOV:** They both sold out after they moved out, They went to the central part of the state and was married, And then they moved up over here - a great big place, two places over here - big house and barn.

**JE:** So they were up here homesteading and that's where they met each other and then they moved down to central Minnesota and got married down there, And then they came back up again, Your mother must have been quite a gal to come up here and homestead.

**MR. SKOV:** The whole Crawford bunch was hunters, footloose and fancy free.

**JE:** Did they all come up here and homestead?

**MR. SKOV:** No. There were 2 girls - her sister the brothers and her dad.

**HS:** There was 9 children in her family... That - she homesteaded up there and then...

**JE:** Did the teachers - the one that stayed around here - get married or move on?

**HS:** While they were teaching they were single - the married women couldn't teach. I can remember, it isn't too many years ago when married women started to teach.

**JE:** (Looking at pictures) Is this the school house here?

**HS:** Yes - it's very apt to be one that was used for a school.

**JE:** Fourth of July celebration, the Severson family. What did you do on holidays - was Christmas a big time of the year - present-giving?

**MR. SKOV:** Oh yes. I remember one time - the Falls. He came home and I went back end - box on the sleigh. I was in and get my coat and cap on first it - he had seen them taking it down we never got to town - I imagine he had to go to out there and here I seen a nice sled in the going to play with it and he said no I had to go When I got back out there Santa's elves had taken the road. I had to wait until Christmas (laugh).

**JE:** So it was your sleigh but he hid it on you, (pause). This has been quite a life for both of you. You've been in this territory all of your lifetime, you've raised your family here and you certainly must know the people.

**MR. SKOV:** Oh ja. I remember one time when we had the Model T - there was no roads here, it was just a tote road - a couple of ruts. This one Sunday we took a drive - it happened to be a dry sunnier - I still remember the old spring with an old rusty tin can hanging on the bush and we had a drink of nice cold water because it was hotter than blazes.

**JE:** When did they put this road in out here?

**MR. SKOV:** I don't know - it was built little by little and kept improving it.

**JE:** Did you get into International Falls very much?

**MR. SKOV:** Not too much. When I was 8 I had to go to school down near Buffalo so they took me up to the Falls and got the train down to Big Lake.

**JE:** That used to be quite a wild town didn't it? I hear stories about International Falls. Are they true?

**MR. SKOV:** (laugh) I don't know.

**JE:** I imagine those days were a little bit different. Those towns.

**MR. SKOV:** Oh ja.

**JE:** Today we'd think they'd be terrible.

**MR. SKOV:** Every older generation thinks the younger generation.

**HS:** When we tell our grandchildren how we lived in those days they shake their head and say, "Golly grandma, you must have been poor."

**MR. SKOV:** (Laugh) We never had any money but we always had enough on the table to eat.

**JE:** People kind of equate money and happiness and it doesn't come that way.

**HS:** I was 14 when dad got our first car. It was really quite a thing but the roads weren't what you could really call roads. If you left in the morning you had to look the sky over good to see if it would rain because if it rained much you couldn't get home. But of all we traveled there was only one night that we sat in a mud hole all night. In daylight my brother walked the 5 miles home to get the team to pull us out. It was us 5 kids and my mother in the car and that's the first time in my life I ever my mother tell my brother to smoke. (Laugh) The matches were wet and he couldn't light the matches but as long as the motor was hot on the car he could light it. The

mosquitoes were so bad she thought if he could smoke in the car it would help keep the mosquitoes out. We were drenching wet.

**JE:** It sounds like you had an open car.

**HS:** No, it had windows on, but just the same, we was in and out of it, you know and the mosquitoes got in there. But that's the only night we ever spent on the road due to the weather.

**MR. SKOV:** I don't care what they say - a person's got all this high standard of living and everything else now - they aren't happy like they used to be when we had to make our own fun. We didn't get out to see how the other half lived,

**HS:** We had good mail service. The mailman came on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays to our post office and on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from his place (unclear). We could order something - say from Montgomery Ward - on Monday and it would be there by Friday. So actually we had good mail service. And then in later years we had telephones.

**JE:** That's the same telephone service you've still got today apparently.

**HS:** Well, it would be the crank phone, single line running through.

**JE:** Well, I want to thank both of you very much - Helen, Ray. It's a pleasure to be in your home and sit and reminisce about the old days. It's a period of time that is gone and good memories about it and that's something to preserve.

**MR. SKOV:** I got quite a kick out of my dad and Oscar Lindball reminiscing about the homestead days.

**JE:** Now Oscar's down at the.

**MR. SKOV:** Rest home in Little Fork. They're the same age and were married the same year and as far as they know they're the only two left of the old homesteaders.

**JE:** And they came up here...

**MR. SKOV:** 1911 or 12.

**JE:** There weren't too many around up here at that time.

**MR. SKOV:** No, but it was built up pretty good.

**JE:** I think International Falls/started back around 1908 or something like that.

**MR. SKOV:** I've seen pictures of the Falls back in the early days - just boardwalk, roads for streets.

**JE:** International Falls is really not that old of a town...

Well, thank you very much. Do you have any special story you want to tell me about - any incidents?

**MR. SKOV:** No.

Forest History Oral History Project  
Minnesota Historical Society