

Narrator: John Attridge (JA)

Company Affiliations: Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Canada Steamship Lines

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Summary: Former sailor and elevator worker John Attridge discusses his short but lively work in the Thunder Bay grain industry. He begins by describing his first job as a temporary elevator worker doing odd jobs around the elevator. He explains the process of grain arriving in boxcars and being weighed, sampled, and inspected by the government and elevator staffs. Attridge then went to work on the lakes as a deckhand at the time when the St. Lawrence Seaway was under construction. He describes some of his responsibilities as deckhand, the hierarchy of ranks on a ship, the recreational culture onboard, and some of the routes of the ships. He discusses the era of union struggles under Hal Banks, the pilfering of cargo (particularly liquor), and his brief training as a wheelsman. He also shares a story of saving a man's life. Attridge also describes his childhood through the Second World War living in a small squatters' community right on elevator property where he and the neighbours swept empty boxcars to sell extra grain to farmers. Other topics discussed include boxcar grain doors being used for building projects, the Intercity and Current River elevators he remembers during his young adulthood, his praise for elevator workers, and the shift of grain movement away from Thunder Bay.

Keywords: Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; Grain transportation—Ships; Grain sampling; Grain elevator labourers; Grain handlers; Canadian Grain Commission; Weighmen; Grain inspection; St. Lawrence Seaway; Great Lakes trade; *Fort Henry*; Canada Steamship Lines (CSL); Deckhands; Seafarers' International Union (SIU); Canadian Seamen's Union (CSU); Labour unions; Wheelsman; Bulk carriers; Lakers; Package freighters; Grain doors; SWP Pool 7; MPE Pool 1; Parrish & Heimbecker Elevator

Time, Speaker, Narrative
EE: Well, it is a great pleasure to be here this afternoon to talk to you Mr. Attridge, John Attridge.
JA: Yes.

EE: Well, I have just given your name. Well, let's start with by you giving your name and place and date of birth, which I have recorded I guess, but we will get it on the tape as well.

JA: Right. I was born out of Thunder Bay and my parents left here to get a job in the later '30s and my father ended up in St. Catherines, Ontario, and that is where I was born eventually June 5, 1939. And they found that St. Catherine's wasn't any better than Thunder Bay. My father ended up coming back here and started working with the government staff of the grain Inspection for the government.

EE: So, he came to the job with the Grain Commission?

JA: As a Board of Grain Commissioners and he worked as a grain sampler and worked his way up to a grain inspector, chief inspector number 1. So that was nice, and of course I was raised here in Thunder Bay.

EE: Right, so being raised here in the grain-trade family, you might say something about your education and how you keep to work. What did you do on the way to support the trade?

JA: I started off working in the elevators, and I guess of course it is easier to get into the elevators when your father was an inspector for the government. But I did not capitalize on that. I went to another elevator and applied, and I got into Pool 7, the biggest elevator in Thunder Bay. And working in the grain industry not a good job at all, the labour end of it. Then right after that, I said this is no good for me, so I decided to go and work on the lakes, the Great Lakes, on the shipping end of it.

EE: When did you first sail?

JA: First sailed when I was 17 years old.

EE: In 1946?

JA: I had just turned 17 actually, yes.

EE: The summer of '46, right?

JA: Right.

EE: Ok.

JA: I was fortunate to get a--. Well the first ship that I was on was an old deep-sea boat called the *Sand Land*, and it had open ribs on the boat. It was only 185 feet long, so it was a very small ship. My first sailing experience on it, we hit heavy seas on Lake Superior and the water was coming into my room where I would sleep, and I was frightened. I got off that ship in Montreal and ended up getting on a new ship through Thunder Bay again and ended up with the *Fort Henry*.

EE: Oh yes. Who was sailing that?

JA: The *Sand Land*?

EE: Who did it belong to?

JA: I don't know the name of the shipping company really. It could be Toronto Elevator Shipping Company, but I am not sure of that. But it was an unfamiliar ship to most people.

EE: How long did you work in the elevators just to close that part of it, just months or through a season?

JA: Through about 2 1/2 seasons, I guess it was, on and off. At age 16 I was in there too. I said 17 when I started sailing, but at age 16 I did work in the elevators for about 1 1/2 to 2 years at the most, but it was seasonal, and you got laid off a lot.

EE: Oh yes. And any particular aspect of the part of the elevator business or were you shunted from one job to another?

JA: From one job to another just available for work what they needed. It probably went from taking samples of grain from the boxcars to start with, and then when the ships were taking the grain away to their port of destination, then we would take samples of the grain that was being fed into the ship by the spouts from the elevators, and that grain is supposed to be clean and well prepared for shipping and for purchase for whoever purchased this.

EE: And were you some extent monitoring the cleanliness of it?

JA: No really that could be done. Monitoring the cleanliness of it would be up to the elevator, up to the inspection staff. They would inspect the grain when it would come in and then knowing every boxcar load. Of course, that is how the farmers would

send it. The boxcar load would be first of all weighed, and not only weighed but tested to see the loss factor. When it came to the elevator, the line of the grain inside the boxcar was taken. There would be a line to show how high the grain was. They would look up and see how high the grain was, and to see if there was loss because the grain could always be shaken out of the cars on shipping.

EE: It would actually be lost from the load? It wasn't that it settled, but that it was actually outflow from the cars?

JA: Right. There would be shunting of the car and movement, and there is always cracks through the doors and a lot of grain was lost all the way along the railroad.

EE: I see.

JA: Sea gulls and pigeons, feeding the birds.

EE: Yes.

JA: So it would be weighed when the boxcars came, each and every boxcar, and the load level was shown and then inspected. Each car would be inspected. In order to get the inspection, I would get the sample and bring it in.

EE: Sure. And you would be doing this in the cars as well as at the loading?

JA: Yes, at the car when it was being unloaded and it would go down a spout in order to go to its bin where it was stored. And I would take then a sample of that and bring it up to the inspectors. The inspectors would test the grade of grain that that boxcar held.

EE: So you were--.

JA: And that determined, by the way, the price that was being paid for that grain.

EE: To the farmers ultimately, right?

JA: And there would be different types of seeds inside that, which meant that it has to be cleaned.

EE: Potential dockage?

JA: Exactly. And it was taken out and I always remember they would test wheat for ergot and ergot is a poison.

EE: Yes, it is.

JA: And they would test each car for the ergot. Not every day though. They would call it Ergot Tuesday and it would be

EE: Whatever day of the week it was.

JA: And they would check the ergot amount in each load.

EE: Would they have a warning that some of the cars might have that, or was it actually a random testing on all the grains?

JA: It would be a random testing at that time, and they would call it the Ergot Tuesday every week. Ergot is a black seed, and it came in different sizes.

EE: Yes.

JA: But it would be in the grain, and it had to be eliminated because it is the last thing in the grain that you wanted.

EE: Of course.

JA: So that end of it when it went up to the cleaning area, they would clean it and then place it in the bins ready for shipping.

EE: Sure.

JA: And then when the ships came in, they ordered so much wheat and so much barley or whatever. Every different elevator had a speciality I guess, you know. And they would ship it via the spout into the ship, and then you would take samples then again.

EE: And up to the grain inspectors?

JA: And up to the inspectors.

EE: You were serving in a sense in as assistance to the government staff?

JA: That is all. I was just a young fellow that would do the labour work and while the inspection staff was in the office doing tests with the grain and eating their food and drinking their pop.

EE: Right. [Laughs] Spiritous pop?

JA: It looked something like that. I can't--. I don't want to incriminate them, but they were a carefree group and a good group and were well educated on the grading of grain, and for which my father was one.

EE: Then he worked there through the war years I guess then?

JA: Well, he started in the early '40s and through the war. He didn't go to war, but he couldn't qualify for the war.

EE: Sure.

JA: Health-wise and he ended up working right through the war years of course. You could call him a warrior.

EE: And I guess the veterans joined him after the war I suppose.

JA: Oh, yes. And the veterans were probably the first they picked for the elevator work with the government.

EE: Sure.

JA: And it was predominately the veterans of the war who would get the jobs for the government. Now, not for the elevator. There is a government and the elevator inspectors. So the government staff including the weighing staff. There are two staffs. There would be the inspection of the grain staff and the weighing staff. The weighing staff, the weighmen staff. They would weigh all the grain and that is the weighing staff they called it. Then the inspection staff would naturally do their own. So they would both not be in the same office but be in the same building.

EE: Right.

JA: So you had the weighmen weighing the grain coming in, and weighing it after it has being taken out of the boxcar, and then weighing it when it is being shipped. Shipping weighmen up at the top of the elevators. So the weighmen were on the top floor weighing grain and then weighing grain for storage and shipping.

EE: Were these all government employees as well?

JA: Oh yes, the weighmen staff.

EE: Why did Sask Pool have a parallel grain inspection staff because that is what you are describing here? Are the two side-by-side, am I right?

JA: Are you talking for weighmen and--?

EE: Well, I was thinking back to the inspection itself. They were both company inspectors.

JA: And elevator inspectors. Government employees for the grain inspection, and the elevator company had an inspection staff too.

EE: Was there a reason for this duplication?

JA: Well, probably for corrective reasons. Maybe there was a grade that was maybe not graded properly, and someone would contest the value of that. So this way they would have probably, in my estimation, they would have the inspection for that car that's all noted and numbered. All under a very high degree of organized shipping. Very organized, meticulously organized because of the farmers main interest is, "My grain is being put here, and I am shipping it and having it cleaned, and I want the best value for it." The elevator would be the one that would, I don't know if you could call it checking out of the government staff or the government checking out on the elevator. I don't really know.

EE: A system of checks and balances as we point to describe it.

JA: Exactly.

EE: Could be a good idea and certainly watching each other. The thing that I am curious about is the Sask Pool in this case. Of course, Sask Pool is owned by the farmers so and they do have that stake.

JA: Exactly.

EE: We were talking to someone just days ago who worked at Cargill—National became Cargill—and there I wonder what stake would Cargill have in double-checking the grading if all they were doing was providing the shipping service and the storage? Yes, of course the storage too, but--.

JA: All the grain would matter to them.

EE: I can see in the case of Sask Pool, though it certainly would because they wanted to be sure the farmer got every cent he could possibly get for the grain.

JA: And then being owned by the farmers, they would have to share in the total expense. Maybe there is one big farmer for instance who might put in so much percentage of grain, and he would be charged accordingly for that storage and shipping.

EE: Yes.

JA: Because the elevator would be cleaning, storing, and shipping and receiving. So all of that receiving and then we have the railways involved.

EE: Sure. Well, it is quite a complex system, and we are ignoring the Wheat Board's role in all of this as the central agent in terms of buying from the farmers and selling on the world market and so on.

JA: And then with the sampling, I am going to give you this thought too because we can miss so many. One very small service that I will never forget. When all the samples were taken, they just don't throw them out. They have to tie them up, number them, and keep them all in proper form, and every day all of the samples that were taken, had to be locked up and shipped to the Grain Commission in Chapple's.

EE: Yes.

JA: For double-checking, certification of this that it was shipped here. Yes, the cars, the numbers, and all of the day's work would be put into a locked case, encasement downstairs in front of a driveway where a Mr. George McDaid had the contract for

picking up. And he would come with his truck and pick up all those samples and bring them to Chapple's where the Board of Grain Commissioner's office is.

EE: Sure.

JA: And he would ship all of that, and I was witnessing this because I lived there, right at the elevators, within a thousand feet.

EE: Sure.

JA: I lived right there.

EE: You observed all of this for years?

JA: All of this happening and things going on, but very few people would tell you about George McDaid.

EE: Right. Well, I am glad you are.

JA: I am glad I did too.

EE: It's because he is now on the oral record that we [inaudible].

JA: Exactly, I am sure if George is still alive, he would be happy to hear that, but I feel that he, I think, was quite superior in age to me at that time. I will never forget him. He was good and kind because when I was walking to school to Queen Elizabeth, it was a good mile and a half every day.

EE: Right.

JA: When he would come and pick up the samples, at night he would pick them up. He would pick me up and drive me and my brothers home at night so we would not have to walk. We had to walk all the time, but when he would come it was always nice to see George.

EE: Right, you would be grateful.

JA: Yes, very grateful because it was a long way to walk.

EE: Sure.

JA: Then I went to Tech from there, which ended up three miles and I never walked. I used to run.

EE: This was at Hillcrest?

JA: Hillcrest. I would walk, I would run all the way to Queen Elizabeth School in the summer. At 12:00, I would run home for lunch. That is a mile and a half almost, and then run back to school after eating, and then run home again. There were four times. So I would run 1 1/2 miles times four.

EE: That is six miles!

JA: Six miles.

EE: You were in good health!

JA: Yes, and by that I used to follow the--. This has nothing to do with me, but I have to tell you this. It's to do with me. The Legion race, the 10-mile race, I use to run alongside of them when I was a kid and interested in who's going to win. And I used to run, and I could beat them.

EE: You used to outrun them, eh?

JA: Of course.

EE: Did you ever run?

JA: No, I never went into them, but I can remember with them and running and running alongside, and then when it came to the end, I was still there and I had a lot of steam left. Taken off like a deer. [Laughs] Because I had every day run.

EE: You should have gone into marathons.

JA: Well, I ended up skating, and I won a lot of skating races, and I always did win a lot of those races.

EE: You could use those legs in the winter.

JA: Yes, playing hockey and everything.

EE: Anyways, sorry to deviate. Back to sea then. Is there anything to add to the experience with the first ship?

JA: Elevators or which?

EE: We might take ourselves onto the lake now, unless there was something you wanted to add about the--?

JA: I was on a smaller ship called the *Grey Beaver* also before I was on the *Fort Henry*. And the *Grey Beaver* was a Toronto Elevator boat they called it. Toronto Elevator, I think it was. Yes. It was owned by Toronto Elevator, and we would travel down to the lower canals, the St. Lawrence, before the St. Lawrence was built.

EE: Before the Seaway was built?

JA: Before the Seaway. The Seaway just started when I started in that year. It was just started.

EE: The construction?

JA: Yes, that would have been '55 or '56, I guess, and making preparation for the Seaway.

EE: Yes, it took several years to build.

JA: And Peterson Trucking from Thunder Bay was one of the biggest trucking companies that started out on the Seaway project. He had all his trucks here and bought a fleet of trucks for the Seaway, which none of them made big money in that because it was, you know, just happy to be there in those years. And I remember in the absence of the Seaway going down the Lachine Rapids, and there is a picture of it in this book, and at that point I was wheeling—also training to be a wheelsman—and they put me on the wheel in the rapids, and the mate said to me, “That back end has to stay back there.” That is what he said, and I am looking and coming to the rapids, and you are going down. You would hit a good 20 miles an hour on those, going down.

Collingwood is there, and then there is a big bridge, you know, the Collingwood bridge. I was so nervous because all it takes is a wrong movement and the after end would go, and then you would see it coming in front of you.

EE: Really!

JA: And you would be looking up the river behind you instead of down. Very dangerous.

EE: Oh yes.

JA: And that my first run down the Lachine Rapids, and I thought I was going to be a failure. I was only a young man, I guess. The age, I mean, 16 or 17, whatever I was.

EE: Well, running those rapids has made one of the delights of sailing the St. Lawrence before the Seaway was built.

JA: It was.

EE: A hundred years ago there were the Rapids Prince and the Rapids Queen. I think there were several ships the Richelieu and Ontario Navigation that are in the book.

JA: There is a picture of them coming down the rapids. You will see the picture in there. And to me that was an experience. There were a lot of experiences-- I once saved a young man's life. It was stormy out, and we were coming into shore just outside of Montreal, and this young fellow swung out on the rope and he slid down the rope and fell into the water, and the boat is coming into the dock. The captain yelled, "Get out there and get that man,," and I am next. So they pulled the boom in, and I grabbed it and I went out, and I went on the dock, and the ship is coming. I bent over, and I don't know how I ever got--. The dock was about that high from the water, and I bent over and I pulled that young man off over my head. I don't know how I did it.

EE: Superhuman strength!

JA: It saved him, and he paid off. He got on the ship and said thank you as soon as I pulled him out.

EE: He was not committing suicide or anything?

JA: Oh no.

EE: Purely an accident.

JA: Oh no. He slid off, and it was raining and wet. He slid down the rope, even down through the knots. There are knots on the rope. He slid down. I don't know why or how, but I pulled him out, and as I got him up, I remembered the ship coming in and boom he hit the dock, and he would have been crushed.

EE: Yes.

JA: And the captain thanked me because no accidents.

EE: No.

JA: I truly don't know the strength I had to do that. How did I accomplish that? Anyways, he gave me his diamond ring this young fellow. He was a little older than me, but he gave me his diamond ring for doing that for him. I put it in my watch pocket. Forgot about it in there, and I washed my jeans in the wash bucket and don't know where it went. [Laughs]

EE: The difficulty went with ease.

JA: Many stories I could tell but far too many would take up time.

EE: So you worked on this one boat for quite a long time, for years?

JA: I worked for 3 1/5 years on the *Fort Henry*.

EE: And whose ship was that?

JA: That was the Canada Steamship Lines.

EE: The Canadian Ship Lines?

JA: Right.

EE: How much training was there to prepare you to be a sailor?

JA: Well, there was no real training course to be a sailor. You came in. You were a deckhand, and you started as a deckhand. And then the watchman was called a watchman because he watched the deckhands, and they would get you started. It would be chipping and painting the ship and then docking the boat and starting right from the ground floor or water level.

EE: There was never an end to the painting, I guess?

JA: No, never an end. The deckhands would do all that work. But when I started, the union had not won their contracts.

EE: So you were without a union at this point?

JA: I worked all day Saturday and any time at night. If they wanted you to work, you would have to work. I think the pay was \$75.00 a month at that time. And I remember after the big strike, that was in '56 I believe it was, the big Seamen's strike and that was under Hal Banks. He was the chief then. You know Hal Banks?

EE: Of course.

JA: Oh, it was bad. They had armoured cars and everything on the Seaway. The new Seaway after--. No, not the new Seaway. The Welland Canal.

EE: Right at St. Catherine's?

JA: The Welland Canal in St. Catherine's. They were all under control and watched by police because there were riots. And they wanted to have proper rights on the boats because they were not treated properly. They had to work Saturdays, Sundays, and cleaning and doing everything and they would get fed. But you see they held that against them more or less, I guess. You are eating and sleeping, you should be working on Saturday and Sunday.

EE: Sure. If you are on the ship, you work.

JA: Right. Now when they won the new contract, Saturday and Sunday working was called overtime, OT.

EE: Right, and it paid better I presume?

JA: Oh, I think the first cheque I got was about \$150.00 for the month then, and we use to get the money in an envelope.

EE: Cash?

JA: Cash in an envelope. Then naturally you would send money home in an envelope too. I can't see how that would ever work, but we did. But your room and board was free. You never paid room and board.

EE: It wasn't deducted from the pay?

JA: Oh no. It was wonderful to have a place to sleep and to eat and to travel and to enjoy the outdoors. It was a wonderful life.

EE: The strike involved the struggle between unions as well, did it not?

JA: It was between you and the Seafarers International Union [SIU].

EE: Yes, the Seafarers International Union.

JA: International Union and the CSU.

EE: Canadian Seaman's Union.

JA: Seafarer's Union, I believe that was it.

JA: The government played a part in pushing one of them out. Did they regard the SCU as being Communist I believe?

JA: Yes, and the SIU was the winner out and took over. The Hal Banks.

EE: The Hal Banks.

JA: Hal Banks was the president of the union at that time.

EE: I guess this happened before the '57 election, I guess, too didn't it? Because the Liberal Government of the time were the villains of the piece, I believe. It has been years since I looked at this.

JA: Yes, and I can't recall. But there were a lot of villains. [Laughs] Even from Thunder Bay there were many different situations where people's privacy was infringed upon because of their actions with the union. I could name some, but I don't think I should. Probably for privacy I would prefer not to. I know the names of a lot of the people.

EE: Things they suffered because they were involved with the union?

JA: Yeah. Oh yeah. A lot of people did, very much so.

EE: So you were with CSL at this point, a CSL employee, and this was CSL being organized by the SIU taking over?

JA: Not the employees of CSL, which was the captains and the mates.

EE: Oh no, no. The Seafarers?

JA: The Seafarers. They for a while were looked down upon because the company people always have dedication, of course, and allegiance to the company.

EE: I hope they got properly rewarded. [Laughs]

JA: It took a little while to win over the confidence and both work as a team because that is the only thing that could work anyways.

EE: How many men would there be on one of these ships? How would these be organized?

JA: In the area of 18 to 25, which you would have three deckhands to four deckhands depending on the shifts.

EE: The size--.

JA: And there would be shift work too. They would work 12-hour shifts and three each, so there might be six or might be eight deckhands depending on the ship. And then you would have the first mate. Oh, that is company now. The first mate, the second mate, and the third mate. You got third mate, second mate, and first mate, and then captain.

EE: So there would be these four would be management people?

JA: The forward end. The forward end they called it. You would take a ship and you would get the forward end of the ship and the after end. So the forward end would have three to four deckhands, three watchmen, which are watching the deckhands, watching the ship, and they would be through--. Well like watchman they called them. So there would be probably three, two sometimes depending on the size of the ship, but it would be to serve the needs of the ship.

EE: Yes, and were they management?

JA: No, not the watchman.

EE: They were sort of lead hands then?

JA: Lead hands exactly. So you would have the deckhands, the watchman, then you would have the third mate. Oh, pardon me. After the watchman came the wheelsman, and there were two to three wheelmen, too. I can't give you the exact number though. I would have to give it more thought. So there would be deckhands, watchmen, wheelsman, and they were in the union. Now the third mate was also in the union prior, but now he would go into becoming management on the ship. So there were the third mate, the second mate, and the first mate. So they would serve as one day shift. The third mate, the second mate, and the first mate. Then the captain, of course, who is the captain. Now that is the forward end of the ship, and that is the total of all the people needed to run the forward end, which is the navigation of the ship, to navigate.

EE: The ship is steered from the--. The steering's from the front, and the action is in the back, I suppose, in terms of runners?

JA: Exactly.

EE: But they are at the front watching and directing?

JA: Now, there would be--. On the rivers, a pilot would come onboard on the rivers. This pilot was a special captain. He was not a sailing captain. He was a specialist in river navigation.

EE: Would he actually take the wheel or would he direct?

JA: Oh no, he would organize.

EE: He would be watching?

JA: Oh yes. He would be organizing the navigation of the ship fore, and I think probably the insurance companies required that, and the shipping company wanted that safety. The captain, he would be on the lakes navigating, but the pilot would be on the rivers and the small lakes, like Lake St. Clair, and in between and all the rivers.

EE: And they would know those waters intimately.

JA: And yes, right. So there is the front end, and that would be the high end of the captain would be the pilot. Now you have the after end. Now in the old days, they would have coal and that would be called "fireman". They would make sure the fire was kept going.

EE: Sure, shovelling the coal.

JA: And then when it went to oil it would become the "oilman".

EE: From fireman to oilman.

JA: The oil is still fireman but then there would be oilman I am sorry I should separate those. Fireman taking care of the burning of the fuel and making sure that there is sufficient to run the ship, coal. And then when they converted to oil, they had to have the proper oil turned on and everything too. They would still be under the union. So they would have the oil. They would be trained in feeding oil into the burners.

EE: Now the fireman were just phased out? They were replaced by oilmen?

JA: Yeah, the name was just replaced. But if you were a fireman, you would--.

EE: Become an oilman?

JA: You would still be a fireman because it's burning. Now the oilman would be the person who goes around oiling all the joints and movements.

EE: Sure. Lubrication.

JA: Yeah, and on the old ship there was this big arm that goes around for the pistons and that needed oiling. And the oilman would have to make sure that he's watching it as it is going and turning. He would put his hand in, and it would swoosh because that arm would be coming around again, and if he wasn't timed, his arm would come off. That was the way it was for the oilman.

EE: Through the day and the shift, the oiling is perpetual, isn't it?

JA: Oh perpetual. Oh, you can't leave that.

EE: I see. You don't fall asleep on that job.

JA: Oh no. Oh no.

EE: The friction would--.

JA: Oh no. Oh no. [Laughs] So all of it needed to be in order for the navigation to be taking place. You have to have the teamwork working and the aft end.

EE: Right. Was that the aft end that the fireman and oilman were working?

JA: Oh no, that is not all. And then you would have the third engineer, the second engineer, and the first engineer. Same as in the forward end. You would have the first mate, the second mate, and the third mate, or the third mate, the second mate, and first. Then you would have the third engineer, second engineer, and the first engineer. The same concept as the front of the ship. Forward end would be the utilization of the rear end the after end of the ship, which took care of the power in order to navigate the ship. So as a team, very unique, well-organized team when you think about it after.

EE: Now the ship would sail around the clock, I suppose?

JA: Except in port, of course.

EE: Yeah, of course, but if they are on the water--. o these are what eight-hour shifts in a day, with the mates taking turns, for example?

JA: Yeah, but the watchman would take a 12-hour shift for some reason. The deckhand would take 8 hours, but sometimes it worked in a 12-hour shift. And I think that was in the early years when they wanted you to work all day Saturday and Sunday. I can't really pinpoint it. Now that is over 50 years ago.

EE: Yes of course.

JA: 60 years.

EE: Well, you are doing a splendid job of describing the complement, the work.

JA: Well, it is all very vivid.

EE: I dare say.

JA: It is.

EE: How many of these different tasks did you fulfill? How long did you sail?

JA: Four years. A little over four years, which is a lot of time on a ship, especially when you are away from home all the time and a young man. It kept me out of trouble.

EE: So you didn't sail all of your life then?

JA: Oh no. I met this woman out here, and the demands were greater than the need on the other end. [Laughs]

EE: We will get to that later.

JA: Yes.

EE: So tie up the ship. Let's not tie it up. Let's keep sailing.

JA: Yeah.

EE: So what different kinds of tasks did you have on the ship? You began as a deckhand?

JA: As a deckhand. Well as a deckhand, you make sure that the ship is being tied up securely, number one, when you're going ashore. You swing out on what was called the "boom". You would swing out and you would lower yourself. But then they came out with a new boom, and they would lower it. The watchman would be lowering and putting the boom out for you, and he would be letting it down.

EE: Was this fellow who slid down, he was on the boom and slipped off into the canal?

JA: Oh yes that fellow. He slipped off, and I was next.

EE: Right, I see.

JA: So I went down and I slid down at that time and let myself go, and then reached over and pulled him out of the water. But now on that activity, the ship has to be tied and it has to be fit to be tied. [Laughs]

EE: That was the phrase, eh? [Laughs]

JA: Yeah, and so you swing out, the deckhand swings out, and then the watchman, after he has done that, he pulls the boom. The boom comes back automatically, and then he wraps it up, and then he throws the heaving line to the agent, to the deckhand,

EE: Right.

JA: The deckhand catches the heaving line and then pulls in the snub, which is the part that goes on the dock, the black tie up. What do they call it?

EE: What do they call them? [Laughs]

JA: I see them but yeah. [Laughs] I can't call it that.

EE: No. [Laughs]

JA: It is against the law. [Laughs]

JA: It was--. You know what I mean. It was a black head.

EE: Yeah.

JA: Exactly. [Laughs]

OM: The end.

JA: Exactly. [Laughs] And with special respect, it shouldn't have been called that, but that's what it was. There was no need for that foolishness but there was. Anyways we would take the snub and put it on and now it is there. Now aboard, on the ship, either the third mate would be controlling the deckhand that was running the winch, and he'd go to the deckhand and say "Okay, tighten it up," and he would tighten it up, and the line would become very tight now.

EE: So it would be tightened on the ship?

JA: Yes, from the ship.

EE: With the winch?

JA: With the winch, and would go through all the proper areas that were required to tie it up, and then he would go, "Okay," and now the motors would be cut off. They would be running but not in [inaudible].

EE: The ship's dead on the water [inaudible].

JA: Exactly, and they would be assisting with the rudder a bit, but now no more rudder. Now comes the winch that will pull that ship in. It's pulling it in now, the winch. Now a steam winch would turn on the winch—and I was winch operator after—but it pulled, and you could feel the ship coming ashore. And then the third mate or second mate or whoever was on watch, or first,

depends on the watch, what watch you were on—they called it a watch—and so they would watch where the ship was coming into the dock and they would go to the captain, or whoever is up in the wheelhouse, how far we are away from the dock. That is the best way to tell. And then that's it. Shut off the winch. Everything is fine. So the winch man would know, and the captain in the wheelhouse would know because if it was three feet it would be three feet. If it was six, you would go like this, and three feet or two feet, one foot, half a foot, and that is how they were directing because you couldn't see down in the docks.

EE: No. So you wouldn't be able to see over the side of the ship?

JA: You wouldn't be able to see over the side of the ship, and you can't tell because your perception is totally off when you are up there.

EE: So everything would be done by measuring of the hands. And the hands, to do what you were just doing on the tape, would exaggerate somewhat. It's arms throwing back almost to indicate the six feet.

JA: Exactly.

EE: Because of course the captain is watching from a distance, too.

JA: Oh yeah. He would know. He would know.

EE: But they realize that you are exaggerating. The distance is actually less than your arms are indicating.

JA: Yeah, and far. But when you are coming closer, and then you'd go like, you know, when you are coming in fast you go like "Oh, too fast!" All actions are read, are a reading in your mind. So you are trained on that to become part of the team. And part of an expression of a team through your habits and your knowledge and your attitudes and your skills, everything put together. And you work it out. And you can't deceive the people who are reliant upon you.

EE: No, definitely not.

JA: You can't. It would be foolish.

EE: It would cost you your job.

JA: Oh, my goodness, you can't. You would be guiltier than you can imagine.

EE: Were you on the ship before and after the strike as well?

JA: Oh yeah, Before and after.

EE: An experience of how new teams were developed in this, the teamwork developed in this situation.

JA: I will give you an example. I would be on the lower canal or even coming into Sault Ste. Marie for instance. In the river, just the mouth of the river.

EE: Up the St. Mary's then?

JA: Right, up the St. Mary's, and we would be there--. No, down, coming from Lake Superior. Correct. Coming down.

EE: Which canal then? The American canal?

JA: It would depend. The American one was one we used more. It depends. The Canadian one was used more for docking in Sault Ste. Marie, but the American one was easiest, and we enjoyed that better anyway on the US side. But I will give you an example of the union prior to the old union, now. They would have you out four or five hours before, sitting in the winch room waiting with no purpose whatsoever, but just that you were available and waiting in there. I said, "Why are we waiting?" And he said, "This is what they want. You have got to do it. You've got to sit there and be available in the event of a catastrophe or whatever." But there never was. But they wanted you out there.

EE: And you are still on Lake Superior before you were even in the river.

JA: Exactly, before coming into the mouth.

EE: Before approaching the canal?

JA: Yeah, and having to be out there for hours on end and tired in the middle of the night. You can't get up, can't go anywhere. "Stay in that room there and wait." Never call.

EE: After the strike?

JA: After the strike, different. Everything. And you were treated like a human being now, treated with respect, and I think they knew that. And I think the company realized that, "Hey, these people are human beings that need--. They are not slaves." We were treated like slaves in the early part, and pre-union, negotiations success of the negotiations, and it was pretty harsh.

EE: So from your perspective, the SIU was a real gain?

JA: Oh, it was a thankful--. Like thankful that it existed for the benefit of mankind, really, because that industry is worldwide seamanship.

EE: Yes, it certainly is.

JA: The CSU was of course the Seaman's Union. The deep sea.

EE: I see. Where the blue water fleet--.

JA: Exactly, and I think they maintained that union, the CSU, the other one.

EE: No, the CSE was what you were saying.

JA: I can't recall exactly. I will have to check up on it.

EE: Yes, we could.

JA: But anyways, it was the negotiations for proper work ethics of management towards the slaves.

EE: This was part of your describing the things you had done on the boats?

JA: Yes, on the boats.

EE: There are some things, I am sure--.

JA: Then I took a brief moment prior to leaving in wheeling, in wheeling the ship. Then at that point, I was on the *Fort Henry* where they had automatic. Where the old ones before I was wheeling down the Lachine--. I was on the *Great Beaver*, and I was wheeling down then. Easier wheeling up here on the lake.

EE: I can imagine.

JA: Much easier because you know you can look back and see the line where--. How you were. Of course, you turn left, and you are going right, and you turn right--. Port and starboard. But when it came out to automatic wheel, that was where the wheels just sat down and talked to the mates and made sure that they were proper.

EE: Were they hydraulic?

JA: Well, it would be, I can't tell you, but it was all electric. It was electric, but it would be probably hydraulic by movement. I can't tell you the inner workings. That would come from the engineering department.

EE: And there would be engineers on the ships as well?

JA: Every ship had an engineer.

EE: An engineer?

JA: Oh, every ship.

EE: Every ship would have a cook or two as well?

JA: A cook, and that's the other one, the next one we were going to bring up.

EE: [Laughs] Okay.

JA: For the after end--. And the after end, of course, is where the dining room was, and they had a dining room for all of the company employees, special.

EE: A separate room?

JA: A separate dining room, and that was like going on the *Queen Victoria*. Oh, they had beautiful tablecloths, candles, silverware for the mates—the first, the second, and third mates—and they would come with their outfits on and their ties and their hats. When they went down to eat, you could see them from our mess hall they called us. Our mess hall. We were like, “Oh look at them!” And they would have their wives aboard too.

EE: Oh really?

JA: Oh, that was the big thing. The captain would have a wonderful suite like this probably, and he would bring his wife and children and they were like royalty.

EE: I see.

JA: Oh yeah.

EE: Speak of rank of the ship. Rank was rank with rank? [Laughs]

JA: And then you would have the first mate would bring his wife, and the second mate would bring his wife. And I never saw the third mate bring his wife, but I think he didn't qualify yet. You had to give him an incentive to become the second mate. And they would be in the royalty in there. Beautiful dress at every meal. Lovely. Captain outfit with his captain. The deckhand would come in with his old jeans and paint on their hands and everything and sit in the mess. And it was a mess.

EE: This was the management dining room. It wasn't an office or a mess or anything?

JA: Oh no. It was a mess.

EE: A dining room.

JA: We had the mess hall. One big table. It sat about 15 or 20 people on both sides like this, and it would run all one side. You step over on the bench, pour yourself a glass of milk, drink it down. Pour another one and before you sat down it would be all covered in milk, milk, milk. Everything lined up. The food lined up, just take all you want.

EE: You could have been in a bush camp!

JA: Oh yeah, same thing. [Laughs] And eat like a king, roar. But in there you got “Hello. Come on in. Nice to see you. Hello, Captain.” [Laughs] Treated like royalty.

EE: Did the captain or the mates work in this clothing, or did they change into them for dinner?

JA: The captain worked in that clothing. The first mate had his first mate hat on always, and the second and third mates had their hats on, but they never worked in that clothing. But when they were dining, they were called to look and become--. To be the part.

EE: For all three meals?

JA: Yes. [Laughs]

EE: It takes a certain amount of time to do that? [Laughs]

JA: Breakfast--. Well, I don't know about breakfast. I didn't see them very often at breakfast, but lunch and evening. And then in the after end there was a night cook. There was first cook, second cook, and there would be--. What did they call them? First cook and second cook, and then there would be the dishwasher, which involved the cleaning and everything. And then there was the night cook for special evening cooking for men that had come back, and everybody could come and have lunch at night if you wanted to, or whatever you wanted.

EE: Well, if there is a night shift on, you shouldn't have to work for 8 or 12 hours without eating.

JA: Well, that's right. They would have to have their meals. And I never forget, I used to go back. This is just an occurrence. When I was in Thunder Bay, I worked as a boy for Percy Daisy, who was at Boulevard Lake. I would peel the potatoes and cut the potatoes for the chips, and I worked there all summer when I was a young boy. 12, 13, and 14 I worked, and I would work with Percy Daisy at Boulevard Lake. And I learned how to peel potatoes.

So I am in the Aft end of the ship one night, and the night cook was sitting there peeling potatoes and I said, “What are you peeling all those potatoes like that for?” I said, “This is going to take you hours.” And he said--. And he was a Frenchman, and he said, “What do you mean? What are you going to do better? You going to show me how to cut potatoes?” I said “Yeah. I will tell you what I will do. I will bet you a dollar that I will peel those potatoes within five minutes, perfect.” He said, “You got to

give me the dollar.” He put the dollar down, and I put a dollar down. And I said, “Ok give me time.” And I fixed up everything I needed. I needed a heaving line. The potatoes were in a jute bag. I needed a nail and the heaving line, and the nail and the potatoes in the bag. I said, “Ok time me now,” and I didn't show him what I had. I went out and took the bag and went out at the after end of the ship. I wove the nail in the bag, the top part, okay? I put the heaving line under the nail, tied it up, threw it overboard on the after end of the ship, and I gave it not even a minute, and I said, “They will be done within a minute, at least half a minute, to a minute.” I put it over, and the churning of the wheel as we are on the lake formed the movement in the potatoes in the bag, and I pulled it up. I opened it up and what do you believe. Pearly white potatoes all the way through. So I took it into him. He went nuts. “What! How did you do that?” And I says, “Give me the dollar.” Just fine, so he gave me the dollar, and I showed him that all of them were beautiful white. And he said in French, you know what they say, “Mon Dieu.” And I showed him how I did it, and what I did. “Here is the nail.” And ever since then, he never peeled another potato. He says, “Thank you very much, John. Thank you.”

Oh, what a life. And I never forgot that. That was wonderful. And I thought I had invented the potatoes peeler, you know. [Laughs] Anyways, so all the deckhands would go in the after end, and that is where a lot of gambling took place, at the after end of a ship too. The forward had no meeting room and had maybe a dart game in the after end and special recreational room back there.

EE: Was back there?

JA: Yeah, right there, and everybody would congregate in there and talk and gamble and do the things. Gambling was bad on the ships. Some men would never come home. They would be broke.

EE: What games were they gambling in?

JA: They would be cards.

EE: Oh, play cards.

JA: I never saw dice on there. Always card games. I think dice was outlawed, but always a card game.

EE: Do enough damage with cards I suppose?

JA: Yes, and darts. They would play darts for money and also card games, like playing with cards. Seven-twenty-seven or whatever it is called. You move 15-2, 15-4, whatever they called it. And so, during the times that we were on the lakes sailing, it was always a lot of activity on the ship.

EE: Yes. The card games were always grain, I suppose?

JA: Not always grain. I was on up on a grain ship on the *Grey Beaver*, and I was on package freighter. The *Fort Henry* was a package freighter.

EE: Oh yes.

JA: We would take the freight, liquor from Walkersville, Hiram Walker liquor, and I remember bringing liquor to Thunder Bay. Cases of it just packed solid. Thunder Bay was a great city for liquor, I tell you, and beer. You name it. And we would bring it in.

EE: It wasn't all being drunk at the elevators?

JA: Well, there were always cases missing. Always. Where did it go? Nobody knows. No one would tell. There is a certain amount of pilfering going on no matter where, either from the ship into the storage when you take it off. We would go Walkersville across from Detroit.

EE: Yes.

JA: And Hiram Walker, we would bring liquor back. We would bring freight back for the city, food and everything.

EE: Sure. Would you go as far as Toronto or Montreal for freight?

JA: Oh yeah. Not Montreal on the *Fort Henry*. Toronto and area and Windsor and Sarnia.

EE: Toronto, Thunder Bay, and the Lakehead and so on.

JA: So they had the freight sheds in there. So we would bring back the freight. Now going back east, we would load up flour from the flourmill, Ogilvie. We would load flour and bring it also to Windsor, Detroit, and we also brought cars from Detroit.

EE: Did you now?

JA: Oh yes. Many cars were lost overboard. Many cars in the high seas.

EE: Oh, literally.

JA: Yes, you would look out and see cars gone again, another one. And the *Fort Henry* went aground and lost a lot of cars. After the *Fort Henry* was not even a year old, it went aground up here at Pie Island area. And it was in the harbour for some time.

EE: At drydock being repaired.

JA: Yeah, of course, right there at the shipyards.

EE: Now the liquor could walk away, but the cars just rolled off the deck?

JA: Yeah, the liquor would walk away, stagger away. [Laughs] But a lot of pilfering in those days for, you know, for the liquor.

EE: It's sad to say that ports were notorious for that. I guess for loss.

JA: I think every port.

EE: Yes. That's what containers are for?

JA: Well, if you are a human being, you qualify for stealing. Yeah. [Laughs] Hey, you're a human being. You qualify.

EE: [Inaudible]

JA: If we are humans, we qualify for all the ill-fated things in life.

EE: But that is what containers, when they began coming into the late '50s out of New York and so on, they really put a dent into pilferage didn't they?

JA: It is just unreal. And to come back to the elevators then. Now pilfering in the elevators, you know, if a person brought his lunch, everybody in the elevator walked away with a lunch pail full of wheat. Every day of the year, that they are working and everybody, it would be full of wheat or barley or oats for the horse, or flax. Whatever you want, it's all there. Or rye and they would take it either in bags or whatever. But the lunch pail was always filled up.

EE: And I suppose everyone knew it was happening?

JA: When you drank your coffee, fill up the thermos, too. [Laughs]

EE: The superintendents knew it was happening, I suppose?

JA: Well, they were--. At one point, they were labourers also. [Laughs]

EE: So they knew. [Laughs]

JA: And I am not convicting anybody of theft.

EE: No, everyone did it, eh?

JA: Well maybe not anyone.

EE: Everyone. [Laughs]

JA: When the boxcars came in, the grain doors were put on the cars to stop, and then close the doors.

EE: The boards were across the inside of the door I suppose, were they?

JA: Yes, yes. All birch. This house is made of grain doors. Right here. This here is a house, a small little home in the early years. I just remodelled the whole thing.

EE: We are here on Dawson Road. What is the name of this lake again?

JA: Mokomon Lake.

EE: Mokomon Lake, right.

JA: This very famous lake.

EE: Pin this location. [Laughs]

JA: There are no big ships coming around the corner. [Laughs] Nature's Cove I call it. Nature Cove as you can see its nature.

EE: Sure, it's beautiful.

JA: Yeah. Thank you. It is. But it had to be created beautiful. Nothing happens without the human being becoming a husband.

EE: No, you were working hard.

JA: Exactly.

EE: Now there was a time when these doors were not needed any longer?

JA: Now, that is what I wanted to get at. So these doors--.

EE: You were taking things that actually were not needed?

JA: Would be taken off. And to get the shoveller to grab the shovel with his cable, and he would stand at the front part and *shooo*. And you never go to the back. You start from the front, short shovels, and then the after end of the boxcar, shovel again all the way, cleaning it out the best as you can. And there was always probably, I would suggest, close to 500--. If the grain went inside the walls of the car, all the way and as they sometimes did when they were feeding it, it would fall down and fill the wall. And when you went on the outside of the car, you could hit the tin, and if it was a solid hit, you knew it was filled with grain.

EE: These would be steel boxcars?

JA: Steel boxcars or wooden boxcars.

EE: But they were two-walled?

JA: Two walls.

EE: And were lined on the inside with boards to get a smooth.

JA: And the bottom there would be a hole out.

EE: Oh, at the bottom and at the top as well?

JA: A hole at the top.

EE: And so the grain could be slopping over or whatever.

JA: Exactly. So there would be a hole at the bottom but it wouldn't all come out. And sometimes there would be what we called them "liners" lined right up with grain, and you sweep, and you sweep, and you would get 100 pounds out of there like nothing. Sometimes three walls or portions were filled with grain. But I would say on average because I am very experienced on this end of it because I swept wheat.

EE: We got you off the ship, and you need to tell us what you did with the rest of your life? Oh, this sort of thing I take it.

JA: Well, no. Okay. You are off the ship now. But as a boy, and now this is coming back pre-sailing years, okay, when I grew up down there at the elevators. I talked about becoming a sailor, and that is in the past years of being a young boy. But as a young boy, I was involved at the elevators, and I watched so many things happening. The grain doors for instance. The grain doors would have to be put back in the car, and now they are taking the empty cars. When you finished emptying a box car, it would come down and go into a special lane, so that if the engineer can come up, hook all together the cars, and take them away.

So where you have full cars that go in, empty cars go over here in the other lane. So you have got a lane of full cars going in. And they shunt it down and go on the side, then empty cars are coming down from the elevators. Now the cars would be full, every one of them, with grain doors stacked that high. Two and a half feet high, two feet. All the grain doors were blocking the doors because they are not needed anymore. You have got to take them off. You take them off and they would go down to what is called the grain door shack which was probably a half a mile away from the elevator. Get them off there because we are taking these cars back to the farmers, to Saskatchewan. Okay. and they can do it. They took the cars gone. But these cars would be

closed the doors after. Sometimes they would leave them open, and many people had free rides all the way to the west. I know because I was on one. [Laughs]

EE: Wow. You rode one? How far did you ride?

JA: Well not far.

EE: You decided to get a sense of what could be done?

JA: Yeah, yeah. I was leaving home early in life, and I jumped aboard probably in the early morning and ended up going the wrong way and ended up going east. I wanted to go west. So I got off downtown when it slowed down. I was only about 12 years old.

EE: That early?

JA: I even had tied a stick with an apple in a bag and everything. You know how you tie it like--.

EE: A real Tom Sawyer!

JA: Yeah, a real Tom Sawyer. I did it and it stopped downtown Port Arthur, and I got off and I waited for another train coming west, and I jumped on that train, and it went right by, and I was waving at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning good bye to all my friends. I am going west, young man! It stopped in Westfort, and I walked all the way back. I got home at about 7:00. Four hours later after all this, I went to bed and the alarm clock went off for my dad to get up to go to work. I just go there and never slept all night. "Okay time to go to school." Then I am up. Oh ho, it was a small little story. Grain Doors. The grain doors would be taken off at the grain door shack by the grain doormen.

EE: We interviewed one of them, Maurice [inaudible].

JA: Don't know him.

EE: No.

JA: Anyways they would pull the grain doors off, pile them all up. Now these grain doors would probably disappear pretty quickly. You know. It was Houdini because all of the South End I believe was made from grain doors. [Laughs] The South End, you know High Street, First Avenue, Second, Third.

EE: So then in Port Arthur?

JA: Yeah, and Fort William too. So then over the railroad tracks--.

EE: I thought they were sending these boards back to the Prairies?

JA: That is what everybody thought. Push them in. No, they were pulled off. I remember the grain door shack. The old place for the grain door shacks. They pulled them off and piled them up. They didn't tell you that, eh?

EE: I don't remember being told that.

OM: They used some to build hockey rinks in the East End.

JA: Oh yes. More than anything. They would build the rink with the flat side out and the other side in and put them down.

EE: None of these boards had any stamps on them?

JA: Yes, they had CN [Canadian National Railway] stamps, CP [Canadian Pacific Railway].

EE: Oh, did they?

JA: Oh yes. Yeah, yeah. And I could probably pull this place apart and show you. And I mean the fully one-inch thick.

EE: Full measure

JA: Yes, full measure.

EE: No planning. So it is fairly rough lumber?

JA: All rough lumber.

EE: And you could of course plane it down yourself?

JA: Oh, you could, but why do it when it is covered anyways?

EE: Yeah.

JA: You never used planed lumber for inside the walls. No one is going to see it.

EE: No.

JA: This side, okay, if you are using lumber, plane it. But anyways. Sweeping grain was a pre-occupation of farmers other than the ones who were stealing it in the lunch box, and some went into bags I guess you know. Sweeping and everything. There was always a continual exodus of grain from all the elevators. Not one elevator is Church orientated. Not one. If you are human, you qualify. From all of the ill-fated nature of mankind. If you are human, you are prone to do the things that human beings want most and that is to take care of me.

EE: No lunch bucket should go home light! [Laughs]

JA: "Don't bring it back empty." [Laughs] And I saw this and witnessed it, and the grain door men would be sweeping grain, piling it up and [inaudible] it up on the sides and bringing their trucks back up at night and taking it and fill the whole truck full of wheat and barley and oats and grab what they wanted. They would fill it up and then they would take that to the farmers and sell it.

EE: Yeah. This was the bonus for the job.

JA: Yeah, and so I got into sweeping wheat as a little, young boy. And I use to bring the grain home because my next-door neighbour--. And there is all the elevators. There were three homes. We were one of the homes that lived in front of P&H [Parrish & Heimbecker] Elevator. Thunder Bay Harbour Improvements, which is in that book. We stayed on their lot. The house, it was an old house made of grain doors and single walls, no insulation. My hair used to get stuck to the wall in the winter, and I would say, "Hey, my hair is stuck to the wall!" I couldn't get my head away from the wall because it was stuck.

EE: This is where you and your family were living?

JA: That's where we were living. We were very poor. It was the time when we were just starting out, my father, until he got the job I guess later. I was only a little boy. But he started working and there was no big money in it then, anyways, working for the government. Today, the government wants to pay you more than you need or want or can negotiate. You know what it's called Revenue Canada? Revenue Canada wants the revenue, and where do you get revenue? From taxation. How do you determine the revenue? From the amount of money that you make. So the more you make, the more the government is getting right? [Laughs] See, it's called Revenue Canada.

EE: I'll let the two of you negotiate this one at the end of the table here. I am just a humble taxpayer myself. [Laughs]

OM: A taxpayer anyways. [Laughs]

JA: The good thing about paying taxes is that your government taxes are governed by the government. And what is meant by government? It means to govern, tax Revenue Canada. It's income.

EE: Well, the ultimate power is the taxing and spending power, no question about that.

JA: Exactly. So the more your people earn, the more you can tax to get paid for the budget. So of course, get more revenue. So give everybody high incomes. Oh, the hospital. The lady working in the hospital, \$265,000.00 a year. Give her that. I once mentioned to a Member of Parliament, "Don't charge doctors any taxes." "What?" Joe says. "What?" I say, "Don't tax them." I said, "You leave that tax dollar there." "Why?" "Just pay the doctor what he would get if you taxed him." Just give him the money but leave the taxation there in the mountain of money that you have for PSI, Physician Services Insurance. Leave it there so that we can use it for the betterment of mankind. Because that is what it is all about. Taking care of us, medically. Oh no, you can't do that. Well how are you going to get ahead of the game, if you giving all the revenue that we put in that pile of money, and then every year the government says, "Go ahead, go to work and get all you want. Take all the money nurses and doctors and everybody else, medical and social, everybody, take it so that we can get more revenue." The doctors, 55, 52, whatever percent. Everybody gets their income. Oh, pay more, pay more. That pile is going like this. But if you left that there, we can have more for medical science and everything. Don't tax the doctors, don't tax the nurses. Just give them a good income. Net of taxes.

EE: Yes.

JA: Leave that money there. “Oh, we can't do that.”

EE: Maybe we should try to get back to the workplace here, John. [Laughs]

JA: Oh that is where I am. The workplace, ok.

EE: So you came off the boats.

OM: So just getting back to your little grain enterprise when you were a kid, you mentioned that your neighbours--. Would you mind filling us in on how you kept the neighbourhood together?

JA: Okay. The neighbours were there before we were there. There was one family. I will never forget their beautiful family. The Phillips. And there are two members of that Phillip family alive still. They are wonderful people. And the one that was a female, and she worked so hard for her mother and father sweeping grain ever since she was a young girl. She would carry a bag of grain, 50-60 bag of grain on her back and together--. She is still very healthy, and she is in her eighties. No, the boxcars would come out, and she would go and sweep the wheat, and her family would enjoy not much money, but they would sell a bit to the farmers that would come down and pick up, you know. But the elevator allowed them to do that because the elevators went through their squatter rights property. Mr. Phillip had squatter rights. He built the cabin right there and the elevator, which was Pool 1 at the time and still is Pool 1—not in operation though—went right into his property and right up and they allowed him to sweep some wheat after the cars were cleaned out.

EE: So ostensibly they had got everything out of the car?

JA: Oh yeah, they would do it with their ways of doing it. But they used to sweep the wheat. Clean the cars.

EE: Right.

JA: Which was good.

EE: Well, they went back to the west lighter.

JA: Yeah. They would have had to clean it out, threw it away anyways.

EE: Exactly.

JA: It was in a way a blessing for some, but for them it was because they never had work, and it was hard for them. And they literally lived as something to assist them.

EE: Right.

JA: So they worked there and then eventually the boys went to work in the elevators. One of them, the name of David became the superintendent of P&H Elevators, Parrish & Heimbecker. Parrish & Heimbecker, which was right in front of Thunder Bay Harbour Improvements office, which the Becotte family had. Thunder Bay Harbour Improvement. Paul Becotte, the father of all the Becottes in Thunder Bay, and Louis Becotte, he was one of the superintendents for the company then. And all the other Becottes worked in there. And we lived in the Becotte yard, in the Thunder Bay Harbour Improvement yard in front of P&H Elevator.

So there is P&H Elevator. There is Pool 1 Elevator going east. Now P&H Elevator, Pool 1, McCabe Elevator, Stewart Elevator, Pool 7, Thunder Bay Elevator, Canada Malting Plant and then Grain Growers. There would be another one in between the Stewart Elevator there was a small one. So there were six elevators. Canada Malting had one also just right adjacent to the Stewart Elevator, and right next to it was Canada Malting.

EE: They had a facility up the Kam as well, didn't they, Canada Malting, or was this the main one?

JA: That was the main one.

EE: I see.

JA: That was the main one. I don't know there was something at another river. There was something there, but I can't recall that one.

EE: But this was the elevator that came in eh?

JA: I knew more about the Port Arthur end than the Fort William end. And then you had of course the Eastern Elevator up on the East End. Pool 6 and another couple of elevators, Manitoba Pool 4, and then Grain Growers on the other end. A number of--. Grain Growers that slid into the lake eventually. And probably a couple of more in between Pool 4A and Pool 4B.

EE: The Richardson.

JA: Richardson's Elevator now, of course.

EE: You had a question?

OM: Just following up. Sorry Ernie, I find this a fascinating story. So this would be in the '40s, early '50s?

EE: Where your house was and the community there--?

JA: Yes, I was born in 1939, and I would be there in 1940.

EE: Through the war years?

JA: Yeah, through the war years.

EE: Oh yes. It would be coming back to the 1944 or 1945 when your--?

JA: Oh yes.

EE: When you talk about your hair being frozen to the wall?

JA: Yes, 1940. 1939-1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1945.

OM: So this was just a small little group of houses that were on elevator land basically?

JA: On elevator land. There were three houses, and that is where I was raised right there, and raised as a kid, you know. I had four other brothers and a sister. We all were raised down at that end, and we all walked to school.

EE: Sure.

JA: And I would see when I went to high school to Tech, these kids were coming in a bus. Well, they say they lived out in the country out here. I lived further out. But no bus.

OM: Were the houses serviced at all?

JA: No water, no running water. All out of a well. No toilet, outhouses.

EE: It would be similar to that central area that is still there?

JA: Similar.

EE: There are not any houses left where you grew up, but further north or whatever, there is none of that area left. It is quite a poor area in the city.

JA: Very poor area. It was called the South End and they called it the Coal Docks.

EE: Right, the Coal Docks. Similar quality of building I suppose? They are serviced now, I am sure.

JA: Oh, there is service now. It used to be below water in the early spring until the river diversion from the Kaministiquia River and the other river. I forget the name of it now.

OM: Neebing, Macintyre.

JA: Neebing. Thanks. And they joined together. They eliminated the Macintyre and put everything through the Neebing. And the Macintyre just goes down to the fairgrounds. Right now, you can still see the Macintyre, but it ends just past that and under the railways and it stops there. No more. Then it diverts to, by the way, into the Neebing.

OM: Did they raise chickens? I am just wondering.

JA: Oh yes, chickens and pigs were raised down there. We didn't raise any chickens or pigs, but I just mentioned to my wife here, I remember Dad bringing home a bull in the back of the car. A little baby bull, and we raised a baby bull. But no chickens. I had rabbits as a kid. It was a wonderful place to live.

EE: Did this calf get raised to adulthood?

JA: Yeah, and then--.

EE: Did it turn into beef then?

JA: Oh yeah, but we were not into any kind of farming at all. It was just that we lived there and then my dad got the job after that with the government.

EE: And then you relocated I suppose?

JA: Oh no, we stayed there all the way through. We were there for 20 years. I left home when I was a young man.

EE: I was slipping a cog on dates earlier, because you were born in '39 and it would be '55, '56 when you were working at the elevators right?

JA: '55 or '56.

EE: And you were on the boats too?

JA: And later after a while when I came back off the boats, I worked in there too a bit.

EE: Yes. You didn't work just in the elevators then, I take it?

JA: Oh no, after I finished with the boats, I worked at Great Lakes Paper. And oddly enough, we used to come for paper with the *Fort Henry* to Great Lakes, and we would deliver the paper to Detroit.

EE: Sure. Newspaper from the newspapers.

JA: Yeah newspaper. So I dropped into the head office when I met this lady here, and planning, "Well maybe I should go and see if I can get a job at the mill." I went to the mill, put in my application. They hired me, and I quit the *Fort Henry*. And then I am loading the *Fort Henry* that had come back, and I was loading the boat that I had worked on. And then they laid me off one week after I finished loading the first boat. The first boat that loaded was the *Fort Henry*.

EE: Kind of a jinx.

JA: Weird. So I paid off the boat, worked for the mill, and then I got laid off a week later. Everybody that they hired that week got laid off. "Oh, you will get called back in a few months." I went back in a few months and worked more. There was a lot of lay offs in those years. 1958, 1959, 1960s.

EE: Well, it was kind of economically uncertain period.

JA: Yes. And then finally after marriage I was working at Great Lakes Paper. I worked at Loblaw's on and off. I was uneducated high school. Nothing. You are not a doctor.

EE: I suppose you attended high school at Hillcrest?

JA: Yes, Hillcrest High.

EE: It was the Tech.

JA: Yes. I went to Tech for four years there. Three and a half years. I didn't finish. Grade 10 was the great big year. If you got your Grade 10, you could go anywhere. Yes. So anyways, finally, I was asked by the Prudential of America to go to work for them.

EE: Selling insurance.

JA: Yeah. And I don't know what gave them the thought that I was qualified. But I always had a great tongue for talking, I guess. As my wife says too. [Laughs]

EE: Who at the Prudential knew that? Someone must have known.

JA: Yes. His name was Earl Smith, and he is now living in Winnipeg. He was a neighbour when we had our first baby, and we were living in an apartment. He asked me to come and work for them and I said no. Well, he said try the exam anyways. And I really didn't want to because I was working in the elevators. I was just laid off. Back and forth. I was working at Grain Growers. I would work at any different elevators.

EE: Sure.

JA: They would call me, and I would go to every one of them if I had to. And so, I got into the insurance business eventually, and I put 42 years and went into financial planning and graduated from financial planning. Then I went into corporate estate planning into working with corporations in Thunder Bay.

EE: Working with CFP? Certified Financial Planner.

JA: Well, I didn't get my CFP. No, sorry. We didn't need them then. We did all of the training necessary to obtain that degree today. But they used the same education, but they give it a degree now. I formed a company called Attridge Financial Services, and I bought out the George Wardrope Company.

EE: Oh really?

JA: I bought his company and formed a company called Lifestyle Insurance, which is still in operation, and I eventually sold that company. Then I had another company that I had going called Attridge Financial Services, and I finally ended up selling Attridge Financial Services nine years ago and retired at 64 years old.

EE: And enjoying the lake as much as you choose to.

JA: Yes, and they wanted me to continue on training people and with different companies. The Royal Bank wanted me to, and I was one of the leading financial planners with the Royal Bank of Canada. I got all the recognitions for that. I enjoyed corporate financial planning more than anything. Working with the lawyers and the accountants in providing the corporations with the proper information to secure their corporations at all costs. All avenues of loss, I would introduce to them because that is not done with all regards to the profession. It is only done by corporate financial planners. It is done by accountants and lawyers but only on a--.

EE: But you came out of insurance. You might have a key to the appreciation of all the things.

JA: Well, yes, but I had the solutions for their problems. Lawyers don't have their solutions.

EE: No.

JA: Oh, they can do the documentation.

EE: Of course.

JA: Accountants don't have the solution, with all regards. I have the highest regard. Higher than for me I have for accountants and lawyers in their profession of estate planning, but they do not have the vehicles at hand in order to solve the main problem, being that of cash. Cash flow. The only problems we have in life are cash. There is none other. Every widow will tell you that. Every surviving corporate partner will tell you that. That they don't have the money to buy out the partner, because they didn't have me to provide it for them. [Laughs]

EE: So you did this for 42 years?

JA: 42 years.

EE: So you were last in an elevator in 1960? [Laughs]

JA: Give it 20 years old. At '59 and '60 thereabouts. Because I started in the insurance business at 21.

EE: 1960.

JA: 1960-1961 I think it was. So I was 21 going on 22 I guess.

EE: So you compressed a lot into those early years?

JA: Oh did I. It was wonderful. But being in the elevators, working with people, real human beings qualified for human beings and working on the ships, being involved in basic understanding of the workforce, of life, and all of the needs of people. As a young man I realized that everybody needs an income and will fight for it through the union, through the elevators. The elevator union, too, it is a union.

EE: I suppose your financial work would certainly involve people in the grain trade at various times? Although they came to you simply as human beings, we suppose?

JA: Well, I did a different way. I promised myself never to bother friends or relatives.

EE: That is a sound principle.

JA: And I always relied on the approach to people. If I felt that person was qualified to talk with me, I would approach them on the basis of understanding and I would provide them with some good ideas. And that it would be a benefit to them. And that is how I worked. Then later on after about 10 years, I then talked, maybe seven years, I would then talk to other people I knew, and people would come to me after. In buying out the George Wardrope when I formed Lifestyle Insurance, buying out George Wardrope gave me that extra--. As a matter of fact, do you see that open garage?

EE: Yes.

JA: There is a chair in there, and it is a swivel chair and that George Wardrope's chair. [Laughs] You can see it or later you will see it.

EE: What was the Wardrope business?

JA: George Wardrope, of course MP George Wardrope.

EE: Yes, obviously MP.

JA: And he had the similar business that I had.

EE: Right. So it was largely insurance?

JA: Insurance.

EE: Real Estate?

JA: Real Estate. I didn't buy the real estate segment. I only bought the insurance end. He had home and auto and business insurance, and I amalgamated his business with mine, Lifestyle, and then John Attridge Financial Services Limited was on the peripheral that I used to service people in the other end of financial planning, which came into corporate estate planning. Then

my people would be in the home and automobile insurance business. My people. They would sell that and manage it and do the work.

OM: So when you bought a business, you bought his good will and clients?

JA: Clients, yes. The files and his good will because his good will was there and people that you take over expect the same good will from a good name.

EE: The good service that they were used to.

JA: That George Wardrope would do it with. Exactly.

EE: He was gone sometime already by that time?

JA: He was probably gone. The name Roy MacKee was the owner then, and he wanted to retire, and he asked me if I would buy his company because of my Lifestyle Company. I was his manager too in the life department. I was the manager for Crown Life I mentioned, and I had Roy MacKee and George Wardrope was there too just for a very brief time. He had not fully retired yet, I guess, but he was involved in maybe just in name. But he was uninvolved after a period and then I never saw him again. But it was called Wardrope Insurance Agency Limited

EE: The closest I have come to George Wardrope is hearing Ron Wilmont talk about him.

JA: Yeah. Oh yeah.

EP: Of course, Ron ran against the back of the '50s.

JA: Ron was a client of mine, too.

EE: Was he now?

JA: Oh yeah.

EE: A very, very fine man

JA: And his wife and his family.

EE: That's right.

JA: I just saw his son not too long ago.

EE: The one at Safeway?

JA: Yes, right.

EE: Yes, right.

JA: Really. Oh, the people you get to know.

EE: Yes, that is one of the great things in life.

JA: And in the elevators, there was a cross section of people in the elevators that were always friendly and good and government people. And then later on, I guess when it worked out, it was a very friendly environment amongst the elevator and the employees.

EE: Sure.

JA: One further thing--. And it is 4:00, and I guess you time. We are not pressed for tape, I am sure.

OM: No. We have half an hour.

EE: Okay. You were going to say--? And I have a question or two.

JA: I was going to say there is a time in the boxcars, when the boxcars were full. When you had some aggressive people in Thunder Bay that couldn't wait for the grain to get emptied and come down and so they would come with their drill.

EE: Yes.

JA: And they would drill holes in the bottom of the boxcars, and the CP Police and CN thought I was doing it. I would never do that.

EE: No. So that was real pilferage. This is serious business.

JA: That's true theft. The other was more or less like an honest effort--.

OM: Recycling.

JA: Recycling.

EE: In biblical term would be gleaning, I think. What the main harvest hadn't taken. Ruth--. Boaz told his workman, "Ruth is allowed to glean here. Leave a little extra for her."

JA: Exactly. And every elevator I would go to as a young boy, and I would sell hockey tickets to all the staff, and they all knew me. All the elevators, I would go to the inspection staff, all of the management and sell hockey tickets for the South End Rangers of whom I played with.

EE: I see.

JA: Of whom I played with.

EE: A team you would know as well, I suppose? [Laughs]

JA: Is that right?

OM: I followed local hockey quite closely.

JA: Oh good. I played junior hockey with the North Stars. I played North Stars.

OM: Just after Migay?

JA: Oh yeah, after them when the North Stars amalgamated with the Bruin when Baldy James and Joe Nigro were the coaches. That is when I was playing with them. And Bruce Gamble just left that year.

EE: He worked in the elevators.

JA: Yes, he did. And Bert Seamon and all the gang, Stan Mac, and everybody from the Northern Woods. They were all involved in the hockey end.

OM: When I was a kid, the three junior teams were the North Stars from Port Arthur, the Hurcs from my area, and the Canadians.

JA: Yeah, the Hurcs.

OM: And the Canadians.

JA: And the Canadians. And Bobby MacKee just passed on from the Hurcs. A good friend of Bobby's.

EE: I suppose the changes that occurred for example, the hopper cars in the '7's which you had to put a dent in unless you were describing--.

JA: Well, it is totally different now because you have got the hopper that just moves up and down and empties everything, which was great.

EE: Because there was nothing left to glean.

JA: No. Well, there was.

EE: Oh, was there?

JA: They still never got the liners out.

EE: Oh, I see.

JA: They could only shake it so much. Get it out. It is taking too long, and they would leave full of grain.

EE: I see.

JA: In the liners. That thick.

EE: That's quite a bit of grain too.

JA: Three and a half thick in the walls. Sometimes full to the top. I would probably sometimes sweep out from one wall two bags of grain 75 pounds each. That is about 150 pounds.

EE: Yes.

JA: I would put them on my back and carry them.

EE: I see.

JA: Yeah, and well, I would get \$1.00 a bag or \$1.25 sometimes. And oats I use to take out to the Dickson Farm. I would get a bag of oats I am going to bicycle it all the way out to the Dickson Farm on Oliver Road and sell them a bag of oats. And he would give me 75 cents. He was tight. 75 cents for that bag. [Laughs]

EE: I suppose that changes that took place in the grain trade in selling--?

JA: Oh.

EE: Today other people have to worry about that.

JA: Well, it is unfortunate today that the shipment of grain has moved from central Canada either to Churchill or right straight through down the US coast.

EE: Or the West Coast to for that matter.

JA: I sort of sense in my mind, and I think that you could probably feel it too if you were to think on it, I sense that there is going to be an urgency in regards to shipping coming forth within five or ten years. And I think that the Great Lakes are going to become a shipping channel for shipping. There is no way trucking can take leadership anymore with the high expense. Not just grain, freight.

EE: Right.

JA: There is no grain movement. Thunder Bay has very little. But freight I believe is going to start coming from eastern ports back up through the Great Lakes System right here and the Keefer terminal will be in work force more than ever.

EE: The wind turbine business and tar sands stuff to Alberta would be examples. The second is more in discussion but certainly the wind turbines have been coming in. So that is a business.

JA: It is a big thing. I really truly feel it.

EE: Well, here is hoping.

JA: You know yeah. For some I can sense that it has to come back because it is available. Why would it come back? Because it is available, and it is a big expense going through 400 miles of trail up a highway especially in the mid of winter and coming all this way back to Thunder Bay, and the high expense when you can fill a ship load of hundreds and thousands of tonnes and ship it within 16 hours, and in Toronto in day and a half. It is there as fast as any truck.

EE: How fast was the *Fort Henry*?

JA: The *Fort Henry* would go 23 knots.

EE: And in terms of elapsed time, let's say from here to Toronto?

JA: No, from here to Sault St. Marie, 15 hours.

EE: Okay, across the lake?

JA: Across the lake and then the balance would take probably another 24 hours. We would get through to Toronto in probably a day and a half or a day and three quarters, depending on the traffic in the canal.

EE: So you could run a round trip and a half I guess per [inaudible]?

JA: Three days you would be back and unload. If it went to Detroit, and we were happy with Detroit and come back.

EE: Sure.

JA: But going through to Toronto, we would go to the freight sheds there and I remember when the *Noronic* was in town. And looking at that port and thinking of it because the *Noronic* is in there. It was just prior to me sailing. And they got all the ships in there too.

EE: You are referring to the *Passage to the Sea*, the story of Canada's Steamship Line?

JA: Exactly and there are other ships in there to. Not all belong to Canada's Steamship Line. There are others in there too I believe. Old ships going back in the early century. Yes, well, once upon a time, and initially the *Richelieu* in Ontario there were of course a big business on the St. Lawrence and on the *Northern Navigation* and others and these all came together into Canada Steamship Lines.

EE: Well, it is quite a story.

JA: Oh, it is really.

EE: Well John we probably conversed some part of your memory. There's a lot more there. We were talking about financial planning would get us into all parts of people's lives and we can't do that.

JA: If you do a book on financial planning, I can help you out there. [Laughs]

EE: Right.

JA: Well, I hope I have been of assistance. The books are there, and I would appreciate a return of them.

EE: Yes, of course.

JA: And I will put my name on the front because that was a gift to me.

EE: I am wondering is this available on the market?

JA: It was published in 1991. That friend the captain of mine gave me this.

OM: I opened the book and the first section ended up to be the Lachine Rapids, and there was a boat in the rapids.

JA: Beautiful. And I looked at that, and I went, “Ah, what a memory!”

EE: And the passengers, they were bringing them to. It wasn't just cargo. It was passengers too.

JA: Passengers too.

EE: Autographed by the President of the company I see.

JA: That's right. I would appreciate that back.

EE: Of course.

JA: That one is very good for you. You will be able to make notations about different companies that were in every kind of service you can imagine. You won't believe how many were servicing the ships of the Great Lakes.

EE: People's laundry?

JA: Laundering even. And remember the bum boats. They would come in and tie up by the ships when they are in port and sell gloves and socks for the seaman and pants and shirts because the seaman couldn't get ashore. Chocolate bars. And if you needed anything, you would just open this book. It's all there.

EE: That is what you would want to have, of course, and they would get them immediately.

JA: Exactly.

EE: Well, thank you very much John and I am going to ask our engineer to shut the operation down.

End of interview.