

Interview with Violet Rodriguez
June 16, 1978
Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection
St. Cloud State University Archives
Interviewed by John LeDoux and Calvin Gower

Gower: Okay, this is an interview conducted by Calvin Gower and John LeDoux. Today is June 18.

LeDoux: June 16.

Gower: June 16, 1978, and we're talking to Mrs. Violet Rodriguez. Is that the correct way of pronouncing it?

Rodriguez: That's right. Rodriguez.

Gower: That's R-O-D-R-I-Q-U-E-S?

Rodriguez: G—GUEZ.

Gower: Okay. R-O-D-R-I-G-U-E-Z. Okay. And she is a member of the Dalbo Baptist Church. Are you the treasurer still -- of the church?

Rodriguez: Yes, I'm still the treasurer.

Gower: Okay, she's the treasurer of the Dalbo Baptist Church. And we're going to be talking to her about the church history as well as some of her own background. Okay, this church—the Dalbo Baptist Church—was founded in 1884. Is that correct?

Rodriguez: That's correct.

Gower: Was this a -- and this was a Swedish Baptist Church.

Rodriguez: Right. The early pioneers were all Swedish.

Gower: Now as I understand it, the Swedish Baptist Church in general grew out of a dissatisfaction with the state church in Sweden.

Rodriguez: That's right. There was certain beliefs that differ from the state church.

Gower: And was there some dissatisfaction also because the—well, for example, you had to go through the church—this is in Sweden—to be registered for births and so on, whether you were a member of the Lutheran Church or not. Is that true?

Rodriguez: Yes. The Swedish Church keeps a very dedicated record of all the births and marriages. For instance, my brother made a trip to Sweden and we have a history of my mother's side of several generations that was gotten right from the church records.

Gower: But was it your impression that this church developed separately from the Lutherans more because of differences of dogma and so on rather than because of their resentment of the church being a state church?

Rodriguez: I think definitely it's on theological differences.

Gower: Theological differences, okay.

Rodriguez: I think those differences were possibly greater years ago than they are today.

Gower: The theological differences?

Rodriguez: Well, what I mean, today one of the things as far as the Baptist church is connected is they are evangelical. But that is also more true of the Lutherans today it was possibly years ago.

Gower: So if it were a matter of -- today maybe there wouldn't be a split between the two.

Rodriguez: Very possible.

Gower: I see.

Rodriguez: I mean that's true in the community because we have excellent cooperation with our neighboring church. And we have joint services together with them.

Gower: Oh, I see. So that would be good example of this coming together to a greater extent. And this whole area of Dalbo is pretty much Swedish, at least it was.

Rodriguez: It was. Now we have all nationalities that have moved in. In fact a few years ago, Dalbo was a very stable community as far as moving in and moving out. But now we get a lot of new families that will move in in a year's time.

LeDoux: Was it predominantly just in the 50s or 60s that it started to change as far as the ethnic composition?

Rodriguez: I think so.

Gower: It was a farming Swedish group that came in and settled the area.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: And the emphasis was upon dairying, was it in those early years?

Rodriguez: Well, it was whatever they could make a living. Because this was a wooded area and they had to clear. Like when my dad came he hoped to clear about an acre a year at least, so that he could put crops in.

Gower: Your dad came from Sweden?

Rodriguez: Yes, he did. He was born in Sweden.

Gower: What year did he come over here?

Rodriguez: Oh, I don't know. He was only two years old when he came.

Gower: He was only two years old.

Rodriguez: And he was born in 1884 so that would make it--

Gower: So he came over in 1886.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: And did he come right here to, I mean his parents come right here?

Rodriguez: No, they settled in Wisconsin first before they came to Dalbo.

Gower: So about when did your father get there?

Rodriguez: Late teenager.

Gower: Pardon me. Oh, he was a late teenager.

Rodriguez: When he was a late teenager.

Gower: Okay. And then was -- were they Swedish Baptist?

Rodriguez: No, they weren't. My dad was confirmed in the Lutheran Church.

Gower: That was in--

Rodriguez: Dalbo, here.

Gower: Oh, I see. Okay. And when did -- then your dad -- did your dad become a member of the Swedish Baptist Church?

Rodriguez: No, he didn't.

Gower: Oh, I see.

LeDoux: What was your father's name now -- full name?

Rodriguez: Charles Gustav Johnson.

Gower: Charles Gustav Johnson.

LeDoux: Do you know approximately what part of Sweden the family came from?

Rodriguez: Well, my mother came from Halstad, and Dad came from Barland.

Gower: How do you spell those?

Rodriguez: I wouldn't -- Barland would be B-A, with two dots, R-L-A-N-D. And Halstad, I think is H-A, with the two dots, L-S-T-A-D.

LeDoux: And what was your mother's maiden name?

Rodriguez: Lillian Erickson.

LeDoux: Erickson, okay was that jus with a "K"?

Rodriguez: Yes, it was. Well it was E-R-I-C-K-S-O-N.

LeDoux: Oh, -C-K-S-O-N. Okay.

Gower: Okay. Then your folks became—your dad became a farmer here then.

Rodriguez: No. My dad was a rural mail carrier. But right -- that's at the time that he was married, he was a rural mail carrier. And then about a year later he bought this place that we're living on because he had to have some place to live. The mail was-- In fact, he had a neighboring man started or were the first carriers out of Dalbo, rural mail carries. There were two of them in those days. And Dad, in looking for a home for his bride and family, because he had two children at that time, bought this farm here which is just a mile and one half out of Dalbo. And as a result, the government soon closed down the one mail route. And Dad was transferred to Grandy to haul mail out of Grandy. And we lived in Grandy for two years. Then he had this farm back here and so his longing was to get back to the farm. He had purchased this land and so he resigned from the rural mail carriers job and came back here and farmed full-time, except for a substitute carrier. He did become the substitute carrier out of Dalbo and held that till his retirement.

LeDoux: Now your parents were married what year? Do you recall?

Rodriguez: In 18 -- in 1909.

LeDoux: In 1909. And at the time they were married he was still a mail carrier.

Rodriguez: Right.

LeDoux: And he farmed then the rest of his life.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: Then he was, your folks were members of this Dalbo Lutheran Church.

Rodriguez: No they were not.

Gower: Oh, they weren't

Rodriguez: They were not members of the church at all.

Gower: Oh, I see. Okay.

Rodriguez: But we did attend down here and as children we were sent to Sunday school and we as children have all become members of the Baptist Church.

Gower: And you attended the Baptist church as children?

Rodriguez: Yes, we did.

Gower: Okay, and what -- would you mind telling us what year and day you were born?

Rodriguez: I was born on September the 30th, 1910.

Gower: 1910. Okay, and that was right here in this community?

Rodriguez: I was -- in Maple Ridge Township which is the township just to the east of Dalbo.

Gower: Okay, so you grew up on this farm where we presently are today.

Rodriguez: Right. I was four years old when we moved here.

LeDoux: And you went to school here in Dalbo?

Rodriguez: Yes. I did.

LeDoux: This was a school in town? Or was it country?

Rodriguez: It's a two-room rural school one-half mile west of the town.

LeDoux: I see. Is that structure still existing?

Rodriguez: That's what's known as the Dalbo Discount Store now.

LeDoux: Oh. We passed that. I thought it looked kind of like a school.

Gower: It's right across from the church there.

Rodriguez: Right.

LeDoux: How long had that been a discount store? When did it quit being a school?

Rodriguez: Six years ago it suspended being a school and the children are now bused and taken into Cambridge. We belong to the Cambridge district now.

LeDoux: So this was the school for Dalbo; in other words there wasn't another school in the middle of town or anything.

Rodriguez: No.

LeDoux: Okay.

Gower: Now when the first people began coming or at least by the time they got around to organizing churches then, apparently they organized first the Lutheran Church and then a few years later the Baptist Church.

Rodriguez: That's right.

Gower: Then these were, in both cases though, they were Swedish people.

Rodriguez: Right, because this is a 100 percent Swedish community.

Gower: Very heavily Swedish. And did the -- was there any kind of ill will between these groups because they were in the two different church groups?

Rodriguez: I've never heard of any ill will, whatever.

LeDoux: I remember just from glancing at that book a couple of examples of instances where the Lutherans would help the Baptists with some project. Was that fairly common -- cooperation?

Rodriguez: Yes, I think it was and it is yet to this day. That's why I said there isn't that much difference anymore.

Gower: It was -- but they definitely apparently believed, somebody did anyway, that they should have the two different churches.

Rodriguez: Yes. Well as I mentioned before, evangelical was a factor and then of course as you know, the world Baptist—that's adult baptism only—and I suppose that was the strongest theological difference between them.

Gower: Why did you -- your brothers and sisters go to that particular church? Was there any particular reason?

Rodriguez: That was just handy for one thing.

Gower: Oh, I see.

Rodriguez: It's our closest church.

Gower: Sure. And did you go through -- I don't know what -- do they have catechism and so on there at the church or what?

Rodriguez: No, we don't.

LeDoux: Sunday school?

Rodriguez: We have Sunday Schools.

Gower: And you went to Sunday school there and then did they have a confirmation and so on like that?

Rodriguez: No. The Baptist Church does not have confirmation.

Gower: They don't have that kind of thing. Okay.

Rodriguez: They may have classes for boys and girls outside of the regular Sunday school. It isn't a requirement but it could be classes that would lead up to church membership. Instructing you know -- biblical beliefs, found especially in the Baptist Church.

Gower: And you were going to this church, at least to the Sunday school then, back there when you were a young girl.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: And then you -- have you lived here all of your life then?

Rodriguez: On this place?

Gower: Well at least in this area and gone to that church.

Rodriguez: Well, I've held my membership in the church but I have taught in St. -- I taught school in St. Paul for 28 years.

Gower: Oh, I see. Sure.

Rodriguez: But then I would come out here weekends when Mother and Dad were living and especially the later years when Mother was living. I would take her shopping and take her out and clean house for her -- things like this. So I never did give up the residency here in these later years 'cause I was out here on the weekends and therefore my membership remained here.

Gower: Sure, okay.

LeDoux: Now you were married in what year?

Rodriguez: 1945.

LeDoux: '45. Okay. And now your husband's name was -- is Rodriguez. Now is that Spanish now?

Rodriguez: Yes, it is Spanish.

LeDoux: Spanish. Okay. And then he's farmed here--

Rodriguez: No.

LeDoux: He didn't farm.

Rodriguez: No.

Gower: This was your folks' place.

Rodriguez: Yeah. This was my folks' place see. So we didn't as a family live here.

LeDoux: And then you were living in St. Paul then, teaching school?

Rodriguez: During World War II, we lived all over the country. So you see, he is connected with the armed services and so was I. I taught Air Force men during World War II.

LeDoux: Maybe we should back up just a little ways to after you graduated from St. Cloud State then and what happened from there.

Rodriguez: Well, my St. Cloud -- my education from -- has been piece-meal. You know what I mean. I graduated first from the two year course. Then I taught -- from the second year -- I taught somewhat in the rural schools of Isanti County, which is our county right here. Then from teaching in the rural schools I went back and got my degree. In fact, I taught in Dalbo for three years right down at that school or the building that you saw that's a discount store. I went back and got my degree in '41 and then after that then came World War II and that's when I said we were -- we lived all over the country. Then of course, after the war was over, then I got -- and went -- we lived in St. Paul and I taught for the city of St. Paul for 28 years.

Gower: That was the beginning of 1946 or along in there somewhere.

Rodriguez: About '48.

Gower: 1948.

Rodriguez: '49.

Gower: And what was your major? English?

Rodriguez: Mathematics.

Gower: Oh, mathematics. Oh, I see. Sure. Okay. Now this church as I understand it is -- the Baptist Church -- it started -- actually there were a few people who met first and sort of began thinking about organizing a church. Is that the way that was?

Rodriguez: The Sunday school was in session first before the actual organization. The early pioneers met in the homes and there were about I think seven people if I remember the history correctly, that met to organize.

Gower: Was this fairly -- or do you know whether that's a fairly common way these churches started? First, they met with the Sunday school session and then maybe if there were enough people then they'd move into a church organization.

Rodriguez: Right

Gower: Because I know we have interviewed the minister over at the Calvary Baptist Church in St. Cloud and that's how that started. It was exactly the same.

Rodriguez: They got together for Bible study in their homes and then as more and more neighbors became interested and they thought they had enough to start a church, they did organize.

LeDoux: Where was the -- do you know where the closest Baptist church -- organized Baptist church was around here at the time?

Rodriguez: I know that the pastor from Stanchfield was called here to come here and give advice.

LeDoux: I see.

Rodriguez: Upon the organization.

LeDoux: About how long did it take before the church was organized? How long was it from the meeting in the homes to the actual organization of the church?

Rodriguez: I cannot tell you the date of the first meeting in the home at all.

LeDoux: Was it several years? Do you know?

Rodriguez: I would say about a couple years. Because I think in reading the -- I've gone into the Sunday school history -- that the Sunday school goes back two years before the church organization.

Gower: Now when this church started then, it was tied in with some kind of -- I don't know what the words are -- some larger group of church though a synod or a -- you don't call it a synod.

Rodriguez: In the Baptist denomination we call it -- we belong to the Baptist General Conference.

Gower: The Baptist General Conference.

Rodriguez: And we both -- now at the present time we're part of the Minnesota Baptist General Conference and we're part of the General Baptist Conference which is nationwide.

Gower: Oh. That's nationwide. And you have the Swedish Baptist group. Is there any tie between this group and the -- there's no tie between them and the Southern Baptist?

Rodriguez: There is none whatever. The Baptist denomination is completely different. They're not united like some of the denominations have made attempts to unite. Like the Methodist

Church for instance. But we -- I don't -- I couldn't tell you the number of conferences or different Baptist churches that there are.

Gower: And your General Baptist Conference, that's just what had been Swedish Baptist Churches?

Rodriguez: Right. There has been no additions to it except church by church you know; not an entire denomination.

Gower: And has -- how has the church -- what's been the history of the church as far as membership is concerned? Did it grow fairly well in the early years and so on?

Rodriguez: There has been a steady growth. It's not a big conference compared to Southern Baptist, for instance.

Gower: But there's, it's been a -- it's always been growing throughout the years since maybe about the 1870's or so.

Rodriguez: Right. And at the present time, you know, Bethel College in St. Paul is the Swedish Baptist or the General Conference -- church -- school, both the seminary and the college. And the college today is growing even in spite of college slumps elsewhere in the country. But it's one of the private growing colleges today.

Gower: So that would indicate the growth of the denomination.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: Now what about your own church here in Dalbo? Did that grow pretty well throughout the years? Or how did that grow?

Rodriguez: No, no. That maintains quite a bit the same number in the membership for the simple reason we're a rural church. And being a rural church, there is nothing here to keep young people when they graduate from high school. So as a result they have to seek employment elsewhere. And they go off to the Twin Cities or go off elsewhere and get their jobs and settle. So actually, we cannot hold young people because there is no source of employment except farming. And you know where farming is today. They've consolidated the smaller farms and they have gone into larger farms, therefore fewer families than they are -- than they used to be.

Gower: Now what's your impression? That the children of people in the Baptist, in the local Baptist church here -- They pretty much go to the Baptist church when they're children here. Is that correct?

Rodriguez: Yes, that's right.

Gower: Okay. Then when they leave because there aren't that many opportunities, is it your impression that they generally stay in the Baptist church then? Or, you know -- this is just your impression.

Rodriguez: Right. I think I have in my, in writing the history of the church, I have ended that history with, "We are a missionary church in that we have trained men and women who are now members of other Baptist churches, wherever they live.

Gower: Oh, so you feel there's been fairly, pretty consistent follow through among young people to stay in the church.

Rodriguez: That's right. Many of them do.

Gower: Sure. Yeah. That's what I meant, in general. Okay, now the people here then, when they started their church, this was all in the -- sermons were all given in Swedish back there in the 1880's continuing till when?

Rodriguez: Right. The early, about 1935 to 37, there was a gradual reduction when they changed over from the Swedish language to the English language. At first they had one Sunday in a month in English. Then it increased to every other Sunday. And finally in about 1937 it became all English in the sermons.

Gower: Was it your impression that there was a feeling that it was extremely important to have the sermons in Swedish there in those earlier years because of the national part, nationality angle, or partly too because of the fact that it was a Swedish Baptist church or-- What would be your impression there?

Rodriguez: No. The main reason, I think, was that Dalbo was such a solidly Swedish community that the old settlers did not learn the English language.

Gower: Oh, they didn't learn the English language.

Rodriguez: Because when they went to a store, they could transact their business in Swedish. When they went visiting to a neighbor they still talked the Swedish language. So when they went to church, it was the Swedish language.

LeDoux: There was no need to learn the English language.

Rodriguez: There was no need. Now, my mother, when she came to this country, her parents settled in Pennsylvania, in a coal mining area, and they had all kinds of nationalities. And so mother had to -- and my grandparents on my mother's side had to -- learn the English language

because they were surrounded by others who did not know the Swedish. Whereas my dad's parents didn't need to learn the English language at all and they all, yet, even upon their death, they'd prefer the Swedish language to the English language and that's why the churches held onto it, because the old-timers never did learn the English language.

Gower: And they'd be very much opposed to efforts to make it just English then-- So they really wouldn't understand some of the stuff.

Rodriguez: Right. Because they couldn't understand it.

LeDoux: Was there active resistance in the church against this? Did they try to really fight this change to English?

Rodriguez: Definitely. Because naturally, they wanted to understand. They wanted to go to church and worship and if they couldn't understand--

LeDoux: Uh huh. Do you have any other impressions of that -- looking back on that time, of what happened in the church? Was there -- How did the minister look on all this? Was he very eager to modernize it to English or was he more or less holding back on it?

Rodriguez: Oh, no. I think the pastor saw the need for a conversion because they would lose their young people.

Gower: The young people, even though the area was almost completely Swedish, they tended to learn some English.

Rodriguez: Oh they had got it in school. They went to a -- to schools.

Gower: Sure. The public schools -- they had to teach in English. Was that it?

Rodriguez: Oh yes, that's right. That was solidly English, all the time.

Gower: So they'd be learning in English and then they would put -- be desirous to have the sermons more -- even though they heard Swedish at home all the time, but they still they would, some of them would want to have the sermons in English, too.

Rodriguez: Right. And they grew up-- Once you've gone to school, that becomes the language that you favor.

Gower: Sure. And also, I was going to ask you; was there any kind of a tie, an official tie of the church back with Sweden?

Rodriguez: No, not that I know of.

Gower: There wasn't. These churches were American churches.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: Even though they were Swedish Baptist.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: And there also was no link, as you said earlier, between the Swedish Baptist church and these other Baptist churches; the Northern ones, the Southern, or any of these others.

Rodriguez: Right.

Rodriguez: There's none. There's no-- No.

Gower: There's no link at all. They hadn't and there isn't any now.

Rodriguez: There is none now.

LeDoux: Was there a lot of feeling for the country of Sweden itself? Now when we talked to some people in Freedhem, these gentlemen were telling about how their parents would still, you know, they'd be hearing something about King Gustav or something. They felt a real identification-- Was there in this town a real identification with Sweden and the Swedish culture?

Rodriguez: I believe there was. Yes.

Gower: How long do you think this lasted or is it still in existence or what?

Rodriguez: I think those still, say, that are even a little older than I am, they still think a lot of Sweden, and today if they have ancestors back in Sweden, those that can afford it have made trips back to Sweden. And we have a family just a couple miles of South of here that have made several trips back to Sweden.

LeDoux: Now did your father learn English fairly well?

Rodriguez: Oh, yes, they were-- See, he went to school -- he was only two years old when they came to--

LeDoux: Right, so he learned it in the schools?

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: Okay, then. Did the-- How did they get their ministers?

Rodriguez: The ministers are usually gotten by calling the state, the Minnesota Baptist Conference for recommendations.

Gower: Now back, like then in the 1880s, did those people go to Bethel College?

Rodriguez: I can't tell you that. They went to their school and I can't tell you just when the seminary moved from Chicago to St. Paul.

Gower: Yeah, I think this -- Reverend Carroll down there in St. Cloud went to a school in Chicago, incidentally.

Rodriguez: Yes, well I think it's before Carroll's time that they moved, but I can't tell you the date. But they've all... the Baptists, the pastors that they've had here, the great majority of them have attended Bethel Seminary.

Gower: Back in the earlier time, they would want a Swedish speaking person as well as a person trained in the Baptist ministry -- Swedish Baptist.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: Was the-- Do you remember what your feelings were towards the matter of changing from Swedish in the Church?

Rodriguez: Well, naturally, we looked forward to the English language because in our home, Swedish was not the language because you see, Mother had never used it in her home, so our home was strictly an English speaking.

Gower: Now did you understand Swedish, though?

Rodriguez: Yes, I did. And I even took two years of Swedish in high school.

Gower: Oh, you did? Oh. So you could go to the church and understand it but still you would have preferred the English.

Rodriguez: Right. And maybe we didn't get out of the Swedish service what we would out of an English service because the vocabulary in Swedish in a sermon is different than everyday conversation. So there would be words in a sermon one would miss, where you could possibly get along in speaking to a person, you know, with the Swedish language.

Gower: Sure. And so it would be your impression that it would be the ministering part plus a number of people in the congregation who were pushing to get more emphasis on the English in the church.

Rodriguez: Right. As people who had been trained in schools in this area in the English language, then, they'd wanted the English language.

Gower: Now do you think that anybody left the church because it was switched over to the English or were they willing to accept that as time went along?

Rodriguez: I think they accepted it.

LeDoux: Looking back now, over the years, have all of the pastors been Swedish, of Swedish decent, or have most of them?

Rodriguez: No they haven't. Not these later years.

LeDoux: The early ones, I assume, were.

Rodriguez: Oh, yes.

Gower: Is this a list of the pastors here?

Rodriguez: I think it does list them -- that there were, I know.

LeDoux: I was wondering if, as the change occurred into English, at the same time, there were pastors coming in that were not of Swedish extraction, if there was a resistance to that; the fact that they were not Swedish.

Rodriguez: I don't believe so.

LeDoux: Is there a list in the back?

Rodriguez: Yes, there is. A lot of them seem to have Swedish name, but could not preach in Swedish – the -- later years, later on--

LeDoux: Most of the pastors, it looks like here, did not stay more than 3 or 4 years. Was this a general practice, do you know, in the Baptist Church to keep--

Rodriguez: Our entire conference today, the average length of stay is about five to six years.

Gower: Do they stay a little longer in a bigger city, do you know?

Rodriguez: Yes, I think they do.

Gower: Because I think Reverend Carroll was at that church in St. Paul for quite a long time and now he's been at St. Cloud for -- I don't know how long, but a number of years.

Rodriguez: You see, your bigger places, it's more of a challenge to a pastor, you know, than a small place like Dalbo would be. So naturally they seek to go on to bigger places just for the challenge that they might meet.

Gower: Sure, right.

LeDoux: You mentioned that the pastor or pastors at the time of the biggest change over into the English language church was very much for the change. Do you remember, was there one pastor that kind of pushed the change or led the change -- that you recall?

Rodriguez: No, I can't.

LeDoux: Okay.

Gower: Now this church was built on the site where it is at the very beginning. Is that--

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: Okay. And then there was a—what was it?—a frame wooden church at the beginning.

Rodriguez: Yes it was. We have a picture of -- here's the old church.

Gower: And then it was burned down. It burned down in 1925.

Rodriguez: '25. And they immediately started rebuilding and it was dedicated in November. It was burnt in April.

Gower: Then this structure is what? Is it stone or--

Rodriguez: Stucco. It's just--

Gower: Stucco. Uh huh. Okay.

LeDoux: Now you would have been fifteen at the time of the fire about?

Rodriguez: Yes. Just about. Fourteen, I think. Because I was in grade school and I remembered it very distinctly being right across the road from the church. It was in the spring of the year when they were cleaning the yard and a wind came along and took some leaves I guess and got it

up under the siding. And it was in the days before any fire equipment, you know -- fighting fires. And so it was just a matter of minutes till that whole building was in flames.

LeDoux: Just dryness you think?

Rodriguez: It was just dryness. It was a very dry spring.

LeDoux: This was during the day that it caught fire.

Rodriguez: Yes. We got out at noon and we took our lunch pails. We were going to eat out on the yard and we looked across and somebody said, "oh"; we saw smoke coming out of the window. And one of the boys said, "Oh they're just cleaning over there. It's just dirty." But it was only a matter of minutes till we saw it was a real fire.

LeDoux: Did it burn pretty much to the ground or was some of it saved.

Rodriguez: No, completely to the ground.

LeDoux: And so immediately then, plans were made to build a new one on that site then.

Rodriguez: And the congregation during that time when it was being built, worshipped in the school on Sundays. And then when they got it farther along so that the basement was finished then we moved over to the basement and had the services in the church basement. So worship services were never cancelled at all because of the building being burned.

Gower: Did you provide a parsonage for your minister all the way through the years?

Rodriguez: Yes.

Gower: Okay. Was it always on the same site as it is presently?

Rodriguez: That's right. The old parsonage was just to the east of where the building -- present parsonage is.

Gower: I notice this was built---what, in the sixties or so -- the present parsonage?

Rodriguez: Yes it was.

LeDoux: Now is this used by the pastor when he's in town or is this empty now?

Rodriguez: It's standing empty when we're now without a pastor but otherwise it's official residence of the pastor. We just—just last year—added that two-car garage and a study or an office for the pastor.

Gower: How long have you been without a pastor now?

Rodriguez: Since the first of the year.

Gower: Since the first of this year.

LeDoux: Did you at the time make efforts to get one and they wouldn't send one or what was the problem there?

Rodriguez: You mean now?

LeDoux: Right. Were there efforts to secure a pastor?

Rodriguez: Well, we're in the process of trying to get one.

LeDoux: I see. What was the problem there?

Rodriguez: Why, because we're here for six months without?

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Rodriguez: Well partially I guess the -- is just getting together. We have to have a three-quarters vote on a pastor.

Gower: A three-quarters vote. Is this a long-standing rule?

Rodriguez: Yes. Well, it's in our constitution.

Gower: Oh, it's in your constitution.

Rodriguez: Yes, it's in our church constitution. So we--

Gower: This is your local church or the conference?

Rodriguez: No, it's our local church.

Gower: Your local church. Oh.

Rodriguez: The Baptist churches are very independent as a unit. We don't take any dictation from higher up at all. The only reason we have a conference is not so much for local work, but for instance in sending out missionaries-- We can't do it alone. We have to go through the larger to spread the Gospel to other parts of the world.

Gower: Sure.

Rodriguez: And the school for instance and things like that has to be done on a larger scale than just what each individual unit -- but each unit of the Baptist is independent in itself as to how they wish to run. And so we have a church constitution. And our church constitution says we must approve by three-fourths of the membership of the voting.

Gower: Approve the appointment of a new minister.

Rodriguez: Uh huh. And we've lacked two votes of getting three-fourths in the -- in the couple candidates that we've had out here.

Gower: Oh, I see. So it is -- I thought maybe there might be a shortage of ministers as in the case of some denominations.

Rodriguez: No, not at all.

Gower: Oh, I see. So you've had the people here who wanted to come here, but you haven't quite agreed on--

Rodriguez: Right. On the three-fourths part.

Gower: Sure -- three-fourths. That's quite a high percentage that you require.

Rodriguez: That's what -- our man was out from the state conference here just a month ago and he said we ought to change that, he says, to two-thirds at least, because three-fourths is hard. Because we're human beings and we all differ. Some want an older man. Some want a younger man. Like one candidate we had, he's graduating from the seminary, but some people thought he was too young. Somebody else might say, oh, they're too old. So there you are. So we'll eventually, I guess, get together.

Gower: But this man who comes out here now—he comes here every Sunday.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: It's just that he's not here and living in the parsonage and so forth.

Rodriguez: No.

LeDoux: And he comes from where now?

Rodriguez: Anoka.

LeDoux: Anoka.

Rodriguez: He is a conference Baptist—a former conference Baptist pastor who went into portraying Abraham Lincoln. You may have heard of him.

Gower: Oh. I've read about him in the newspaper. What's his name?

Rodriguez: Bruce Hanks.

Gower: Bruce Hanks. Sure. He's related to Nancy Hanks in some way.

Rodriguez: Right. Uh huh. And he certainly looks like Abraham Lincoln too when he gets his tall hat on and his long tails on his coat and--

Gower: When you said a former conference minister you meant that he had been a minister of--

Rodriguez: Of a Swedish Baptist Church.

Gower: Right, sure, not--

Rodriguez: Until he went into the Lincoln work.

Gower: Sure, right. Okay. Now I don't know if you mentioned this in your-- Do you have any statistics on the membership of the church through the years? Is that mentioned here in your written work or--

Rodriguez: No, it isn't mentioned in the written work but, the membership...there are statistics.

Gower: Has it -- it's remained fairly stable.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: Throughout, would you say, throughout many of the years that the church has--

Rodriguez: Throughout many. You see, our membership is under one hundred.

Gower: Under one hundred. This is one hundred individuals.

Rodriguez: Right, that are baptized believers.

Gower: Not one hundred families; one hundred individuals.

Rodriguez: One hundred individuals.

Gower: Sure. So you've been a small church.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: All the way through -- sure.

LeDoux: Did you--

Gower: Yeah, I was going to say-- Now you've had some groups -- like you had a sewing society. Was this a women's group?

Rodriguez: Yes.

Gower: Have you had several women's groups in the church?

Rodriguez: No.

Gower: Or just that one?

Rodriguez: Being that we are -- have a small membership we just have one women's group. We have one youth group. By youth group I mean there's Sr. High group -- there's Jr. High group and then there's those younger than Jr. High.

Gower: Is this sewing society still in existence?

Rodriguez: No, we call it the Women's Missionary Society. We do very little sewing today.

Gower: Oh. Yeah. That's sort of faded out, hasn't it? Well, what do you do in that group? Do you meet periodically?

Rodriguez: We meet once a month as women.

Gower: Once a month -- uh huh.

Rodriguez: And we have our programs. It might be a missionary program, it might be just be a Bible Study. And, for instance work can be done as far as, well, we have Grandview Christian Home in Cambridge which needs volunteer work and programs are put on there -- that kind of thing.

Gower: Do you -- if there's a funeral in the church do you handle the lunch?

Rodriguez: They always serve the lunch, right?

Gower: The same way if there's a wedding and they want to have some kind of a reception.

Rodriguez: Right. If they ask the ladies of the church to take care of it they do.

Gower: And you've had the Sunday School – has that been taught by individuals in the church who volunteer to handle the classes and the various level of the Sunday School?

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: Ok.

LeDoux: I noticed a statement in here it says “We decided that with God’s help we could be self-supporting so we discontinued all conference aid in 1956.” Would you explain that? What was that all about?

Rodriguez: When – years ago when pastors had to come from a distance to serve the church and well when we got a family man they had to have a salary that would be a living salary that they could live on. So the church applied to the State Conference for help and asked if they would be willing to send out – send out money in addition to what the church was able to raise. So in the first conference help that was gotten the conference – the State Conference – send out \$25 each month and the local congregation raised \$50 so the pastor got \$75 a month for his salary.

Gower: After this you were saying that your local church would assume that entire burden.

Rodriguez: Right. You see, so even now to this day State Conference has home mission churches – that they call home mission churches. When they started, if they plant new church then they send out aid to these new churches. And the older churches that are established will – in their missionary giving – will specify money to go to these home mission churches. And that’s how Dalbo got – in those early years – got the \$25 was from the stronger city churches that gave it as a missionary offering. And you might call it missions on the home field rather than -- we

often think of missions as being just foreign missions. But we have missions right here in the state of Minnesota.

Gower: Was your-- Do you have a follow-up on that John?

LeDoux: Is this a common practice among a lot of like, smaller rural churches?

Rodriguez: Right. When they're starting out they get help from the bigger places.

LeDoux: I see.

Gower: Now is your church then supported financially just through the contributions of the members?

Rodriguez: Right. We've been self-supporting since the date—that what he said.

LeDoux: '56.

Rodriguez: Yes – since 1956. So every bit of the cost of running the church is met by the local membership.

Gower: Then your current situation without a minister – that's not related to the fact that you could not finance that.

Rodriguez: No, it's related to that--

Gower: This ¾'s rule thing.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: Sure.

Rodriguez: So it's nothing--

Gower: Sure, right.

Rodriguez: Nothing there in finances.

LeDoux: So actually you're quite independent then of the General Conference – almost totally independent.

Rodriguez: We are.

LeDoux: You are totally independent, ok.

Rodriguez: In fact, we send out as a mission budget from Dalbo about \$3,000 a year to State and General Conference. See, the General Conference will take care of foreign missions and the State Conference takes care of missions within the state of Minnesota. And so our missionary budget that we raise here in the Dalbo community is about \$3,000 for state and foreign missions.

Gower: You actually send the money out rather than having money brought in.

Rodriguez: Right. These last years we are.

Gower: Now how would you say that your theological beliefs differ from – well say like other Baptist churches – you know, other than Swedish Baptist? Is there quite a difference there do you think?

LeDoux: Between the Southern--

Gower: Theologically I mean.

Rodriguez: I can't answer that.

Gower: Ok.

Rodriguez: I wouldn't be in a position to know the exact differences. I don't think it's very much.

Gower: So maybe there—at least originally – maybe it was some other things that kept them apart – other than theology.

Rodriguez: Well, I think more it's geographical location. You know, across the entire south you had your Southern Baptists and, in your north,, you had your Northern Baptists. But there has been now migration into the two parts so that you have Southern Baptist Churches that have come up into this area.

Gower: Sure. There's some in St. Cloud, I believe.

Rodriguez: But I think it's brought up chiefly because of geographical regions. See transportation, communication, that was slow in those days so that you tend to group right around where you live.

Gower: Now from the standpoint of the difference with the Swedish Lutheran Church there it's the adult Baptism is a major theological difference.

Rodriguez: I would say that the difference between our church here in Dalbo and the Salem Lutheran Church is that of baptism.

Gower: Because otherwise you're both in the Protestant and the -- we have joint services together in special locations.

Gower: So it would be more along this line. Ok. John – what do you – do you have anything else?

LeDoux: Yeah, there was another statement here. During the ministry of Omar (?) Johnson 1927-29 the Wyanett Baptist Church was dissolved. Nearly all the members united with this church.” Do you recall that incident? What was that all about?

Rodriguez: That’s when I said that the Wyanett church became so few that they couldn’t support a pastor that they dissolved that church and joined with ours.

LeDoux: I see. And this Wyanett Free Church, that’s evidently still going over there – what type of – what were the differences in the doctrine between the Free Church – are they way apart in the doctrine? I’m not familiar with the Free Church.

Rodriguez: Between the Baptist Church and the Free Church?

LeDoux: The Baptist and the Free – is there a great--

Gower: No there isn’t. Again it’s baptism chiefly.

LeDoux: I see.

Rodriguez: Although the Free Church will baptize believers as adults by immersion. But they may also join the Free Church without being baptized as adults.

Gower: Is the Free Church an outgrowth – I mean is that a Swedish Church too? That Wyanett Church?

Rodriguez: Yes – I don’t know if it’s completely Swedish.

Gower: But, I mean, it was?

Rodriguez: In this area it was. But I can't tell you. I don't know that much about the Evangelical Free to know.

Gower: Sure. Ok. But it's not tied in to either the Baptists or the Lutherans.

Rodriguez: No, no. It's a special--

Gower: A separate group.

Rodriguez: Right.

LeDoux: Do you know if, it's--

Rodriguez: I just saw in the paper that they had a convention in the Twin Cities, and it says a 700 member denomination, meaning there were 700 churches of the Evangelical Free Church.

Gower: In Minnesota?

Rodriguez: I don't know whether it was Minnesota – no, I think it was national.

Gower: Oh, national, yeah, 'cause that would be an awful lot for Minnesota. Ok.

LeDoux: In about the same time period – I had a question related to the effects of the depression in the town. And did the church, both churches in town have – what sort of a role did they have during that time? Was there any efforts to help people out through the church or did the women's groups actively work to aid, you know, people who might be less fortunate during the depression or did things pretty much go on as usual around here?

Rodriguez: I don't think the depression, maybe, was felt as badly in this area as say in cities. Because this was a farming community and they had their food. They maybe didn't always have certain types of food 'cause I can remember my sister, she looked so longingly at oranges. I wanted oranges. Well that was one thing that the folks couldn't afford to buy -- was oranges. But we always had plenty of food; food that was grown on the place.

LeDoux: So here weren't many foreclosures on farms that were forced to fold during the depression.

Rodriguez: There were some.

LeDoux: There were some.

Rodriguez: There were some, yes.

LeDoux: The reason I asked that there, in some towns there were churches, there were efforts made through the churches -- women's groups -- to provide food or clothing for people who were... that was very necessary. It was quite self-sufficient around here though.

Rodriguez: Yes, I think those -- if there was a case or two that was taken care of very nicely by the area.

Gower: Now you said in here about tent meetings -- were held for many years. These were special meetings that they had on days other than Sundays or--

Rodriguez: Right. They would rent a tent and would get an evangelist. They would have one or two weeks of meetings and even to this this day now, they have been revises -- since that revived and it's sort of a community effort and we have about seven churches that cooperate in tent meetings including the Salem Lutheran Church.

LeDoux: Are they held in Dalbo then?

Rodriguez: They're held right across the road from the Baptist Church at the -- on the Discount Store lawn -- in back there.

Gower: Oh, I see. Sure.

Rodriguez: That's where they pitch their tent.

Gower: So they're doing this again now. Like this summer, have they had that or they will have it?

Rodriguez: No, it's coming the first week in August. They usually pick that time because it's a lull in between planting and harvest time.

Gower: Sure. And you said here too -- the traditional -- how do you pronounce this? Julotta?

Rodriguez: Julotta.

Gower: Julotta, yeah. That was a Swedish Christmas morning service.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: That still is observed?

Rodriguez: That still is observed. We get up and we're in church at 6 o'clock Christmas morning. That comes from Sweden. That's what they did there.

Gower: So that is the thing that goes back to Sweden and is carried through this church all the way up through 1978.

Rodriguez: Right. And not only is it carried on in the Baptist Church but the Salem Lutheran Church had their Julotta service.

Gower: Oh, I see. Sure. So that has -- there is a tie back to Sweden.

Rodriguez: Right.

Gower: Sure. Okay, John have you got any other things here you want to ask?

LeDoux: I was just going to ask – have you noticed, or what is the impression of any changes that might have taken place since you remember growing up as a little girl in this area and also in the church. Is there anything that had change about the church? Or about the town?

Rodriguez: I imagine we grow with the changes so we're not aware of them. You know, we accept changes as they come.

Gower: Is Dalbo about the same size it was forty years ago?

Rodriguez: I think so.

Gower: It really hasn't change much ether declining or increasing.

Rodriguez: No. Because, now like for instance, years ago, as you say forty years ago, this used to be a potato area though here and they had a big potato starch factory here in Dalbo then as an industry. Well, now, Land 'O' Lakes has built a large cheese processing plant in Dalbo. So with one industry has gone by the wayside the other had taken its place.

Gower: And you've had some changes like the school as you said -- the school--

Rodriguez: Yes. And of course the State Legislature saw to that -- that all rural area -- all rural schools -- had to be closed. You couldn't operate a school unless you belonged to a school that had -- a district that had a high school.

Gower: Sure.

Rodriguez: You see, this school down here just went through the eighth grade.

Gower: That had been where all -- did -- was there ever a high school here?

Rodriguez: No.

Gower: Oh, oh. So that had been that way.

Rodriguez: So that when the State Law said they couldn't operate, they had to close up.

Gower: And your church has remained about the same in every way too.

Rodriguez: That's right.

Gower: That's your impression, yeah.

Rodriguez: It hasn't changed a great deal.

Gower: Sure. Right.

LeDoux: Now Cambridge is about how far away?

Rodriguez: Fifteen miles.

LeDoux: Fifteen miles. Are there folks living here, like in recent times, have moved here and live here but work in Cambridge?

Rodriguez: Oh, yes. We have a lot of people living in Dalbo that commute to their jobs. We have people that go all the way to the city to work.

LeDoux: I see. So it's--

Rodriguez: We have a member -- we have a family that belonged to the church that -- he works for the St. Paul school system.

LeDoux: Oh.

Rodriguez: And she works as a medical technician in Minneapolis.

LeDoux: Are--

Rodriguez: Everyday, they travel.

Gower: Everyday? Gosh!

LeDoux: That's what I was wondering. Some towns, they serve as kind of becoming bedroom communities. In other words they live here but most of their lives are concerned with where they work. And they attend church in that town. Do most of the people who reside here and work in other towns go to the churches here or do they mix with the rest of the community fairly well then, or--

Rodriguez: They go to the churches here, yes. We have -- we -- that -- when you ask me about change, I will say one thing; that the church membership now is not made up of 100 percent farmers like it was years ago. Now you have other types of work that people do engage in. We have a lot of commuters that live in this area.

LeDoux: And other nationalities also.

Rodriguez: Right, and other nationalities. Your tendency today is to get away from the urban areas and get out and have a little acreage.

Gower: Sure. John, how's that cassette there?

LeDoux: We have a little bit of time left.

Gower: I don't know that I have very many more things here really.

LeDoux: No, I don't have.

Gower: Okay, is there anything else you'd want to add that we haven't brought up here?

Rodriguez: Not that I know of at all.

Gower: Okay. This concludes this interview.