

Interview with Henry Bolinski

May 31, 1978

Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection

St. Cloud State University Archives

Interviewed by John Simonett

Simonett: Today is May 31, 1978. I am John Simonett of the Benton County Historical Society Research staff. The interview is with Henry Bolinski – B-o-l-i-n-s-k-i – of Sauk Rapids who is living presently at Good Shepherd Lutheran Home in Sauk Rapids, Minnesota. Henry is a past county commissioner. He served two terms in the time of the bridge construction across the Mississippi River here in Sauk Rapids, and that bridge was erected over seven years, from 1941 to 1948. Construction was interrupted by World War II. Bolinski talks briefly about the formative years of the Farmer/Labor Party in the Benton County area and Minnesota, generally. He has other political commentary. It's a good interview. And now, the interview.

Bolinski: I was born out here in Poople Creek in a little house there. It's removed just the last year. And I started school there in Poople Creek, public school. When I was seven years old, my people sold the farm and we moved to town here. My father got a job as a laborer, and he worked and I went to, we all went to school – the rest of our family. Right now, there's only one – I'm the only one left of the Bolinski family here. I still have two sisters and two brothers that are living, but they're in the West. So we all lived in town. In fact, lived in the house that I practically lived in myself until I built my own – got married and built my own. That's only a few blocks away. I'm just in the transaction of cleaning it up, and that's where I went to school, and we were polish people. And at home, we came here to Sauk Rapids. We went to this German

school that used to be here – German Lutheran school. That’s public. And in school, we spoke German and on the street we spoke English and at home we spoke Polish. When I went to town, Mother told me what to get in the Polish language and then we would go to town and buy from the grocers that were here at the time – Daggett, and Coborn and Sparrow and those people. But I gradually learned to speak the English language, too. And I spoke the German language also. Then I started, as I grew up, we went to high school – to the public school. We finished catechism in the parochial school, then we went to the public school and finished eight grade, and then we were on our own. We had to go and make a living. I went to the paper mill at that time and got a job over there. And then, by the way, I got a job in the electrical end of it. So I worked in that department. In fact, that’s where I learned my trade. From there on, I was refined in the electrical business and I kept working at it. Then we, naturally, got to going, and I had a late girlfriend here. She’s gone now. We lived together over 53 years. We celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary years ago. Wonderful girl. Then World War I came along and I was just in the prime of life. Like myself, Jack Gazett from --

Simonett: -- Rice

Bolinski: Rice, and the long boys from around here. See, we all were drafted. In fact, Greenwalk – Walter Greenwalk - I was drafted with him and we got to Foley and from Foley we got to Fort Snelling and from Fort Snelling I got as far as – there, we had an examination, and I happened to have a hernia and he says ‘Well, who sent you here?’ I says ‘Well, I was drafted. Here’s my card.’ ‘Well,’ he says ‘You call me a crippled. You’re a ruptured. You go to go back.’ ‘Oh’ I says ‘No, I can’t go back.’ I says ‘I arranged my things at home and everything, I’m ready to go. I got to keep on going.’ Well he talked a little rough on the army language and he says ‘Well, darn, we’ll send you from here to the next camp and let them catch you there.’ And I think we

did. Walter Greenwald was there with me, and we chummed a little bit together and so did the Long boys. And I got to camp and there, they caught me also. I kept holding it back, but they had to roll us out at night for examination. And they found that hernia, and they says 'You'd better go back home.' And I says 'No, I don't want to go back home. I want to stay in. I'm in here now.' 'Well,' he said, 'You want to go to a hospital and get fixed up?' I said 'Yah, I'll go to the hospital.' So, Walter Greenwald and I, they caught him, he was getting a little nervous, so we went to the hospital, both of us. I got my hernia fixed up and I was ready to leave the hospital, and Walter Greenwald stayed there and he stayed there and stayed in the Vets Hospital in Minneapolis until he died up to a few years ago. But I kept right on going. See, we got into France and got back here and went back to work. We'll skip the rest of the army. Went back to work to St. Cloud, got a job. I worked for the Public Service Company before that so, and the Pan Motor Company, I worked for them.

Simonett: Is that right?

Bolinski: Yah, and they threw a party for me yet when I was leaving at the Pan Motor Company. The boys at that time were old enough. The took a bottle out and we had a party at Ernest's, at a saloon where Herberger is, next to Herberger.

Simonett: In, in St. Cloud?

Bolinski: St. Cloud, yah. We had a party and had champagne, but we lived through it, and I went to the army with it, come back feeling all right and went to work back at the electrical work. I think I got a job at Axle Electric at that time and I worked there for 13 years and then I started going in for business for myself and I've been contracting for myself ever since.

Simonett: Electrical work?

Bolinski: All electrical work, all the time, yah. Houses and stuff like that, see.

Simonett: Henry, if I could ask you where – now your friend, Greenwald, how come he stayed in the Vets Hospital?

Bolinski: Because he has a nervous breakdown. I went over, seem him several times in the Vets Hospital. He had a nervous breakdown. It was too much for him. It would have been too much for lots of boys. It has been a lot, too much, for lots of boys. I think the Polish blood in me kind of roughed it over a little bit and I made it, and I'm glad I made it. I'm glad I made it, and I come back her and as I say, I went to work at electrical and I've been at the electric work, and joined the Legion. Was with the Legion and stand 100% with them and the boys – 90% with me there, treat me fine and I just--. And the firemen, too. There's a plaque there from the firemen that I got just the other day from them. And I was also on the Country Board. We'll jump a little bit here. I was the Councilman here on the Council and I worked a little politics here and there.

Simonett: Can you talk about that?

Bolinski: Sure I will. You betcha'. We had people running here like Claude Warren, used to run a curtain factory here and the hill was going up 1st, 2nd, 3rd Street up, that used to be steeper than it is now. He says 'That's the thing we'll lower down. They did cut down a little bit. Gradually, gradually it got so we could drive up and down the hill. Before, it was steep enough, that you'd have to drive carefully to go up and down the hill.

Simonett: Is that what they call Swede Hill?

Bolinski: No, no, no, this other hill is way down here. See, it's just around the Village Hall going up the hill.

Simonett: Okay.

Bolinski: That's the street. No, Swede Hill was there at the time.

Simonett: Oh and just while we're at it, can you spell Claude's last name?

Bolinski: Claude Warren.

Simonett: W-a-r-r-e-n?

Bolinski: Yah. Claude Warren. That was – you mean the Mayor that I'm talking about?

Simonett: I'm not sure.

Bolinski: Yah, he run for mayor.

Simonett: Once in a while, I'll just stop you to get spellings and names.

Bolinski: That's what we did. He done that and after that then, we got elected Mishall, and I was on the council then, too. From there, we got on--. The country happened to split districts, and split Sauk Rapids, and before that, they moved the courthouse away from Sauk Rapids, and that was an ill feeling between Foley and Sauk Rapids, I think to this day. A little friction.

Simonett: Yah, really.

Bolinski: Because they moved that courthouse at night, they just come up here and moved the books and all. The courthouse was gone.

Simonett: John Foley did?

Bolinski: Well, yah, setting it straight.

Simonett: Well, they had a vote on it though, didn't they?

Bolinski: Oh well, yah, sure they had a vote on it. They pulled it over, see. And it's there yet. We had to vote over that, too, but they split the district. This Holdridge was a big man on the county then, and he said 'We'll split the district here. We'll split so that Sauk Rapids won't have any commissioner.' But it so happened that I was running for county board. The boys put me up to run for county board, and put up John Linbloom. He was a policeman here, to run for – we had two districts here so that Foley thought neither one could get it, but it so happened that both of us got elected so we had two commissioners from Sauk Rapids.

Simonett: Are you saying you were a county commissioner then?

Bolinski: Yah, at that time.

Simonett: Do you know about when that was?

Bolinski: Oh, I don't remember. That was quite awhile ago. Yah, John Linbloom and I were both county commissioners.

Simonett: That must have been after you got back from the war?

Bolinski: Oh Lord, yes. Oh yes.

Simonett: In the 1930s?

Bolinski: Yah, up in there somewhere. I don't remember those dates. But we were two, but we got along all right. Linbloom was a very good, smooth politician, and we got along with Holdridge. I was appointed. Schuman resigned – or Schulman got elected legislator, and then I took Schuman's place on the county board, see?

Simonett: I see.

Bolinski: Then I got on there and I kept on going until I served my term – two terms – and then I ain't running no more. But I was on that county board, and I enjoyed it. We built the bridge, the Sauk Rapids bridge. That was just an old rattle crap and we fought hand and foot and we took those commissioners, Linbloom and I, took those commissioner out many a night to get them, to persuade them to appropriate enough money so that they could help build the bridge. And through our – we had a very good country engineer – and through him we worked and the Highway Department. We finally got the bridge, an appropriation under the state, coming in to go ahead and build the bridge. Then the war come out and, of course, the bridge stopped – the construction of the bridge – till after the war, and then they went and finished it up. I wasn't on then, but the cornerstone on the bridge is still there. My name is still on that board, on that rock and so are the rest of the commissioners, see. You don't see it, but if you went to the rock, the names are on there, see.

Simonett: On the bridge?

Bolinski: On the bridge, yah.

Simonett: You must have worked with Joe Kotsmith then.

Bolinski: Oh yes. Very much. Joe Kotsmith some in after Harry Allison, see. I know Joe very well. So, and then from there on, I come back as a commissioner and kept on working and my family kept growing and growing. Putting them all through school.

Simonett: How many kids did you have?

Bolinski: I had three daughters – three wonderful daughters. We lived – my wife lived to be quite old. She died, as I said, when we celebrated our golden anniversary. No party because my wife was sickly, but the cards that came in, boxes – congratulations.

Simonett: Really?

Bolinski: Yah. Even from the governor, see.

Simonett: All right.

Bolinski: All those boys – politics, of course. As far as they were concerned, they didn't give a darn about Henry Bolinski, who he was, but I appreciated their card, see. But then I lived alone – now, I'm jumping a little farther ahead. But then my wife passed away and my daughters were all married so it was pretty tough living. I lived alone for five years, and they finally persuaded me to come in here, see. But I still am downtown with the boys at heart, and I'm at heart with the Legion and I'm at heart with the firemen. Like Harry Burns and them, he worked on the section and so that my brother, and we picked berries to make some money. All of us young kids did, see.

Simonett: Oh, you grew up with Harry – Harry Burns?

Bolinski: Oh, he's younger than I am. Oh yes, you betcha'. He comes in here every week pretty near. Not just to see me, but to see Donahue and we always have our chat.

Simonett: He's that lawyer in St. Cloud, isn't he/

Bolinski: Oh yes. Yes, he is. Very much so. His boys – he's got three boys – that are there, too. Now, I'm over there. See, now I'm over here. After my wife passed away and my two daughters – one is in Washington, D.C., she'll be here on the end of June for her graduation exercises.

That'll be around – it must have been thirty-five, forty years ago, but she's coming. She'll be here. I've been waiting for her. And I have one in Brainerd, one lives in Brainerd. He's a Prudential salesman – Zdunek – in Brainerd. During our golden wedding anniversary here in Sauk Rapids, I was on the Village Council. See, who was mayor then? I think he wasn't around to get me there, so the told me to go ahead. C. Amer Ancerson, he's the Mayor of Brainerd now. C. Amer Anderson?

Simonett: Yah?

Bolinski: He was also Governor. There was the four governors in the Tribune here last week, and I laughed when I saw him. I said 'You little rascal. I walked you around Sauk Rapids introducing you as governor of Minnesota and I, a poor little fly like Henry Bolinski, introducing the governor.' But I got a kick out of him. That's not of interest to anybody, but it's my life, and I've got to do it fast because you ain't got the time, and I haven't either. I could tell you more, I could show you pictures – only they're all in Brainerd – of old-timers that were here.

Simonett: Yah, I wish we could maybe get ahold of those. Well, that's all right. We can, you knw. Maybe if you wrote--.

Bolinski: Simonett:

Bolinski: Oh, she comes down. She'll be here tomorrow. She'll be here tomorrow. But I don't want to bring those boxes – that's a box of pictures that's way back from when we were kids.

Simonett: Are they labeled in the back so that a person could know what they were?

Bolinski: Oh, I imagine she probably knows. I'd have to ask her. We lived out here. We lived at one time, Popple Creek and over that settlement was mostly Protestant and Lutherans. Then

when you get beyond Popple Creek going towards Gilman, then it turned to be Polish Catholics. Then they'd be coming down with wood and everything and there was quite a friction between the Protestants and Lutherans coming down the line, see. To us it was a joke. To them, they meant to have the road, or else.

Simonett: They were hauling wood?

Bolinski: Wood down to town to sell it. Sell it where Coborn's Grocery Store is. Used to be a hotel there. David's Hotel and a market. She run a big hotel there and a bar and the wood market was there. They all parked wagons and wood there and everybody went there to buy cords of wood and so forth. Fed the horses and shod them. Charlie Logergreen the blacksmith shop right east of the corner because it didn't have the blacksmith shop at that time, of course, but later on he did, see. But Arensburger – there was across the road, used to be a long building where the blacksmith, there was a little doing there, see. I think old man Arensburger learned – well, not learned it – but he worked in blacksmith shop.

Simonett: Yah, Fermie was talking about that.

Bolinski: So the Kier's family lived there. Mrs. Kier, the old, old grandma was a great big woman and he was such a little squirt, the old father. I got a kick, I talked to a fellow here I know too. He's from Oak Park but he's been here in the county a long time. What else should I tell you?

Simonett: If you wanted to say something about radio or music maybe that you listened to?

Bolinski: I wouldn't be able to. I wasn't a musician. We had to be a working family so we all worked a little bit and we naturally had music. Not talented maybe, but we set out our songs and

had our instruments and had our bands and so forth. And we did have a nice band and here in town all the time. I think old man Sherbert is living yet in that St. Joseph Home in St. Cloud. He was a leader here, too. Oscar Krieg's father was a leader in the band, too.

Simonett: Okay. Are there any more political stories that you talk about, either locally or nationally or maybe in St. Paul?

Bolinski: Well, not so. I remember a thing about Harold Knutson. Was a Congressman for years and years here, and thought he never could get beat. I was up in politics at that time a little bit, too. And August Rogosheske and I, some more – Vanderslucce as here then, a newspaperman. He was a very strong Republican, very outspoken. The election come up for Knutson and this man Johnson from that's the lake here, from southern Minnesota, I can't say that man's first name – Congressman Jonson.

Simonett: Andrew?

Bolinski: No. we said then, I said then to him, I said 'Say, by God, Harold, you got trouble. You're going to get beat.' And he says 'No, Henry.' August Rogosheske thought so. He said 'I don't think so, Henry.' I said 'By God, it looks like it.' This man Johnson's gonna beat him. And sure enough, there was men out there electioneering that were strong, like August Cop and those fellows up here that come in here from Iowa. They were very strong. By God, when the election come, they sure as heck beat Harold Knutson for Congress. So Johnson stayed, and that was the beginning of the Farmer/Labor Party at that time, see. There was no Farmer/Labor Party before that, only what they created at that time. And they got themselves together and wanted to be known as Farmer/Laborers, see, and they did. They started there and it kept on going.

Simonett: It sure did.

Bolinski: And it's there now, but I think their back is broken now, that I think there is a chance for the Republican Party to come back in. Humphrey was the backbone of the Democratic Party or Farmer/Labor Party and he isn't here to do that, see. There isn't anyone that's goin' to take his place right now. We always had the spoils, the fight over the spoils of the thing, which is happening today in the political party in the state of Minnesota. I think they could do that, too. You didn't talk to Erstadt, he wasn't as strong a Republican as Wangey was or some of those others that were there. That were there yet.

Simonett: Now Rogosheske, he was Republican?

Bolinski: Oh, yes. Eddie, you know Eddie?

Simonett: No. I know Walter.

Bolinski: Oh Walter. He was here, Well, he's judge of the State Supreme Court.

Simonett: Yah.

Bolinski: That's the one you know?

Simonett: Yah.

Bolinski: Oh yah. Well, he comes here all the time. He's a fine fellow. LeVander appointed him. John T. Kosloske beat him.

Simonett: In '48?

Bolinski: Yah, for legislator. Then LeVander, they were friends with Walter and he put in as Judge of the Supreme Court. And I say to this day to John T. Kosloske, I says 'Hell, you made

out Rogsheske because you beat him and LeVander appointed him Justice which you can't beat now. And you're still running for lousy Legislator and lousy County Commissioner.'

Simonett: Really?

Bolinski: Well, that's the way the story is.

Simonett: That's true, isn't it.

Bolinski: It's the absolute truth. You betcha'. You can see that on any of the records. Well, there aren't any of those men living today that will tell you that. I don't know of one that could tell you that same thing as I'm telling you, which is the truth.

Simonett: This is why I came and talked to you.

Bolinski: Fermie Arensburger is a good old man, but he didn't play politics at the time that I played them, see. But Schuman knows it, only Schuman is a little shy in society. But that's the way the things are working here. And today, I'm not betting so much – the last few years I haven't been too well, but I watch my papers every day and watch everything that goes on. But John T. would admit he wouldn't want to admit that Walter put him in there as Justice, but I can say it because LeVander, Governor LeVander, appointed him, see, and there was Amer Anderson, that's the little squirt from Brainerd, he's the Mayor in Brainerd now, you know, which they're all good friends of mine. You'll find LeVander, you'll find Stassen, see, and then you'll find Rohlvog, and you'll find a fellow at the last – I can't remember his name, my memory isn't too good – were there yet. And I still am in hopes that we have a chance of getting a foothold here in the state of Minnesota. What else you want me to tell you? I don't know much.

Simonett: Let's see now. Oh, how about organizations like clubs or any of this type of thing that you might have been a part of?

Bolinski: Oh well, yes. At that times, we didn't have too many. We had such things as a Sportsman's Club, I think there's a ticket in there from 1913 where Neiman was still active in the Sportsman's Club.

Simonett: E.J.? Ed Neiman?

Bolinski: No, his name was E.W. – his father. At that time, sure, I belonged to – there was no Legion then, see – but I belonged to the Sportsman's Club and I belonged to the Fire Department, and then eventually, we belonged to the Legion. That I got in '70, see.

Simonett: That senior citizen?

Bolinski: Yah. I get a kick out of that.

Simonett: I thought you put your hand up there on purpose.

Bolinski: Yah, I did so you'd see it. I had it laying in the drawer here, and the girls come by here and say 'Why Henry, you don't want to leave them things lay there.' I says 'Well, they're good enough to pick up sometime and take them home.' And of course, that fireman I got the other day. The boys insisted that I come to their meeting that night. I didn't know that, but thet did have a banquet there, very good and treated me loyally.

Simonett: That's great.

Bolinski: Well, it was for a few of us old fellows. Like Fermie and I were the old ones – we got those and that, of course, is there all the time.

Simonett: You're Catholic, aren't you?

Bolinski: Oh no, I'm Lutheran

Simonett: Oh, okay.

Bolinski: Oh yes. Very much Lutheran. There's no ill feeling between me and the Catholic people. I got money to pay my way through here so far, I hope, and if I haven't, we have some in the state of Minnesota, and if we haven't, we have some in the United States government.

Simonett: That's right, Henry. You bet.

Bolinski: So, that's the way I feel.

Simonett: Did you want to talk anymore about --

Bolinski: No. About myself, I think I've talked too much now.

Simonett: How about what happened over in France?

Bolinski: Well, in France, yah, I did. I was in active service, I'll admit that, see. We landed from here. Shucks, we didn't know enough to change one gun to another, but we went there and we landed in LaHar. And from LaHar, France, it wasn't but a week and we were heading for the front lines, and we did. We went in the Argon, I was in the Verdune and Valchez Lorraine, and then we landed back here. And I was in a battle or two. In fact --. You got it on?

Simonett: Yah. That's all right. These are just war stories.

Bolinski: In fact, I was in the outhouse when the Germans start firing. They didn't fire all the time, but they did in the streets. And I thought 'By God, am I going to get killed here and not

even see a German?' And I felt kind of bad, but I got to see them and I'm glad I went there and I'm glad I come back as I am. And I think the world of the boys that have gone after me and that come back, and I stand with them 100%. Good enough?

Simonett: Uh-huh.

Bolinski: All right. What else you want?

Simonett: Any memories of the --. Oh, I was going to ask you. Neiman, is he the one that had the fruit farm?

Bolinski: His father did.

Simonett: You didn't know his father that well.

Bolinski: Oh, very well I knew his father. We called him Doc Neiman. We called him Doc Neiman, see. Rocky could tell you that a damn sight better than I could, see. He was on a court case one time. He was an Englishman and he spoke up bold. He says they called him to the judge, and he says 'What's your name?' 'My name is E.W. Neiman.' 'What's your business?' He says 'I'm a grafter.' Well, the judge looked at him and he says 'You're a grafter?' 'Yes, sir,' he said 'I'm a grafter.' Well, he thought he was on the crooked side. But he says 'What do mean by being up there. How'd you get in here to be a grafter?' He said, 'What kind of grafting is that?' He says 'I graft trees.' He says, 'I put potatoes on tomatoes and plums on apple trees.' See, he straightened him out. But I get a kick out of that one. Rocky tells me that. But I knew old man Neiman and old man Mishall. They were great pals.

Simonett: I was talking to Alice.

Bolinski: oh yes, yes she's a nice girl. She still lives alone in there?

Simonett: Yah.

Bolinski: Yah, she was married to Rudy Mishall.

Simonett: Right. Well, let's see, I should come up with some more good questions here. Anything that you may want to talk about, Henry, as far as the Lutheran Church and your participation in it?

Bolinski: Well, I was a young man when I came here. Yah, the Lutheran Church, we naturally went to the German school and I was confirmed in the German Language. I still have the German songbook and everything here. And I still speak German quite a bit around here. And I still have the polish songbook. I married a German girl, she's a Russeloski. She was a Russeloski, but they spoke German at home. She couldn't speak much Polish. But my mother couldn't speak any German. And we lived pretty close together, and my mother happened to be a hard woman. She had a hard life – a widow in those days. But my wife learned, talked Polish as good as anybody, and she sang in the Polish choir, and she read the German language, too. She communicated with her kins in Germany up until her death. Even after her death, I getting letters from them, begging her to write. Finally, I said, well now, Join is my brother-in-law and friend. I said to my daughter, I said, 'Now, Mertle, we can't do that.' I said, 'You sit down and type a letter up in English and tell them that Mother is gone.' We'll be glad I says to hear from them, but we won't be able to communicate like they did together. And she did that. So now, letters all stop here, and the letter I got here was about last year from Brazil. They had a, one of her, after the first World War I, their brother – not my wife's brother, but her uncle – left Germany and went to Brazil and settled there. And I think he done well because there was a letter came here

that time from Brazil to me. And I said well now – I took it to John, that’s my brother-in-law – I think you’ve met him already. John Kosloske? He used to be a plumber. I think you met him.

Simonett: Big John?

Bolinski: Yah, there’s only one John Kosloske. I said, ‘John,’ I says, “You take that letter and you answered them once, too when Mother wrote to Germany. But, I says, “for me to try to commune with these people.” So we did that with him, too. So now I’m closed up with Europe. My wife kept that channel open.

Simonett: Do you know anything more about German settlement in Brazil?

Bolinski: Nope, we don’t know a thing about it. Yah, I’ll take that back. I think that there was a letter came back to John that one of the Meecees or so settled in California. But John, I don’t think was a big hand at writing, and he never kept up. My wife was the one that did the communicating with her people.

Simonett: Did you ever get to Poland?

Bolinski: No, I didn’t get to Poland.

Simonett: Would you mind just maybe saying something in Polish?

Bolinski: In Polish?

Simonett: Or in German, I guess I mean. I meant to say in German.

Bolinski: Well, in German I’d say -- That’s ‘Today is Thursday.’ – ‘Today is Friday – “morgan” – tomorrow is Thursday.’ See, I couldn’t carry a conversation though. It’d be pretty hard for me to do. But there would be people that read that, would know what I’m talking about. I said a

Polish prayer in German here in Polish before the meal table. We'd pray before a meal. So I said the Our Father.

Simonett: That's really nice. That's nice.

Bolinski: There are two women that u talk Polish with over the telephone. See, like Mrs. Mathilda Viske, they were good friends of my wife's. And I always talked to them in Polish and she talked to them in Polish. And I still, over the phone, we have Polish conversations. I used to have – always with Mrs. Otto Ropulski, Delroy's mother – always in Polish, never in nothing else. And I have Polish people here that I talk with. My dear friend, I didn't tell you anything because I am a small boy, raised up to be small. When I came from Popple Creek --. You got that thing on?

Simonett: Yah.

Bolinski: When I came from Popple Creek, there used to be a Pelten that lived below the hill from my place. I lived up on the hill there, and I was always afraid to go downtown because at that time, their streets weren't cut. And he'd always chase me and lick me. So I was always afraid to go down. One time, my older brother, he said, "Now, Henry." Mother says I want him to go downtown. He's crying and he doesn't want to go. Mike says, "Henry, you go." I'll see that he don't do it. I ran by. I got to the hills and I got scared there and I was going to run. He jumped and he hollered and he says "Go on! Keep on going!" And then the kid come after me, pelten. And at that time, Mike come and got him and he says "Now pound the hell out of him." I gave the boy a licking and ever since that, he never bothered me a bit. And I'm still here. 82 years old and still willing to – not take everybody on, but--.

Simonett: Yah.

Bolinski: Try it. I wouldn't take a back seat.

Simonett: All right. Okay. I was wondering now if you had any hobbies that you're interested in and maybe would want to talk about.

Bolinski: Well, my dear boy, as I'd say before, hobby work was my hobby.

Simonett: Okay.

Bolinski: We raised three children. Got married on a few hundred dollars, built a home, put the kids through school, and lived to be, put my wife away, and I'm still here at 82. God willing, He can keep me here as long as He needs me. What he wants me to do, He'll direct me. Is that good enough?

Simonett: Really, that a really good attitude

Bolinski: Anytime, anytime that you think of something or anybody thinks of something—maybe, some of the ladies know me better than I know them, and if I know it, I'm only too glad to tell it.

Simonett: Let's see. If you had any more political stories, Henry, you could go on. I'm very interested in them.

Bolinski: Well, that's as far as I am now. Now really, I'm out of politics. I'm not out of them, but I'm not a contributor no more, you know. And I will talk, you bet. Taught my side if I can, and if my side is on the wrong, I will not support it. But if the other side – I don't see their side, I'll fight it. Now, Judge Rogosheske comes here every couple weeks, and Harry Burns, he'll know who I am. And he knows who my wife was. My wife was--.

Simonett: How long ago did she pass away then?

Bolinski: Oh, I don't know.

Simonett: Well, that was quite a long time ago.

Bolinski: Oh yes. She passed away in '70. That's eight years ago. And she had friends, all of them.

Simonett: Now, you mentioned your 50th wedding anniversary and I can't help but think now a days a lot of people just don't stay married that long.

Bolinski: Oh yes, we did. And as I say, the anniversary cards the mailman mailed, the mailman's still on, he brought them in tied up in bundles. So they must have thought something of her.

Simonett: Really.

Bolinski: Maybe it wasn't me, it was her. She was a lovely woman. The tea kettle and coffee pot was always on the table. The door was never locked.

Simonett: Must have been a rather large funeral. But, let me see. Any memories as far as going to school?

Bolinski: The wife and I, and her sister and Emil Trunitski – he's gone – we had a double wedding. The two sisters and the two men were married double, the first time in the history of this church or in the history of, a Pastor Agother used to be here. That's years ago. A lot of the people remember him. But that was the first double wedding that they ever performed in that church.

Simonett: Oh, you had a double wedding.

Bolinski: Yah, we both married together because her father says now, he says, we talked about him, and he says now, “Oh, my goodness.” He worked in the shops, he said, “I can’t be affording two big weddings.” And we finally got together and we said well, we’ll have one big wedding. And Agother, too, he says have one wedding. And he felt that would be fine for him, and it was.

Simonett: Are you getting a little bit tired now?

Bolinski: No, I’m not tired, but I’m afraid I’m telling you things that are not interesting or--.

Simonett: Well, yah.

Bolinski: And maybe sometimes I’ll be able to talk things more interesting.

Simonett: Maybe we could come back another time.

Bolinski: Son, maybe you can. I’d be only too glad to listen to you. And you saw a picture of the cyclone, I’m sure. If you don’t--

Simonett: Yah.

Bolinski: You did see it. My mother, as I told you was raised, and the cyclone took her when she was right across the street in that little house across from Floyd Chunitski’s Harvester. That’s where she was, and the cyclone went on into Rice and tore off things all the way up. But that’s hearsay from my mother’s conversation.

Simonett: Right.

Bolinski: That was not me. That’s not me telling you the story. It’s coming from her.

Simonett: Okay. How about one more question, Henry, and that's just having to do – I might have asked you already, but do you have any memories as far as maybe the Depression and how it affected Sauk Rapids?

Bolinski: Very much, very much. I happened to be on the county board during the Depression, and those were the hardest years that I put in because people didn't have the means for a living. And I happened to be a liberal up on that side, but I also had a couple of conservatives on that board that said 'Hell, let them go out and make a living.' Where are you going to make a living when there's no jobs. So I was on the lenient side. I believed in giving it to them from the county funds. But those years I'll never forget, and I hope that we'll never see them.

Simonett: And they had that WPA project.

Bolinski: We had the WPA project, yes, and the PWA. Those were worthy projects. I think we've accomplished something. We accomplished that stone wall around the high school up on the hill. That was all PWA work. A lot of the curbs downtown were the PWA work. Those deals were worth it. They were more than these tickets that they give today – those stamps. Because there, you went and worked for a living. You were damned if you only got a couple dollars a day, but you worked for it and you enjoyed it and it was your money. You was free to spend it. I like that better.

Simonett: Okay. And can I ask one more?

Bolinski: Yes.

Simonett: Did you ever follow presidential elections over the years?

Bolinski: Oh yes.

Simonett: Was there any particular presidential election that you remember the most?

Bolinski: Yup. Franklin D. Roosevelt was a wonderful man. And when the war was going to an end, which it would have never went to an end, but Stalin was too damn smart for him and Churchill both. Churchill was a smart man. You know that better than I do because you got schooling, I haven't. But Stalin sold them both down the river. See, they should have never, never given Stalin what they did give to him. From then on, we had trouble with Russia ever since. We had no, Pat – I agree with General Patton. He says, 'We'll never go to Berlin. We don't want them in there.' Churchill and Roosevelt kept our troops away from Berlin, and let Russia march in and take it. That's the beginning of our trouble with Russia, and it is today that we have a war. I hope it never comes. Good enough going.

Simonett: Thanks a lot.

Bolinski: I hope it's not all foolishness. I hope they don't laugh at it when they read it.

Simonett: I'm sure they won't.

Bolinski: --any value, I'm glad that you have it.

Simonett: Well, Henry, it's been one of the best interviews.

Bolinski: Oh, it is! Well, I'm glad of it, boy. I'm glad of it. I happened to be -- the minister asked me the other day. He said, 'Henry, I'd like to have you come down and speak to my Confirmation class. I was Chairman of that congregation for a long time since the other one.'

Simonett: This is your wife, isn't it?

Bolinski: Yes.

Simonett: And are these your two daughters?

Bolinski: That's my older daughter and this is my youngest daughter, she died.

Simonett: Oh, she did. Just recently?

Bolinski: About two weeks ago.

Simonett: Say, I'm sorry to hear it.

Bolinski: And I have an older one, she's in Washington. Say, excuse all this sentimentality.

Simonett: Well, you still must be in mourning for her.

Bolinski: I certainly am.

Simonett: Sure. I can understand that.

Bolinski: I speak to Him every day because I believe in the Communion of Saints.

Simonett: Beautiful women, all of them. Really sharp looking.

Bolinski: Well, I hope you got a little bit out of it.

Simonett: I really did. As I said earlier, I like it when people tend to be a little bit philosophical and you were, and yet we --. And then, Henry, I usually ask everyone to sign this form. It just says that you give the interview to the Benton County Historical Society.

Bolinski: I certainly will. Where?

Simonett: Right on this line, and I put in the date already.