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Company Affiliations: Canadian Grain Commission (CGC)

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Summary: Former operations manager for the Canadian Grain Commission in Thunder Bay Jim Ball discusses his long career within the organization across Canada. He begins by describing his father's connection with the grain industry as a manual grain scale tester and repairman. Ball shares memories of following his father to work in the elevators, his father's work during the switch to the metric system, and some of the characters his father worked with. He discusses his first job with the CGC in the car shed monitoring boxcar unloading, what would happen if there was a shortage or overage on the weight, and the integrity instilled in the job training. Ball then describes his ascent from weighman to operations manager, overseeing a new initiative of cross-training inspectors and weigh staff. He surveys grain elevators from east to west across Canada, sharing memories of their operations, audits, and unique features. He shares some of the major changes that occurred during his career, like the consolidation of national regions, changes to regional management teams, the demise of the Canadian Wheat Board and Lake Shippers Clearance Association, the privatization of inspection and weighing, and the removal of some of the CGC's mandatory services. Other topics discussed include the opposite personalities of inspectors and weigh staff, labour strikes, layoffs and downsizing, the CGC's relationships to the railways and farmers, the complexity of the national grain system, lake vessels moving between elevators in the port, grain blending and ship loading issues, women joining the CGC, and the different characteristics of Thunder Bay terminal elevators.

Keywords: Canadian Grain Commission (CGC); Grain weighing; Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; Lakehead Terminal Elevators Association; Manual grain scales; Electronic grain scales; Metric system; Weight conversions; Automation; Grain car unloading; Grain elevator car shed; Grain inspection; Cross-training; Grain transportation—ships; Grain transportation—rail; Terminal elevators—St. Lawrence Seaway; Grain elevator audits; Grain trade—Laws and legislation; Canada Grain Act (1912); Labour unions; Strikes; Dust control; Downsizing; Inward weighing; Inward inspection; Organizational restructuring; Canadian Wheat Board (CWB); Privatization; Society of General Inspection (SGS); Intertek; Canada Ports Clearance Association (CPCA); Women in the workforce; Pool 6 Elevator; Richardson Main Elevator; Pool 5 Elevator; Halifax Elevator; Bunge Elevator—Quebec City; Pool 4 Elevator; Parrish & Heimbecker Elevator (P&H); Empire Elevator; Western Grain By-Products Elevator

Time, Speaker, Narrative
NP: It's January 8, 2015. I think this is the first interview for this new year. I'm going to have our interviewee of today introduce himself and just give a brief description of his connection to the grain trade. JB: My name is James Ball, better known as Jim for most people other than my parents. My connection to the grain industry is probably three-fold, I guess. My grandfather on my mother's side worked for Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, from all accounts an accountant. I'm not sure if that was a certified accountant or--. Back in the day an accountant was someone who worked in bookkeeping for the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in their head office in Winnipeg. My father--. Well, actually, all of my family, with the exception of myself, were born in Winnipeg, and my sister and my brother. My father moved here from Winnipeg, he had been working for Simmons Bedding Company and then I believe he worked for Fairbanks-Morse in Winnipeg. There was an opportunity to come to Thunder Bay to work with the manual scales and to be the technician for the Lakehead Terminal Elevators Association in here in Thunder Bay. So, he moved here. I was born in 1958, so they would have immigrated from Winnipeg in '56 or '57, bought a little house on Walsh Street, and the Lakehead Terminal Elevator built his workshop for doing scale work in the garage, in our backyard. It really wasn't a garage. It was actually a heated millwright shop. He worked for all of the companies. There wasn't any one particular company he worked with, because he worked for the Association. And he was responsible for doing all of the scales in all of Fort William-Port Arthur at that time, eventually Thunder Bay. If I recall, when he moved here there was 28 elevators, and all of the manual scales that were associated with those 28 elevators. Unlike the electronics that we use now, which have to be maintained and corrections made to them, the manual scales were a little more hardy than the electronics. But they had to be audited every year, and they had to be retested, and then they had to be corrected if there was any issues with them. So, of course, the time to do that would have been in the wintertime once the shipping season finished. So, he's responsible for all 28 elevators, to do them. Then of course the companies want them up and ready to go by the springtime. It was a fairly—as I recall as a child—it was a very busy, demanding job. He didn't travel very much. All of his work was here in Thunder Bay. He had one partner, a gentleman by the name of Jerry Dunbar, who was killed in a car accident just as my father was getting close to retiring and hoping to pass on the trade to Jerry. Jerry was killed in a car accident. And then another gentleman from, at that time Canada Car, who was a millwright—or not a millwright, but a tool man, from the tool trade anyway, tool and die—he came and worked with him, a guy by the name of Bob Corbett. Very meticulous man when it came to building little parts for the scales

and stuff like that. They partnered for a number of years before my father finally retired. Anyway, he was responsible for all of that. My brother, in 1970, worked for the Canadian Grain Commission [CGC] for 35 years. Seven years later I joined the CGC and worked for 36 and a half years. From a family's perspective, we're pretty tied to the grain industry in Thunder Bay and, quite frankly, quite proud to be a part of that whole history.

I can remember my first trip to the elevators with my dad. Of course, I played in his shop all the time as a kid and never thought anything of it. I played with lathes, the one lathe that he had, and the surface grinders that he did the pivots and the bearings for the scales. And he actually had a mock scale for testing the scales inside the garage, so he could take the beams out of the elevators and do the initial tests on it before he brought it back. I played with all of that stuff. I can remember kids played with blocks and built houses. I used to take bearings and pivots and build all kinds of stuff and play with the lathe. I learned how to do an awful lot of stuff in that garage, provided I didn't get in his hair.

[0:05:10]

But anyway, it was kind of neat. I mean, he was away from the garage quite often. He did a lot of his work in the elevators, and he collaborated quite a bit with the millwrights in each one of the elevators, and they did a lot of the larger work. But it was nice to have my dad and his partner in the backyard there, and you could go and watch them and play around.

Anyway, my first recollection—although you could always smell the grain dust in my garage, my dad's garage—was we went to Pool 6 when I was--. To this day I'm not sure I remember how old I was. But I do remember we went on a Saturday, and he had to go do some work on one of the scales. The elevator, they weren't receiving any cars or anything, so it was shut down. But I remember him telling me--. I remember the ropes and the cables being there and him telling me that, "You've got to be careful, you've got to get over these." And showing me how to cross over. But I remember the smell of the grain—fermented a little bit—and that smell to this day, still sweet and it's good. Some people would say it stinks but I didn't. I always liked that smell, and I liked it my whole career. Going into the elevators I could pick up that smell, always made me feel good. It's in my blood, it's in my nostrils, it's everywhere. The people that I worked with out there through 37 years were absolutely fabulous, very, very dedicated people, whether it was for the elevator, the railway, the Commission itself—all my colleagues very, very dedicated—long hours put in, great amounts of time to make sure the grain moved through this city, and very proud of their work. So it's always good to be a piece of that.

NP: Just going back to have a few questions answered about your dad. First of all, what was his name?

JB: His name was Walter George Ball. Everybody knew him as Wally Ball—quite the character. He was a commissioned officer in the Air Force, and I suspect—although I don't remember him telling me this—I suspect that's where he got some of his understanding of the scale pieces and balancing and all of the calculations that are involved in all of that. But he was a very meticulous type of person when it came to that kind of stuff. Everything had to be perfect. He applied that here in Thunder Bay. Certainly, had a lot of friends. One of the things that he did do, which is interesting because it played out later on, was originally the operation supervisors that work at the CGC were the people that inspected the scales. We didn't have a Ted Code or a Gary Baditch, scale inspectors for the Commission. The operation supervisors would have done that. It was part of their duties. And those people came to our house, and my dad showed them how he fixed the scales and how the scales were to be tested. He worked hand-in-hand with the Grain Commission back then. He also did the inspections scale. At that time, they were little, black, with the cradle, and then later on of course they were electronic. And I believe that Ted still does those today, but the electronic version of them. So that was an interesting piece because what ended up being my boss many years later were people that were working with my dad in the backyard there. I recognized a lot of them, and they knew me of course. There was a rapport there, right before I even got started.

NP: Now, where on Walsh Street?

JB: 2047 Walsh Street, right across from Hyde Park School. We were on the corner. Yeah, and so--.

NP: Do you know if the workshop is still there?

JB: The garage is there. The workshop was all dismantled before--. When my dad passed away, Bob Corbett maintained some of it, but of course they'd been moving pretty much primarily over to electronics. Near the end, my dad was doing some stuff for Lakehead Terminal Elevators like gear testing and stuff like that, so they were moving away from the manual scales. And before he retired, they moved his shop over to what was a Sask Wheat Pool warehouse area. I can't remember where it is, but it's just down in here. There was a green shed back in here. I just remember.

NP: Where Mr. Stone was, the engineer?

JB: That's exactly where it was, yeah, absolutely. They moved everything into there and amalgamated all of the machinery into there. Before he was retired all of that was gone out of our backyard.

NP: When did your dad retire? Do you remember?

JB: No, I don't. In fact, he actually died 64 plus. He didn't actually retire. He was like 15 days away from retiring. But he was sick. He had leukemia before. He was sick for the last year and a half or whatever, and so he wasn't at work. I say retired, but he wasn't working anymore.

[0:10:12]

NP: Would he have been working during the switchover to metric?

JB: [Taps on object] That's what this is.

NP: You have brought something along?

JB: Yes.

NP: Why don't you tell me about it, and at the same time we'll take a picture of it.

JB: Well, there was a period, and by this time I was already working, so I was involved in it. The Commission, we were loading boats, and we had to make conversion from Avoirdupois—from British count—to metric. And, of course, that was the simplest way without any expense for the elevators to do, was just to do the calculation.

NP: And what is this little item, this little, heavy item?

JB: Well, if anybody's familiar with elevators, they're familiar with hand weights. They're round and come in one-pound, two-pound, eight-pound. When you're weighing a car off, you're loading a boat, or unloading a car, you put the weights on and you balance the beam, and you take them off, and that's the counterweight. All over Canada they're all round weights and they're in pounds. There's a calculation, the multiple, between the weights that you put on the counterweight and that which was in the scale. For Avoirdupois I believe it was 1 to 2,080 or whatever. There was a calculation. An eight-pound weight represented—once it went through the multiple of the levers—one pound here meant a thousand pounds on the scale. Of course, when you weigh the boat off, you had X-number. Originally it was bushels and then we had to convert it to pounds and then convert it to metric, because everybody needed different figures. It was a little bit complicated at the end of the boats because everybody had to do the calculations and had to check off with everybody.

But there were a few elevators, 7B being one of them, that my father actually designed metric hand weights, and he converted the beams to metric. And they weren't there for very long—I'd venture to say a couple years at the very most—but he did design them, and they had them manufactured here in Thunder Bay. They were forged in Thunder Bay, and he ground them down in his shop to fit properly. He modified the test weight boxes so that they were in metric so that when they tested, they were testing in metric. It was a huge job and I mean he ground each one of these down—him and Bob Corbett ground them down. I remember they actually built a grinder so that they could do it, and they did those all down. So, this is 2,000, but it's actually 2 kilograms weighing 2,000 kilograms on the scale.

They used them for a while. I would venture to say there may be a few of these around, some bigger ones some smaller ones, because they came in one-kilogram, two-kilogram, and four-kilogram I think is what it was. I'd venture to say they're still around. There may be a few around, but it's possible that I have the only two left because they were in my dad's garage when we cleaned it out when he passed away, when we sold the house. And normally the elevators would just take these for scrap, and they would've went to the dump because they weighed quite a bit, and they're worth more in scrap than they are holding around the elevators. But they might be a doorstop in one of the elevators somewhere, or somebody picked one up just for a keepsake.

NP: Now, the elevator that we put forward as a national historic site, they still use those scales.

JB: But they would be still in pounds. The ones that--.

NP: Oh, so these are the kilogram ones?

JB: These are very specific to this--. Any ones that are square--.

NP: The metric, you mean?

JB: They're in metric, sorry, yes. The ones at Western Grain, they would still be the round ones, and they're in pounds, different multiple in the levers and different--. Western Grain and the Commission still convert. At the end of each of the lots, they'll convert it to metric from pounds.

NP: Just keeps your skills up.

JB: [Laughing] Well you've got to memorize 2,002.4, and I can go down and do all the decimal places because we used to have to put it in the--. We used to do it by hand originally, and then we got calculators finally to do them by calculation. But when you're

doing multiple lots, and they're converting back and forth, and then you want to know if that's enough or not enough, and one wants to know how many bushels are on the boat, and one entity wants to know how many pounds are on the boat, and the other one wants to know what's the metric total, so you had to keep all those running totals with your elevator counterparts. It was during that whole transition. It was fun. But you know, it just complicated it. This made it a little bit easier, but unfortunately it was short-lived. Once they went to electronics, of course the conversion's done electronically.

[0:15:34]

NP: Now you'd mentioned that—and I was surprised to hear it—you'd mentioned that the electronics actually were more likely to require tweaking on a more regular basis than the old system. Why would that be? Do you know?

JB: Well, the manual scales are bulk scales. I mean, they're big, heavy pieces of machinery that were built to last. And my father, to his dying day, believed that the manual scales were far more accurate than the electronic scales. The tolerances were adjusted to accommodate electronics in the beginning, but they required on all ends, because, first of all, you still had the manual scale piece of it, because you didn't change the scale physically. You had to put load cells in and in some cases you remove all of the multiple-lever system. Other cases, you ran it through the multiple-lever system and there was only one load cell right near the scale. All of that still existed. Plus you had the electronics, which in the beginning was new technology, and it took years for them to perfect it, right?

We had trouble with the printers and trouble with the electronics itself—out of calibration, in calibration, temperature changes, variations. It took them years to figure out how to adjust for the temperature. Now it's all built right into the electronics. It adjusts automatically just like your gas pump. If it's cold out it adjusts for the volume and then the metric. The new electronic scales, they do similar, the same, for weighing. In full course of time, I mean, it was where we needed to be. But I still say to this day, there was more opportunity for things to occur on the manual scales that wouldn't be recorded because every operation and function of the scale, whatever it is—printing, or catching a draft, or releasing a draft, or filling the garner—is recorded somewhere in electronics. The manual scales, the only thing that was recorded was the ticket that the weighman and the government weighman overseen. They watched, and they were the ones that recorded when a garner was open, the same time as a scale or if something was weighed improperly.

So, there was a lot more oversight from the government's perspective, and a lot more manual labour obviously from the elevator's side. And they had to be much more aware of what was going on. With electronics, my way of putting it is, they really don't have weighmen in the elevator. They have control operators that move the grain around the elevator, that position it appropriately for

inward and for shipment to make sure it's all in the right spot. But in behind the scenes, all the weighing is being done by the electronics. There isn't anybody really sitting there monitoring the whole process.

NP: So, if—you'd mentioned a garner opens the same time as the scale and so on, which means nothing to me, but--. Well I shouldn't say it means absolutely nothing. I don't know what the connection is. Nowadays, though, with the electronics then, and as you said the person is more like a control operator, are they observing at the time of the weighing so that they can see some of these problems or is it after the fact that they identify that there was a problem?

JB: Today? If you're talking about currently with electronic scales, the scale is set up with all types of checks and balances right in the electronics—interlocked systems that prevent the garner from opening when the scale is open, and if it does, it records it, and it signals somebody, and it tells somebody. An alarm goes off. But those things would be recorded. The elevator on inwards now are responsible for that now with the new legislation. On outwards, yes, there is a government person that goes through tapes and makes sure there isn't anything that's glaring. You're doing more of an investigation rather than an actual oversight. You're reviewing the information after the fact to make sure that what's said to have occurred, occurred.

NP: And what would alert somebody to the need for an investigation?

[0:20:00]

JB: Well, I'm not sure what they're doing in particular now. My sense would be is that if there's a call for a shortage or an overage, or if there's something wrong with the grades or something, they may go back. Even on the weighing side, the grades are affected by it. It could have an effect. I believe what they're doing now is, in a general sense, they oversee all the shipments. Some goes through them, and then they go through what the elevator provides, make sure that the elevator's doing what they're supposed to be doing, audit their work, and approve it, because the Commission's still putting their stamp on it as certified weights and grades. So they have due diligence to make sure that what the elevator says they're doing, they're doing. I left the job when they moved into that. I wasn't in weighing the last ten years. It kind of evolved and I was aware of it, and people worked for me that worked for weighing, but I wasn't--. The ins and outs of it are--. I'm familiar with it, but not familiar with it.

NP: Did your dad--. Were there any sort of stories that your father always remembered, even whether they were related to the weighing or scale aspect at all, is there anything else that you recall? Did he have a favourite elevator? Did he have a non-favourite elevator?

JB: No, I don't think so. He had places like Westland D. I remember he had some close friends there. I remember being at Stan MacKay's house when I was a kid. I mean he knew all of those people before they were managers of an entire organization. But I remember he spent a lot of time at Westland D with the millwrights there and I remember he had lots of friends there that he learnt a lot of stuff, and he showed them a lot of stuff. But a particular elevator? No, I think he was like friend--. That's the one thing about his job, he was kind of halfway in between the government and the elevators themselves. He was arm's length from each of the organizations separately because he worked for the Association. From my recollection, I couldn't go out with him for five minutes without somebody come up and saying, "Hi, Wally, how you doing?" "Who's that?" You know, "I would've introduced you, but he's a millwright or he's a millwright's helper. He's a scale floor guy," or something. He had lots and lots of friends in Thunder Bay, had many, many people that he associated with. But I don't know if there's anybody in particular.

NP: Was he still alive when some of the elevators were taken down? Or did that pretty much occur after he passed away?

JB: Hm. I think that would've been after he passed away when they did Pool 5 and Pool 6. Pool 4 was still up and running when he was commissioned in three shifts. But--.

NP: Did he ever, sort of like a number of people would just by our very nature, sort of feel nostalgic for the old days?

JB: Like I said, he was very, very sold on manual scales being accurate. And I remember going with him—ironically, later on, I ended up working there—but I remember going to Richardson's, and they were the first ones to my recollection that went electronic with their track scale. And at that time—I may stand corrected on this, but this is my recollection from back being a young boy—I believe we went there and I believe there was load cells, but I think it still had a dial. And when you brought the truck or the railcar on, the dial would show the weight. Instead of a digital readout it was a dial that went to x-number of pounds. And I remember my dad telling me that he didn't think it was ever going to work. They're not accurate enough, and I remember he was sold on that.

I don't know if he ever really got sold on it, I think he passed away thinking that they were going to go back to being manual scales. Or that they would have trouble with it, and it would affect commerce. He did get--. I mean, he was okay with the Metric piece. He kind of bought into that because he could see the manual scales being converted over, that that would still work. It was funny because when they worked in the backyard, I guess one of the pieces that was interesting about their thing was my mom was his secretary. Even though she wasn't, she was a housewife home-keeper, but the phone rang all the time and she always had to take the messages and she did some of his paperwork and stuff like that, and kept his files and whatnot. That was the other piece in the house. We were always getting phone calls from so-and-so at this elevator, "Where's your dad? I need him here right now, the scale's down. We got a boat at the dock." And so that's kind of how his job was.

So, when I took over, when I worked for the Commission, it wasn't an unusual thing to be called out at any hour and have to work oddball hours and all that stuff. It was kind of just part of our lifestyle. My brother did it, and I did the same thing, and it was just part of our life. But I'm trying to think back to some of the--. I mean, obviously there was lots of shenanigans that went on in the elevators and my dad was certainly a part of that. He worked with millwrights and, you know, drinking was not an illegal thing in the elevator. I remember one time them telling us that they had a beer fund instead of a coffee fund. Well, that was just part of working in the elevators. Because they worked such long hours, and it was such a stressful job, that's the way they coped. That's just the sign of the times. It wasn't just them, a lot of industries, if it was blue-collar or that type, that's just the way it was. Well, white-collar too I guess. [Laughs] It was draining and hard on families.

[0:26:09]

But still rewarding. He was certainly proud of his work. Before he retired, he started doing the air testing, and he actually got to go to Vancouver. He had always heard about Vancouver. He knew that there was a counterpart out there that did scales. In fact, at one point in time I think that that person actually wanted to move into Thunder Bay. And so, he had a little bit of competition there for a piece, which was difficult because he was getting older and trying to compete now would've been difficult. I can't remember the gentleman's--. I'd say Bowley Rothwell would have been the name, I think. And I think he worked for Richardson Scales or maybe Fairbanks-Morse. I can't remember which. But, anyway, there was some type of conflict there. I was too young to pay a whole lot of attention to it. But I remember he went to Vancouver to do the air quality testing and he spent, I don't know, a month there. It was the first time I ever remember him being away from the house for any length of time.

NP: And why would he be doing air quality testing?

JB: Because that was when they were making the transition. Most of the elevators in Thunder Bay had gone electronic, and there was only a handful left, and it wasn't enough to keep two people busy. So, they added--. The Lakehead Terminal Elevator Association hadn't established a baseline for air quality, and this was where they were starting to think about it. I guess, maybe from a compensation and liability's perspective, they needed the test, because people were saying, "What about the pesticides? What about the herbicides?" They wanted to test and see how much their employees were being--.

NP: And I'll ask you this question, it may not be one that you're able to answer, but what do you think it was about your dad's background that made him a good choice for doing air quality testing when he was a scale tester? Well, a lot more than a scale tester, obviously.

JB: Obviously, there was some accuracy that was involved in it, right? Like there was a finite amount of measurement that had to be done. And I believe that him and Bob did all of that stuff. They would collect the samples, and they would actually prep the samples, and do the weighing and the residues and stuff. I don't think they did any scientific research on it. I mean that was all done by somebody else. But it had to be done impartially. Like, they couldn't have the elevator doing their own, because the optics would have been inappropriate. So, he was, like I said, he was third-party and had no vested interest in what the results of it were.

NP: And precision?

JB: And it was precision, that's right. And I think that they had scales. They had small, tiny, finite scales. He had done work on the government scales. A lot of the ones were doing dockage and so on, so I think it was a natural match. There was somebody with some time that needed to be filled, and they were starting a new project. It was when he was working over at the warehouses on the lakefront. I guess Sask Pool management probably proposed it, and from the terminal elevator perspective it made sense. And Bob continued on. Bob Corbett continued on after my father was long gone and did the annual testing and still did some scale testing, as I recall. I mean, I lost track of Bob later on after my dad passed away, but I think he still maintained the Western Grain elevator scales with Kevin and worked with them--.

NP: Kevin--?

JB: Kevin King at Western. I'm sure you know, well, Mailhot, but Kevin's his right-hand man.

NP: What's Kevin's involvement? Just because of the--.

JB: Just because of the scales. And Kevin did a lot of the--. As you know, Western Grain's a little bit unique. There isn't really a millwright staff or any--. Kevin is the millwright staff, the operation supervisor, general manager and everything—chief cook and bottle washer. But he did a lot of work on the scales themselves to get them up to--. And he worked with Bob and Bob either showed him how to do some of the stuff or actually did some of the stuff with him, because he was the last living person that I know of that knew how to fix and repair manual scales.

[0:30:18]

NP: Kevin hides his light under a bushel basket, I think is the--. He's very--. He's an amazing--.

JB: He is an incredible gentleman. I was just talking to someone yesterday about Kevin. He's the most intimidating figure if you ever walked into a room, and you didn't know him, and probably one of the friendliest men I've ever met. Certainly, the most accommodating and easy to work with. Very pleasant. But it's the cover doesn't tell you what the book's about. Anyway, but there's lots of people like that.

NP: And his knowledge of his elevator is--.

JB: Oh incredible. Well, his knowledge of the elevator, but also his knowledge about everything. Like, he built our office. He engineered the way they move the test weights around. He built all that himself. Incredible. I never thought he'd be able to do that. And he manages the personnel appropriately. He's got it all. He's just a well-rounded individual for where he is. Mailhot lucked out when he found him. Whether he knew what he was getting when he got him, I don't know. And hard worker. His dedication and his motivation are incredible, I mean he's there for everything. Never says no, always prepared to do whatever it takes to get it done. And that's Mr. Mailhot's forte because he's the same way. Whatever it takes, they'll do it. He's a little bit more of a character than Kevin, but--. [Laughs]

NP: They're characters in their own way.

JB: [Laughs] Yeah, yeah.

NP: Speaking of characters, again just thinking--. We'll eventually get to you, Jim, but we're still talking about your dad. He would've worked with the last round of elevator managers, maybe even two back. Did your dad ever talk about characters that he dealt with at the time, as you recall?

JB: No, he, well--.

NP: Well, you mentioned Stan Mackay. He's sort of a legend.

JB: Yeah, he's a legend. Some of the names, I recall some of them, some of the supervisors. But most of the names, by the time I started working, those gentlemen were pretty much at the end. They were getting ready to retire as well. They were about the same age as my dad. I'm trying to think of some of the names, some of the characters we had working there. Harold Sinfield was one person I know who worked for Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and I worked with him for a little while after, but I know he was there when my dad was working there. And he was just a hard work--. He was what they would have considered back then one of

the young people coming up in the organization. Of course, for me he was older, but he was one of the up and comers and certainly did a lot of work.

NP: Who was at D? Do you remember?

JB: Pardon me?

NP: Who was at Elevator D and Consolidated? Do you remember at all?

JB: Westland D? Well Stan--. Was not Stan there?

NP: Could've been, yeah.

JB: I think so. I'm not sure who the manager was at that time there, or who the supervisors were. When I went there, I remember going there and my dad would be talking to the millwrights about whatever, and I'd be playing in the rat holes and the piles of dirt with the dogs. There was a gentleman by the name of Dunbar. He was one of the millwrights, and he had a dog. I remember that, playing with the dog, and he'd be chasing big—and I don't mean little rats—I'm talking about full-size rats, but never thought nothing of it. We were playing in just the piles of dirt, and there was piles of grain everywhere, rotting around all over the place. I remember going there with my dad again. He had to fertilize the garden and pick up the most rotten grain you could find. It was always at Westland D. But as far as names go, they're on the tip of my tongue. I know that there was Robinson, I think, was in charge of Pool 4. That would've been around that time.

NP: Was there a Mr. Irwin? Or was he--. He may have been gone by then. He was really early on, so.

JB: Irwin, you mean from the Pool 15 era?

NP: Yeah.

JB: He would've been around during my dad's period for sure. Certainly before my time. I wouldn't recall him. I remember him being friends with the people from Searle or when Irwins were a part of that for sure. But I don't recall any stories about them.

[0:35:04]

NP: Now, you mentioned your brother. And what was his name?

JB: Glen.

NP: Glen. What was his career?

JB: He worked on the weighing side of CGC as well.

NP: Started young?

JB: He started--. Yes, he started very young. 19. 18 or 19. He started seven years before I did. We were seven years difference in age, and we started seven years apart from each other. I thought about actually coming and doing a dual interview because we could have fed off each other in terms of the history because he has a little more on the history with my father than I did because he was already working in the industry for seven or eight years. He actually started in the industry working at Canada Malt doing bagging. My brother still believes to this day it was his way of teaching him, "You either get an education or this is what you're going to be doing for the rest of your life." And I remember him going there and getting the skin burnt off his neck from carrying the bags off the--. Because they just came off into the boxcar, and you had to throw them up on the thing.

My brother still talks about that to this day. He says, "I think he was trying to kill me." 112-pound bags coming off, burlap sack--. And, of course, all the guys they just love it to have a rookie, right? Because they let you do that for a while, and then they show you how to do it properly. But he wouldn't give in. He did it. And then he took a job with the Commission, and he finished as a unit supervising grain weigher.

NP: Would he be willing to be interviewed, do you think?

JB: I don't know, he might. Yeah.

NP: Yeah, even if both of you came back?

JB: Yeah, I'm pretty sure if I came with him. I'm not sure he'd come and do it by himself, but he might be interested. And I thought about doing it, but it would've been too short term after you phoned me. I was thinking it'd be too hard for me to work it all out.

NP: Yeah, and you know having the two of you together, you're quite right, I think the ability to say, "Oh, you remember when?" "Oh yeah, yeah." But at the same time, it usually doesn't allow us to do what we're doing here, is getting your story as well. And maybe that's a good introduction to then doing one just with him?

JB: Yeah, he has--.

NP: Is it Glen with one N?

JB: Glen with one N. Walter, Glen Walter Ball.

NP: Sorry, he has--?

JB: He has a better recollection of dates, like when they moved here and stuff like that. He can probably tell you what year it was that my dad moved and some of that stuff. Because he's seven years older than I am and my sister is ten years older than I am, so they--. I was only just little when he was starting out here and my brother was almost a teenager at the time. More recollection about the early years than I would have had.

NP: Okay, then. At 37 minutes into the interview, let's talk about your career. Did you always think you were going to go into the same industry that your dad was in?

JB: Oh, no. I had no idea I was going to do that. Originally, I was going to go away to do photography at Ryerson. It was a summer job, like it was for a lot of people back then. My dad got me an interview, and he said, "Look, I got you an interview. The rest of it's up to you. You fail or make and break yourself. It's up to you." I know when I started, I remember I worked at Pool 5 was my first elevator.

NP: So, did you start with the Grain Commission then?

JB: Yep, yep.

NP: It was a summer job--.

JB: Right out of high school, summer job.

NP: And when would that have been?

JB: It would have been the summer of 1977. I think I started in June.

NP: Okay, continue. You said you started out at Pool 5?

JB: Yeah, Pool 5. Indoctrination was, "Go to Pool 5." I don't know what other people who have never been to an elevator would have known. I mean, my dad pointed where it was and showed me how to get to the parking lot, but other than that you're on your own. Sat in the parking lot for about ten minutes, I got there really early in the morning. And finally, some elevator guys said, "Are you the new government guy?" "Yeah." "Well here, I'll show you where you're supposed to go." They never told you where to go or anything, eh? I remember going and a gentleman by the name of Tommy Dickson, who was in charge of the elevator—he was the supervising grain weigher at the time—was working there.

And Swin Goodmanson, who I found out later on was the person they put all the new people with, and he showed you the ropes. And his favourite line was, "I'll show you how it's supposed to be done. You can make your shortcuts on you own, after you leave here." And I remember, I'll never forget that, because it was absolutely true. There was all kinds of shortcuts, but here was a right way to do it. I remember going into the car shed and he said, "You stand here." And I remember spending eight solid hours standing in the car shed, except for coffee and lunch, and he went inside and did all the paperwork. And I remember the cars at that time, they had to separate them, and they had winches. Nobody showed me. I mean they said, "Don't go in here, don't do this." But basically, that was it. You wore a hard hat. You stood in the car shed, and you watched them unload the cars. And I remember trying to--. Took a step forward, and they were winching the cars, and that was the first time I'd ever heard two cars bang together. It scared the crap out of me. I thought I was going to kill myself. So, that was my indoctrination. And then shortly after that I got moved to Pool 15, MTI [Mission Terminals Canada Inc.].

[0:40:29]

NP: Now at Pool 5—because it's not there for us to have a look at anymore—what was the system for unloading at that time? What was their--?

JB: They had bobcats, I believe. Or was it a shovel house? I believe they had bobcats. They bobcatted the boxcars. There was very few tank cars at that time when I first started. They might've had gondola cars, the square ones, once in a while, but most of it was boxcars.

NP: What are gondola cars? That's new to me.

JB: Well, gondola--. I mean you call them gondola cars before they became tank cars. That's the squares ones. Some of them had eight hatches on the bottom. Instead of being a round tank car, we called them gondola cars. Why? I don't know. It had something to do with the way they were--. I think, originally, they had tarp on the top instead of, like, sealed up and stuff. So, the original tank cars were actually referred to as gondola cars. I don't know if that's an American terminology or a Canadian one, but I remember us differentiating between tank cars when I first started--gondola cars, tank cars. You'll see in some of the documentation still, the old, old, documents, still talks about gondola cars.

NP: This is a snapshot in time of what it was like in the car shed at Pool 5, which was Western Grain in the early days. In the early, early days, it started out its life as Western Grain.

JB: Pool 5? Yeah? Saskatchewan Wheat Pool?

NP: Yep.

JB: Really? That I didn't know.

NP: Other than becoming really aware very quickly that this is a dangerous place to work, what else went on in there? I mean, you're there for a day, standing there waiting for the cars to come in and watching the weighing. So, what was the job of the weighman? Or the student weighman that you were at the time? You didn't just stand there. What did you have to do?

JB: The job back then was—I don't know if they'd call it labour intensive—but it required a lot of staff. People had to be everywhere and monitor everything. As years went on, they eased up on some of it and became like a timely monitoring system—go back and check and make sure things are going—and if it's going good here, it's assumed that it would have been going there. But at that time, everything was monitored full time. You had a full-time car shed crew. Depending on what elevator you're at, if you're at 7A—it's Viterra—where they have five dumps going, you might have two people in the car shed because you couldn't watch. But you made sure that every railcar was unloaded—every boxcar was unloaded—completely.

NP: And how would you actually do that?

JB: When they finished unloading it, you'd put your head right inside the car, and you'd check, and you'd make sure both ends were empty because if it was a bobcat, they could leave grain in the ends. If it was a dumper, then there's always one end that

went by the baffle. And you had to make sure. You'd tell the elevator if there's grain in there you need to bring that back and unload it. And they'd fight tooth and nail. They'd say, "I'm not doing that." Sometimes they did it on purpose, because there's a guy at the end of the thing bagging up a little bit of it. And they were getting a bottle at the end of the year to pay for it. But we made sure that everything was completely unloaded, and then we made sure that the delivery system was clear. Sometimes between cars, periodically once an hour, we'd go and check the basement, and then make sure it made it to the receiving line.

NP: Because where would it go in the meantime?

JB: Well, it can spill in the basement. It can fill up the boot. It can be diverted somewhere else. We had to make sure, that was our job. Because there was no interlocks. There was no electronics. We were the checks and balances to make sure it got to where it was going. In an elevator, grain can go anywhere. If you get a good elevator person, they can make grain go around in circles, and you would never know. So that was our job. And we had seals on the boots and the legs, and we made sure that the legs weren't leaking, and we checked those. We had long sheets of paper that we recorded everything that we checked so if there was ever an investigation that's what they went back to. "When was this checked last? Was the basement checked between these cars? Was the pit empty at the end of the car?" Because now they've got electronics, it tells them when the pit's empty. We looked in the pit and said, "Yes, the car was all up."

That was the car shed. And we started out before the elevator got there. We would go out and record all the car numbers off the cars and make sure that when they unloaded that the cars were in the order that we recorded them. And so that was the other piece. We would have a list of all of those, and the weighman up on the scale floor would have the same list, and so would the elevator, so that everybody is unloading the same car at the same time. When the light indicated that the car was finished, you knew that it was this car. You checked that off, and you started the next car.

[0:45:29]

NP: Now, what difference does it make whether they're in order or not? I mean I'm asking some boneheaded questions here, but the people who don't understand the system, you know--.

JB: Fair question. Because each one of those cars are individual parcels of grain, and each one of those cars are owned by a farmer possibly or one of the organizations. The elevators are unloading other companies' cars, and so they all want to make sure they're getting paid for theirs. If there's a shortage on a car or an overage on a car, somebody's going to want to know why it is. If it was an overage, the terminal elevator wants to know, "Well how come we've got this overage? You're claiming it wrong." The

farmer's happy with it or the guy that loaded it, but not necessarily here at the terminal. We made sure. We were the impartial body that made sure that the grain was unloaded.

In some ways, it can be compared to if you're at the grocery store, and you buy a pound of hamburger, and it's Grade A—some inspector said it's Grade A Number One—when you go to the till to checkout, you weigh it. And you're there to see that it says one pound. But the people who were unloading the cars here in Thunder Bay or in Vancouver or Montreal, they're not there. The people that loaded the car are not there to see the transaction occur. They needed someone there to verify and authenticate what had happened. Not to be a hindrance to the elevator. Obviously that wasn't our job, I mean we were there to try and promote their production, not hinder it. But we were always perceived as trying to hold them up because we'd say, "No, you're going to have to stop. We have to check this." Or, "You have to do that. You have to clean this up," or do whatever.

But there was many spills and stuff that we would account for, and make sure that they were properly accounted for, and that the right person was given the right credit. And where there was no way of figuring it out, we would apportion the weights. That was all done based on the information we would collect everyday, three shifts around the clock. So that was the car shed. Eventually tickets came, and we would do things like dust lines and load lines to verify weights. Car was short, we would go down to the end of the track, get inside the car with a stick. You could see where the grain had been and where the dust was above it. We'd measure that and then do a calculation, and we could give you a volume Metric calculation of what would've been in that car, approximately. If it was 158,000 pounds and the weigher got 128,000 pounds, well then something's not right here. Either the car leaked—in the morning that's what we were checking—check to see if the rotation of the cars, check to see if there's any leaks on the railcars. And we found lots of that kind of stuff, and so that would account for a shortage. There's a leak, so then the railroad's responsible for it, or if it's not, then maybe the elevator got a spill. It gave some accountability to where it was.

NP: What were some of the unusual reasons why there was a shortage?

JB: Well, most of the shortages would have been the result of spills in the elevator or a leak in the car. Sometimes it was just from, especially when you got right to the tank cars, leave grain in a tank. We were the only ones that checked them after they were unloaded, sounded them to make sure that they were empty. But there's been some difficulties right through the entire system, and that's why we were there at every piece of it. You could have problems with the scales. You could have problems with the delivery system. You could have problems with the railcar. You could have problems with the pits. We kept track of all of that stuff. And that isn't to say that the elevator wasn't as well, but they weren't focused on that. They were focused on opening the car, making sure the grain gets out and gets up. Next car. We were focused on everything else.

[0:49:05]

NP: Now, the inspectors, in the inspection side of things. The elevators had their corresponding inspector?

JB: Yes.

NP: Was it the same in the grain shed then? Did the--?

JB: When I first started, they had hand sampling. You didn't have delivery systems. They had a person from the CGC sample each one of the railcars or was on the vessel and sampled the shipment from the vessel. Later on, they developed sampling systems, and they would take it from the sampling system into the inspector. And then eventually they got delivery systems that brought it right into the inspector. Yeah, the elevator had a corresponding, but generally speaking their job was to get the initial assessment of what it was. They already knew what it was going to be. They would go sometimes by the ticket, but they would give a quick look, and they'd bin it. For them, it was a little less finite because it was going into a bin with maybe ten other cars. For us, each one of the parcels had to stand alone, and so the inspection on those had to be much more accurate.

NP: Now, as a newbie, when you were starting out in the car shed—and, as you said, there were times when you would have to ask the elevator to bring that car back or stop this when they just wanted to get the job done—was there not a temptation to just say, "Oh who cares. They're right, who needs to call this back?" How would you--? Why wouldn't you just do that? Why wouldn't you say, "Yeah, they're right." You know, just let them--.

JB: Well, no, that wasn't our job obviously. That's our job. And they're built right into the Commission for whatever reason. No matter who it was that worked for us, there was a high level of integrity there. And that was our job. It was ingrained in us. People like Garnet Watkins that I worked for—I'm sure there are other ones across the country—but they instilled that in us. "This is your job. If you want to continue to have a job, you want to have a career at the CGC, this is what you do." We can't make the elevator—that wasn't our job—to make them do anything, but we recorded everything. And so that would be our answer: "If you don't want to bring the car back, then I'll record that an undetermined amount of grain was left in the car. And when the person who comes up 50 tonnes short, and there's only 10 tonnes in the car, you may be accountable for 50 tonnes because you're not prepared to bring it in and do the weighing." It was always up to the elevator. Ultimately, it's their business, it's their job. But we would record whatever we observed. They would have to be accountable for that.

NP: I don't know if this is the time to throw this in, but I will because we're talking about integrity here. And I've always had, because my dad was a grain inspector and a lot of his friends were, I've always had a sense that integrity was important. But in the last--. In some of the interviews that I've done, people have said some people had integrity and some didn't. And that sort of--.

JB: Hm. Are you talking about within the Commission?

NP: Yeah.

JB: Hm. I don't know.

NP: Nobody would name names, and I don't intend that people should name names. But I was quite disappointed to hear that, but that's not unusual. In every industry there are people with integrity and those without.

JB: It's interesting. Of course, as you know, there was diversity within our organization. There were weighers and there were inspectors. And the two, although they were like siblings, you know, we would fight tooth and nail amongst ourselves, but God help anybody that got between us. But, in my recollection, the worst of the worst employees still, when everything was all said and done, in my estimation—I mean I never inspected grain, I couldn't tell you if an inspector was doing it right or wrong—I never had that sense that when push came to shove that they wouldn't put their name--. If they were putting their name on that sheet of paper, to the best of their ability they were doing what they had to do. Certainly, there's always margins of error that are acceptable. Maybe some of them pushed that a little bit, but I don't remember too many people ever being taken to task because of something going wrong. Sometimes that margin of error might have been exceeded, and we had issues. But in 37 years, maybe a couple of times that the Commission was ever taken to task for what we did.

We don't load the grain. Everybody has to remember that. We don't actually put the grain on the boat. We don't select what's going to go on the boat. All we do is sample it and weigh it. Whether you put too much on, or you put the wrong stuff on, we have no control over that. All we can do is report the news. We don't make it. I never got that sense. Certainly, in every organisation there's performance issues. I don't see that being any different from the Commission as any other organization. You have to appreciate these people are working 16-hour days, putting their lives out there, and they're staying away from their families. Those are long hours to put in, and if you cut corners, so be it.

NP: And as I said, it certainly wasn't rampant. But one person did say that there were places he would not work because of what was expected of them.

JB: Was he talking about the elevator per se? Or the people that work for it?

NP: Well, I think it had something to do with the people that worked as well. But, yeah. It wasn't rampant.

[0:55:12]

JB: If I was an inspector, I might be able to speak to that. But as a weigher, I don't know of anybody. Everybody that was on there, that I know of, I don't know anybody that wouldn't be doing their job when it come to grading the grain. Now whether they got someone else to do all the grading during the day, that's a different story, if you can sneak out that way and avoid some of the work. But there really was something about putting that signature on it and being a government employee, especially the older people. I'm not sure the younger ones maybe appreciated that, but the older ones—my age and certainly the ones that are still working there now—that meant something. There was a piece of that, that you were signing for Canada, and so there was a big pride. Huge, huge pride in what we did. Both staffs, I mean that's one thing I--.

And the other thing about inspectors, which is always a--. I said they have a huge ego, right? Like they were huge, and it used to drive me crazy. But I remember saying, I said it's the thing I hate about inspectors, but it's the thing I love about inspectors because they could never grade in the time that they have to make that decision, if they didn't have that huge ego and that expertise. They'd never be able to make those split-second decisions that could cost people millions of dollars, right? And they do it day in and day out, 16 hours a day, three shifts sometimes. As much as that's difficult to work with when you're a weigher, because we were--. The weighers always saw themselves as the weak sister in the organization and kind of this easygoing group, and the inspectors always saw themselves as the prima donnas in the whole organization, from my perspective. They wouldn't say that. I was happy to work with both of them. And as it turns out, in the end I was managing both sides. My appreciation of inspection grew even more when I became a manager, right? Because my responsibilities became part of theirs, and so it was a total different perspective. I think that if there was any shenanigans going on I don't recall them ever being rampant or large.

NP: And were it rampant, it would be something that would surface. As you said, they had to sign, and the final customers were--.

JB: Well, everything's double-checked, and there's always somebody questioning everything. So someone goes back over your work. Certainly, there were times when we had problems, but, like I said, no more or less than--.

NP: How does the double-check work?

JB: Well, the elevator's also responsible for their actions, the person who's receiving the grain. If it's export or going to a mill, if it comes in wrong, you're going to hear about it. Someone's going to say, "Look, I can't even grind this stuff. It's not going to do what I want it to do." Or, "It's 10 tonnes short or 100 tonnes short of what it's supposed to be. I can't mill it. I can't use it. I can't

move it." All of those things are brought back as complaints that have to be investigated. And then they go back through the work and samples are retained, weights and tapes and tickets are all retained.

NP: We're really jumping ahead of ourselves because now we're into some of the stuff that you would've been responsible for or involved in later on in your career in the management function. But since we're talking about it now, a lot of grain goes through our port, and there's always going to be something at some point. It's not going to be perfect. In a typical year, how many problems of the sort that you were talking about—the short weight, or the--. And I'm talking about the customer end. The short weight, the improper or problem grade, degradation of the shipment—how often would that happen?

JB: Well, just for clarification, when I became the manager, I became manager of operations, but there was an evolution to that. Historically, when I first started, there were two silos in the organization: There was a weighing silo and an inspection silo. They had their own management team, their own operations supervisors, and their own reports in Winnipeg. When they converted it to put an operation supervisor and an operations manager, where they combined the two disciplines, that changed the whole thing. I had nothing to do with vessel investigations or grade disputes or weighing disputes, that was all done by Jeff Tiboni or Al Coffey. That was their responsibility. I was responsible for the staffing piece. But back in the day, those investigations would've come through Winnipeg, through the chief of weighing on the weighing side or the chief inspector for Canada. And they would have got the complaint either internationally or from the domestic market.

[1:00:35]

On the weighing side is the one that I can speak to the best because I'm not as familiar obviously with the inspection side. But on the weighing side, in Thunder Bay in particular, we had a check and balance between here and Montreal. Because the grain was loaded here, it would go domestic. And Garnet kept records that he used to audit himself, audit his own operation. So, we would be constantly doing reviews of our work on the shipments and on the inwards. How many? Oh God, I don't know if I can quantify that or not. I mean I remember working at the elevators and probably doing two or three car investigations a day as a track person, going back through all of our sheets, write it up on a report, send it down. And someone down there would amass more information and then forward it off to the chief, and they'd respond to it. On the shipment side, when I was younger, I never had anything to do with it. I mean we heard about--. We provided them with the information we had as assistants at the elevator, but I didn't get very involved in it.

Vancouver might've been different because they didn't have that check and balance with the laker shipments and the transfer of grain. Theirs went directly to export. My understanding was that some of the complaints would have been insulated by the Wheat Board [CWB] at a time. They would have maybe taken care of business and said, "Okay, if it's only that, we'll take care of it. We

don't want any disruptions in the way we're moving." That's what I understand. I can't quote anybody on that, that was my understanding on some of that.

But they did get their complaints, and there would be cargo investigations, and there would be a lengthy report that would be recorded, and "This is what we suggest happened." If we had realized some type of error in the scale, we would go back and try and do calculations on how much grain was lost or gained through it. Same with railcars. I remember at one point in time we had an investigation on one scale in Vancouver—I won't mention the elevator—but it probably went on for a month and a half before it was detected. Part of it, our shortfall, should have probably detected it, but it was one of those things that could've been, might've been, should've been. But there was a significant amount of grain being lost and so we captured all of that information. There was months of paperwork that were put together and a report provided to the companies that may or may not have lost grain through that whole process.

So those were going on. But that was kind of an anomaly, that large scale. Most of what the weighers here would say, back in the day, was that we prevented those things from happening. We didn't let long, large-scale errors occur on inwards or boat shipment after boat shipment being messed up. We'd catch it as it was happening and then make the adjustments at the time. And that's why we monitored everything live-time, and we made sure everything was going appropriately and the way it was--. What we said we did, we did. So that would've been part of it.

The inspectors, a little bit different situation. They weren't in the car shed. They weren't in the elevator--. The samples provided to them either by the sampler at the time or by the delivery system. This is it. What happened out there since the last time I checked the sampler, whenever that would've been, this is that sample that's assumed to be official, and they grade it right then and there. They say what it is, whether that's what the elevator thought it was or not is irrelevant. It is what it is. But they did get--. We collaborated on some of the investigations. If there was a grade problem and the car before was a wheat and we got barley in the wheat, they would come to us and say, "Is there any chance that you could pick something out of your weigh issue, your weigh records, that would indicate that this car was co-mingled with this car?" We would collaborate on those things. But for the most part we had two separate entities. Maybe in Winnipeg they might have collaborated a little bit more, but in regional areas, we had two separate operations. We worked in the same building, and we were friendly to each other, but not a lot of times where we worked directly together.

[1:04:52]

NP: You were there for the amalgamation time, because that wasn't all that long ago that they amalgamated the two.

JB: Yeah, actually I was the first operations manager.

NP: How did that go? I just interviewed somebody who was in head office at the time, and so I'm interested in knowing on the frontline how well did it do? What were some of the bumps, what were some of the savings, which is what they intended.

JB: I'm not sure there was a whole lot of savings. It complicated things because there was so much history and so much distinction between the two divisions. When they tried to marry the two together, I'm not sure it came together as well as they had anticipated. We were trained separately, we had two training--. When you came in off the street, you immediately became an inspector or a weigher, and never to--. I mean it was very rarely that people crossed over. There were a few, Debbie Pankewich being one of them. She became one of the head inspectors and ended up in Winnipeg. But she was a weigher to start, and she was one of the very rare ones that jumped across. For the most part you were proud of what you did and, like I said, we were like siblings. It was good and we had lots of fun together, but for the most part we were two separate groups.

And so, when they amalgamated it, there was lots of animosity and how could Jim Ball, a weigher, tell an inspector what he's going to do? How could Jeff Tiboni, a weigher, tell an inspector that you're moving to this elevator or that elevator? It made it difficult at the beginning, and Jeff and I were the first, Jeff and myself. Jeff Tiboni, Dennis Caruso, and myself were the first operations management team. Dennis was an inspector, Jeff was a weigher, and I was a weigher. There was always the belief that there's no way a weigher could possibly understand what an inspector--. And Dennis could never understand what a weigher was doing.

But if you went to it from an operation perspective, work is work is work. It's staffing. It's scheduling. It's performance management. It's all of those things. It had nothing to do with grading or weighing grain in its simplest terms. But the truth of it is, in order for you to staff you have to understand the idiosyncrasies of where those people are going. And when they're asking for more staff is it really--? Do they need more staff? Or can they get away with less or can they do it a different way? Well people who had been doing it their whole lives are going to be more likely to answer that than someone who's never done it before. Or if they can get this dissuaded one way or the other, you may not be able to make the best answer.

In the full course of time, I think that it started to go well. I worked as the operation manager. Al Coffey and Jeff—Garnet originally—we worked really closely together. I started as a manager same time as Al Coffey did, and we came up through the organization together. He was an inspector. I was a weigher. It was always a running joke because we still kibitzed as weighers and inspectors. He'd be giving me shots, and I'd be giving him shots. But we agreed at the beginning that we're going to do this. We're the newbies on the block. Rick Bevilacqua was the director at the time, and he worked really well with us. It was a good thing we had him before he retired because I don't know if we would have ever made it. But he had that history. He had the

insight, and he had an open mind to doing things a little bit differently. At the first, he did good tutoring, but at the end he was good to let the leash go and let us do our own thing. He'd back us up 100 percent.

So, we got to do stuff a little bit differently. And Al was a real progressive kind of guy, and I wanted to do things differently. I'm sure we had our differences of opinion, and boy we fought tooth and nail. But when we had something that we both agreed to, Al was like a railroad machine, a railroad car. We move out of the way, just hang on, and he's going to take you wherever you want to go. And we did lots of work together. But we started doing stuff like hiring the staff. We hired them as industry services employees instead of inspectors and weighers. Originally, working with Janice Andrews, who was the training officer of inspection. Tommy Moore it might've been—might've been before Tommy. Alex Crane would have been the trainer that took over for me because I was a trainer on weighing before I became a manager.

[1:09:22]

We started training people right off the hop, "You're not an inspector. You're not a weigher. You're a Canadian Grain Commission employee working for industry services." And so, they took their orientation on both staffs. They learnt about inspecting. They learnt about weighing. Then once they found out what their preferences were, we would distribute them as best we could in the--. And the whole plan was that eventually we would have cross-trained employees. Well, the reality was as that was occurring, that was great during the growing prosper, but when things started to tighten up, we didn't have the resources to train on both staffs. So the expectations that the Al and the Jeffs and the Jims, when they first came on, was that you were going to become an inspector-weigher. You're going to have all these skills. We were never able to do it. We just couldn't get the time. They were working all the time. We couldn't train them. Once they got trained in one discipline, we were lucky to have them out at the elevator doing that. It was almost impossible.

And at some point in time, it was really on the inspection staff, Al and his colleagues said, "Look, I can't spend more time trying to get people off the street to learn inspection on the weighing staff when I'm having a tough time getting those entry-level employees up to grading grain. I can't train both at the same time. I just don't have the resources to do it. So, we've got to go back to focusing on inspection and focusing on weighing." And as you know, in the full course of time, weighing is pretty much gone, and we're just grading grain on the export now. It's even more difficult now. There's no transition. You come into the organization as an entry-level, and then you're grading grain onto a vessel. I don't know how they're going to do that.

We had the luxury of them going through like three or four steps, cutting their teeth on grading grain on the inward side, which is one small parcel at a time with people seeing you and lots of other inspectors around you, before you start putting your John Hancock on a million-dollar shipment of grain. All of those things—economics, politics—all came into place. It was like the

perfect storm. Much to my chagrin because I did a lot of work to do the amalgamation mostly with Alex and Janice, but Janice Andrews in particular because she was the inspector. She was the only--. Like Al and her worked with me to try and get that, to try and get an ex-weigher to work with inspectors to get them to buy into this whole thing. We did a lot of work to get it there and then at one point in time we just made a management decision that we can't manage this anymore, can't maintain it.

[Audio pauses]

NP: We took a well-deserved break. And I think I'm starting up pretty much where we ended off, and that was we're talking about the initial bumps as could be expected in the cross-training, and then moving onto eventually it working, and then because of the realities of the situation and cutting back on staff, having to go back to the separation again just because of the lack of resources. But I have a question to ask about this that I was thinking of at the time, and it may not have an answer. To my knowledge of weighing and inspection, however limited that might be, they're very different skills. Over time were you able to determine what type of person would be better doing the different jobs? Was there any differences in abilities or interest that would define somebody who would be more successful at one versus the other?

JB: I'm not sure if you could say from the onset, from entry into the organization, whether a person is pre-dispositioned to be an inspector or a weigher. It's more the evolution that occurs after you start. But most would say that the weighers liked to be outside. They liked to be working directly with the elevator organization itself. They were a little more loosey-goosey in terms of their way of approaching things. And inspectors were inside, more meticulous, want to be focused on things. A weigher would tell you there's no way in a million years that they could sit there at a bench all day long picking grain. And a grain inspector will say, "There's no way I want to be wandering around an elevator looking at grain cars unload." Whether those are predispositions for those people--. Because I don't think the people that hired them actually said, "This guy looks like an inspector and that woman looks like a weigher." I don't think it was like that. I think originally it was, "That's my brother, that's my cousin, and that's a friend of the next-door neighbour's." because they're only about two people away from being brothers and sisters in the organization. Pretty much everybody is related some way, shape, or form in the original.

At one point in time, we talked about cross-training and the end of it when it devolved, but it did have a starting. There were some specific reasons why they wanted to do it. Small, regional parts of the organization didn't have enough staff to maintain both functions, or they only delivered one function. The Act on inwards, the legislation wasn't enacted past Thunder Bay for inward in the same way that it was from Thunder Bay west. They didn't do inward cars like we did in Thunder Bay, but they were responsible on occasion to load vessels. And most of that work was done either from Montreal or mostly from Thunder Bay, originally. Even all the weigh-overs and audits that we did, they were all done from crews from Thunder Bay on the weighing side, and crews from inspection are from the East or from Winnipeg.

[1:15:34]

The very first training, from my understanding, was Rick Bevilacqua and Garnet Watkins. Rick Bevilacqua was the inwards manager or supervisor for inspection, and Garnet Watkins at the time was the manager of weighing. Again, two silos betwixt. But they went together, and they went to Chatham for the Bay Port operations because we loaded boats there. And the understanding was it was very expensive to send people from Thunder Bay. It took them more travel, more everything for the people of Thunder Bay to go to Chatham to load these boats. And Chatham said that they had staff that were willing to cross-train to learn how to load the vessels. On the weighing side, that was a leap of--. These were inspectors, so it wasn't to learn inspection, but it was a leap of faith on the weighing side, particularly for Garnet, to jump all the way from a person who has nothing to do with weighing to being responsible for loading the boat. That would have been generations, a long evolution—start on the track, work your way up through the organization.

But they were open minded enough to consider it and see if they could do it. And they were the first ones. I remember there's a videotape around somewhere where they're walking through—I believe it was Sarnia, Cargill Elevator. They were going through and showing all the checkpoints that the weigher would have to check and all the scale components and checks that we would have to make. And Rick was speaking, and Garnet was speaking. It was the very first generation of video training basically. And I remember seeing that. I was a part of that because I was to go down after and work with some of the inspectors to do the training because I was a weigher. Ultimately, as time went on, I ended up being the trainer. Garnet, his evolution was through training as well on the weighing side before he became a manager. And I had worked for a number of people, but I started to do the training exterior. I did training there. I did training in the Prairies for audits because that was all that they were responsible for when I was working.

So anyway, that was the first cross-training. It was well-received. In fact, it was the one place where we would have said that it was kind of the flagship of cross-training. It actually benefited the organization economically, fiscally. It also gave more opportunities to the people that worked in Chatham that were pretty static in terms of what their responsibilities were. It gave them an opportunity to make some more money. They could travel for different reasons. And ultimately, they became independent. They started doing their own weighing and inspection and became fully qualified—went through a training program that I ended up having to develop so that they could certify themselves as weighers. And they became the picture of what cross-training could do if the organization was prepared to do that.

And it was the selling feature for the rest of the organization later on as to why they thought they might go there, because they were no longer--. They were inspectors, but they had weighing skills. And I laugh because, originally, they asked the graders, the

grain graders, if they would be interested in doing the cross-training. They said, "Absolutely not. What do I want to do that for?" So, they trained the PI-1s, who were the samplers and assistant inspectors. We trained them first. And of course, they started travelling a little bit more and getting a little bit more overtime, and the next thing you know the 3s were starting to say—the PI-3s—were starting to say, "What? How come I can't travel?" "Well, you don't have weighing skills. You can't go." "Well, I want to take that training." And so, it grew.

It had its place. I know that in Montreal they utilized cross-training quite a bit. Because of the remoteness of their locations, it was hard to--. You can't maintain ten people to do five people's work, only ten people's work every other third or fourth day. So, you're maintaining all these people to try and do the work, and so it'd be better if you have the five people or six people that can do eight people's work.

NP: And that would be the same for Quebec City and Baie-Comeau? Trois-Rivieres?

JB: Yes, yeah, well that's what it was. Absolutely. They started cross-training. Back in that time, because there was no centralized—which is one of the reasons why they changed the way the regions worked—they evolved separately. Then weighing took off in a different way because it was mostly inspectors teaching weighers what to do. Thunder Bay had Garnet. He was from the old school, and he maintained all the original rules, and then Vancouver evolved differently. At one point in time, we actually had three completely separate weighing functions going on and nobody really knew what the other hand was doing. They just operated separately. When they changed the silos so that there was operations and weighing, and weighing became responsible for all the regions, and then Jim Stewart became responsible for all of that, then we got to tighten up that—started to solidify what everybody was doing so we're all doing the same thing at the same time so that we can be accountable for it. It was a long time coming to get it back around. Nobody realized how far we had actually evolved away.

[1:20:52]

Anyway, just a little bit of a story. Anyway, for me, back in Thunder Bay we were fortunate, like I said to you during our break. A lot of the people that moved to Winnipeg in the managerial positions came from Fort William or Port Arthur, for whatever reason—put in lots of hours, had lots of people with lots of experience. One thing I will say on the weighing side, is people from Thunder Bay travelled, so we had a really rounded experience. We worked at all the different locations. So when you went to Winnipeg, you could relate to what they were doing on the Prairies. You could relate to what they were doing in the Bay Ports. You could relate to what they were doing in Montreal or Halifax. For me, I don't think there's an elevator that we provide a service that I didn't work in at some point in time, or at least visit. For me that helped me out later on because I could relate when

I was talking to my colleagues, my co-managers. I could relate to the elevators they were talking about. I could relate to the issues they were having, the staffing problems. It helped us out.

But I had the good fortune of coming up through the organization when Jack Robertson was the director and Rick Bevilacqua was one of two, Brian Storry being the other. One was responsible for outwards inspection, and one was responsible for inwards. And then Garnet was there on the weighing side. I also had the benefit of working with a gentleman by the name of Gordy Mandigo, who was an up and comer on the weighing side at that time. He was a young guy. He was about the same age as me.

NP: Madigle?

JB: Mandigo. M-A-N-D-I-G-O. And ultimately, he became my mentor up through the organization. He was an open-minded breath of fresh air for the organization. And ironically, it came at the same time as we changed our--. I'm trying to think of our--. Dennis Wallace, I'm trying to think of his title at the time.

NP: Executive director?

JB: Director of--. Yeah. Executive director, right. And when he came into the organization--. This is my own personal opinion. The organization was a very conservative organization-- Federal government conservative organization, didn't want to change a whole lot, couldn't change a whole lot. It was difficult to move things and to think outside the box. We had a job to do. We did our job. We did it the same tomorrow. Yes, they would improve some of the technology and things, but for the most part nothing ever changed. When Dennis Wallace—this is my impression anyway--. Maybe it was just the perfect storm that three things came together. Jack Robertson was a very open-minded, trusting individual. He would give responsibility to the people that he felt could take the responsibility. And Gordy Mandigo was just off the wall with wild ideas. And when Dennis Wallace came in and said, "We're going to look at new business lines," Gordy Mandigo put his hand up and said, "I'm willing to take that on. I don't want to do staffing anymore."

He took on the training, and he started doing things like customer-client service training and report training, elevating how to do training. Because we did our training all at the waterfront, nobody ever really even talked about doing training. And Jack Robertson just said, "Gord, if you think that's going to work, you go for it." And, of course, I plugged into it through the training piece on the weighing side and worked hand in hand with Gordy all the way through it. But my belief is that, for a short term that Dennis was there, that he was the catalyst to convert the Commission, to start thinking about, you need to start changing because you're going to be dead in the water long before your time if you don't start moving the organization into the modern-day business world.

Some would criticize it because, “What are we doing in new business lines?” You know? In retrospect, hindsight’s 20/20, What’s the government getting into new business lines? Now you’re competing against people that can provide your services, private sector. All of those thoughts were changed. But he got us thinking outside the box. It wasn’t just inspection and weighing. It’s personnel. It’s individuals that work there. What’s client services? How do you speak to the client? How do you generate interest in what you’re doing? We were happy just to be a regulatory agency. You don’t need to know what we’re doing. We’ll come and tell you what we’re doing, right? In my mind, he twisted that, turned it, flipped it on its head, and then guys like Gordy Mandigo got opportunities. And Jack promoted him, and I guess I got a piece of the hook, and he dragged me along because I loved to do things differently. I didn’t think what we were doing was going to sustain us forever and ever.

[1:25:29]

So, that’s a piece of it. Gordy was the operation supervisor here. They were going through a downsizing process, and him and Jeff Tiboni were working together, and they removed two of the operation super--. They called them walking bosses, but they were operation supervisors. And they told Jeff and Gordy that there’s one job left, it’s the staffing job, and then there’s this new training thing if somebody wants to work at that. And Jeff said, “Well, I really like the staffing. I’m going to stick with that.” And Gord said, “Perfect, I’ll take on the training.” And he had his own little office in the corner and created his own world and, ultimately, became the chief of weighing in Winnipeg and so moved down there. But he was, in my mind, one of the most progressive people at that time. Many came along later, but he was one of those people that could see something, the diamond in the rough, in a person. He would let those people develop and grow, and that was never heard of before. It was more hierarchical and, “Wait until it’s your turn.” All that kind of stuff. And Gordy, he was a self-made man, and he didn’t hold any of those things. He was respected in the organization quite a bit for that.

NP: Where did he come from, Mandigo? In the organization, what was his--?

JB: He was a weigher. He started as a weigher, actually started after me. I remember us working together on the track. I remember him coming to the elevator. I remember my brother saying, “Who’s this Gordy?” Because you used to have to sign in, “Who’s this Gordy Man-ding-o guy? I haven’t seen him yet.” And he says, “That would be me. It’s Gordy Mandigo.” But he was a big--. And he loves to talk, and he’s a tremendous storyteller. People that worked with him loved him. He just motivated people. There was just something about him that grew on you. There was obviously some people that didn’t care for him, but for the most part they loved his storytelling. He had five kids, and so he had lots of children stories. People now, my age, will tell you that they brought their kids up based on the stories that they heard from Gordy and the mistakes that you could make and the things that you should do. Him and I became best friends actually, in the end.

NP: Is he still around?

JB: Yep. He's six months in Winnipeg and six months in Florida.

NP: Okay. Retired I take it, with that six months off?

JB: Yep. I shouldn't say Winnipeg. He's in Oakbank outside Winnipeg.

NP: An unusual name, so I should be able to track him down pretty easily. Knowing that he's in Oakbank and with the name Mandigo it's not like Smith. You mentioned, just in passing but, oh, my ears perked up, you said you'd probably been in most elevators that are in Canada. And you know that we're really interested in elevators. [Laughing]

JB: Well I shouldn't say most elevators, I wasn't obviously in all the primary elevators back in the day.

NP: I'm thinking of the terminals.

JB: Yeah, pretty much.

NP: So, I'm just going to throw out an open-ended question and maybe it would help you if we just started geographically. Do you want to start west or east?

JB: I worked east. I did training west. I actually did audits on the Prairies too, but most of my experience in Vancouver and on the Prairies would've been either training people or working with people that were doing training.

NP: So, let's start with the East Coast. How far east were elevators operating at the time that--?

JB: Mentioned one, Vanc--.

NP: Was it in Halifax still?

JB: Halifax, yeah.

NP: Okay, so tell me about the Halifax elevator.

[1:29:24]

JB: Oh, Halifax. That's and interesting one. That's--.

NP: I think that's as far east as they went isn't it?

JB: Yeah, yeah, There was elevator in Saint John's. Saint John, New Brunswick or Saint John's, New--? I never can remember which one's which.

NP: The farther away you are, the longer it is.

JB: Okay, so Saint John. Halifax? Probably one of the most notorious elevators for people here in Thunder Bay and for Montreal. Ironically, there was a laker called the *Halifax*, which was a self-unloader, and it often worked--. Loaded here and then unloaded in Halifax.

NP: On whose fleet, do you remember? CSL [Canada Steamship Lines], Algoma?

JB: That's a good question, I don't know.

NP: Doesn't matter, we can track it down.

JB: It almost exclusively came out short every time it went to Halifax for whatever reason. And we could never figure it out. We always blamed it on it being a self-unloader, and they must be dumping grain out in the middle of the lake or something. You know? And then there came the realization that they've got—just like the elevator—they've got an elevation system underneath below the actual holds, that the belts run underneath. It elevates and it either can take grain in or ship grain out. So we believed that there was grain down there, and then they just dumped that in the ocean, in the lake, when they were making their travels. They never ever accounted for it. And actually, I loaded the boat here. We sealed it up. I went to the locations it unloaded and went down below decks and there was some grain down there which they eventually had to clean up.

Anyway, it used to go to Halifax, and it came out short. It got so bad that they actually started to investigate it. The RCMP got involved and there was a--. I'm not going to get into the details because it's restricted information. But ultimately the chief of

weighing we went down there. We did countless audits back-to-back-to-back to try to determine what the problem was. We monitored the shipment of the boats that came in there. We'd sealed them up here. We'd regularly go down there and watch them unload and monitor them in and do audits after the weigh-overs or after the shipments. Ultimately, there was some shenanigans going. There was a processing plant that was beside it, and as it turned out, someone who used to work as an accountant for the CGC ended up working for this company next door. And some of the documents just didn't work out, but because he'd worked for the Commission, he had started to question it and then he inquired. There was some repercussions from that.

But they—for years and years—they had problems with the elevator. So that was one of my first experiences. I remember going travelling there with a gentleman by the name of Jimmy Vescio Sr.—and there's an inspector which is his son, Jimmy Vescio Jr. But Jim Vescio Sr., he was quite the character. One of the most travelled weighmen around and as a result was probably one of the most experienced at the time. And I remember travelling with him. I remember it was on an Easter weekend, and we were supposed to be home in a day. We were supposed to unload the boat and--. Like always, there's always something happens. And I remember that we had three shifts around the clock watching the boat unload, and we let one shift go. We let two shifts go, and then him and I stayed just to finish the boat. I remember I caught the plane with my overall, parka, and my hardhat. I washed up in the airport is what I did, and I put my helmet in my bag. We caught the shuttle back and forth. Anyway, that was a side note to that story, but that was in Halifax.

NP: Mr. Vescio no longer with us?

JB: Yeah, he's still alive. He lives on Brown Street. Cat, cat, cat—444 Brown Street. Funny I can remember that.

NP: Okay, and his son?

JB: James, Jim Vescio. He lives right next door to him.

NP: And did he go into the same--?

JB: He was an inspector. He suffered some health issues. He had a stroke. I don't know how old he would have been--. In his forties? Still, I see him quite often. Still got all his faculties and everything, but he does have some residual stuff from the stroke.

NP: So maybe they would be a good interview.

JB: Oh, they'd have lots of great stories. I remember picketing with Jim Vescio Jr., but I travelled a lot with Jim Vescio Sr.

NP: So, picketing?

JB: Yeah. Strike. Because I was in the union for 17 years.

NP: Okay. So that didn't happen very often.

JB: No, it was cyclical. We, pretty much every time the contract came up, we probably--. Not very many times we settled without having some type of strike if I recall. Later on, when I was in management they became--. The Commission became kind of the catalyst for the PSAC [Public Service Alliance of Canada] because we could have a huge effect by shutting down elevators. They used the Commission a little bit more in terms of getting their point across about what you're losing if you don't have--, because we were regulatory, and they couldn't load. At the same time, I think the Commission eventually came up with the exemptions to our services during peak periods and that was the beginning of—what some would believe, others would say not so—but some would believe that that was the beginning of the Commission looking at, you can't shut a country down, and you can't maintain all these things. The elevators seem to have done it. Everything went fine while we weren't there. "We checked into it, everything looks good, so maybe we don't really need us to be there." Which is exactly what the private sector was insinuating all along was that you don't need us anymore. It's not the same industry as it was in 1912.

[1:35:15]

NP: Good for you to have that date right.

JB: I was the trainer. [Laughing]

NP: Do you know how few people in Canada would get that date right?

JB: I'm sure.

NP: Anyway, just to add to this—and it might make you think of other things—I interviewed one of the elevator managers and there had been a strike of elevator workers. And his comment was, "Well, it was during that strike that we learned how few people we really needed to operate well." He said that was a downside. And he was a person who came up through the ranks, so he was sympathetic to the union operators. But as things got tighter, they started to look at those things.

JB: The Commission was very understanding and benevolent when it came to strikes. They would shut down operations. They wouldn't try to make people go in and work, and bring in terms, or somebody who's not under contract. Once the strike was established then we shut the doors and management would do the best they could with what they could. I mean there's always the conflict. You can't avoid that, and there's always tensions during that period. But for the most part, let it take its course and we'll see what comes out the other end. We all benefit and are hurt by it, whatever the case may be.

NP: Now the issues. You were how long with the Commission [CGC]? How many years?

JB: 36.

NP: 36. I don't need exact numbers, but how many times would you have gone out on strike would you say in the 36 years? Every five years, every two years?

JB: That's a good question. Hm. Yeah, about every four or five years, I guess. Whether we went on strike every time, I think there were some we might have--. Well, I was there during the legislation, during the Trudeau years when we were five and six.

NP: Five and six?

JB: We settled the contract and at that time, back in the heyday, contracts were ten percent, eleven percent increases in wages. When the economy got to the point where somebody had to do something because it couldn't continue on increasing like that. It wasn't just us, but all organizations—industry, private sector, everywhere—at the time we had settled. The inspectors had settled on something around 10-11 percent. We had settled on 10-11 percent. The inspectors' contract was a couple of months before ours—the anniversary date—their settle was in place. Five and six [referring to wage and price constraints in the 1980s, a government 6/5 program] came in, which was 5 percent, 6 percent, came in, in between the two contracts. Ours was legislated back. So, they clawed ours back from eleven percent to six percent and then it went increasingly down to--. I remember being there zero, zero, and zero, and someone saying, "That's terrible." And I said, "It's better than nothing." [Laughing] That was the joke. Zero is still better than nothing, right?

NP: So, that was wage and price control as you were talking about?

JB: Yeah. I can't remember if I--. There was a term for it. Wage and prices, similar to that, but I don't think that was the exact terminology for it.

NP: Now, something else came out with that. Anyway. We took a little bit of a side trip here, but it's important for me to get them in when we're talking about them and they're fresh in your mind. It just flows much better, and with modern technology we can take what you said now and put it 20 minutes from now, so it's not a big issue. We finished with Halifax, or at least we were talking about Halifax and its elevator. Is it still operating, do you know? Or was it still operating at the time that you retired?

JB: I believe it's still operating. I can't say for sure. Just before I left--. Because it wasn't my responsibility after Montreal took over the full responsibility for it, so Thunder Bay was rarely ever travelling there. But it was still a remote location for even them. They didn't have any staff in Vancouver, they had to come from somewhere else, whether it was from Montreal or one of--.

NP: Or in Halifax you mean?

JB: In Halifax, yes. It was one of those ones that we only had to be there when it was a shipment like an export shipment.

NP: Who owned it?

JB: Good question. I think it was Halifax Elevator. I don't know if there was a major interest that had--.

NP: So, it might have been a port a--. Something like Montreal Elevator which was owned by the Port Authority?

JB: It might have been, originally. National Harbours Board or something like that. But that I'm not too sure about. I just knew it as Halifax Elevators. Seeing that they had all their management and administration were right there at the elevator. So I'm thinking it might have been a stand-alone elevator. But it might have been a part of a larger grain company. Or maybe one of the grain companies had an interest, like Paterson's or something like that, that kind of--.

NP: Or a co-operative effort for those that need to ship out of there.

JB: Some arm's length, yeah.

[1:40:48]

NP: Now, I wanted to go back to, actually before we move back into the elevator, because I've been curious about this. You know how everybody is always interested in the dirt, let's say. I can remember reading early in a historical piece that was reporting on some shenanigans—as you refer to it—shenanigans that went on in Thunder Bay. The early, early, early days where they had

actually had someone testifying that they had been requested by the management of the elevator to build a false floor in a bin. I mean, it might've been 1920 or something or even before that, which may have brought about the 1912 Grain Act because of the shenanigans. But I've always wondered what group in the CGC, at head office, dealt with these issues of potential fraud? Was there a unit that dealt with them?

JB: I can't speak specifically to that because I was never in any of those positions in headquarters, but I would suspect that it would have been the chief of weighing and the inspector for Canada that would have been dealing with those.

[Audio pauses]

NP: We just took a break for helicopter traffic.

JB: So, I would suspect there would have been--. And maybe back then at one time there was the chief inspector, the chief of weighing, both for Canada, and then there was the chief registrar. So, they, in conjunction with the director, would've done an investigation and reported on it and any type of repercussions that come from that. I do recall—and it would have been during my time because I believe that Elizabeth Larmond was involved in it--.

NP: Elizabeth--?

JB: Larmond. She was the first female director of industry services. She would have been the director before Jim Stewart. I believe that in Vancouver there was some belief that there was the crack in the bottom of one of the shipping bins and some of the grain was leaking through. It went undetected for a period of time. And the elevator—it's believed—knew about it but didn't say anything about it until somebody finally found it. For me, those were just stories. I never was personally involved in it. Most of those things were kept hush-hush to only those that needed to know about it, so they're just stories that came out of it. Whether it actually happened or not, I couldn't verify that. Someone like Gordy Mandigo might have been able to allude more to that.

NP: And Dennis, too. I didn't ask him because I just sort of wondered where those records went. I can understand if nothing ever came of it, why hush-hush. But eventually, if there were charges, and I assume they were few, that they would have gone through the court system and then been public.

JB: Or there would have been corrective action taken and all the parties would have come to some sort of--. I don't know what the logistics of it are. At some point in time, I know that on the Prairies there was issues about documentation and stuff being recycled, so people were getting credit for things that had already been unloaded or been loaded. And I know that we used to go

out and do audits, and they'd shut the elevator down. And actually, Jim Vescio was one of them that went there and actually opened the scales. Nobody was in the elevator except him with and RCMP officer. And they literally closed it down. But I don't know, after it goes into the legal system, I'm not sure what happens or what occurs with those. You'd have to speak to someone like maybe Gordy Miles or someone like that today, or historically it would have been Gordy Mandigo or Len Seguin, someone like that. As to what the repercussions were and what they would do. I know that they're fined, I know that there's law that they're breaking so those things would be taken into account. But I never knew what the penalties were.

[1:45:20]

NP: From a historian's standpoint, where I'd put myself as a lay researcher, it's interesting. It's interesting to know, even not the names, but just know how the system can go wrong and why it's important that it doesn't. And how it's prevented from continuing. So, I'm curious from that perspective. I'm not looking for--.

JB: One of the best stories, in that vein, I was only on the job a few years and I got to go out of town on an audit—it was my first out-of-town audit—and coincidentally, or on purpose, I'm not sure, but it was the only time I ever travelled with my brother. I never travelled with him again. In fact, we rarely worked together. I mean they did that on purpose. They kept us kind of separated. We did work occasionally, and we worked overtime together, but for the most part that was one of the very few times. The reason why we went there was because there was a huge fraud issue there.

NP: Where was this?

JB: In Toronto. The elevator doesn't even exist anymore. If you go to Porter Airlines, you'll see there's a Canada Malt plant, beside that was Maple Leaf Mills. It's been since knocked down. But there was a huge, huge issue going on there with--. The way it was described to me—I was coming in third-party just to do audits, just to make sure after the fact that they were back on the straight and narrow. But I do know that there were mangers involved, supervisors were involved, truckers were involved, police were involved. Everybody was involved. It was a huge scandal. What I understood was they were bringing the trucks out because they unloaded their grains from trucks. They would bring them out in front of the gate early, early in the morning. Then they'd come in, and they'd unload, and they'd go back out, and they'd load the grain back in and come back in again so they'd get a double receipt for it. And everybody was taking money off the top.

Finally, somebody caught onto it. At the end of the year the paperwork didn't work out with the stocks that were in the elevator. Someone twigged to it, and then there was big court cases and suits and law and every--. But the Commission was called into it because there was obviously the shenanigans that were going on. And we did audits there every year. Normally they were in

cycles of 30 months, but we did theirs every year. I was involved in two of them. The very first one we were called down, special team crew, to go down and do this weigh-over. You're not to talk to the elevatoring staff. You're to go in, run the elevator, run the audit, do it independently. They'll do the physical stuff, but you're not to discuss any of this. I understand one gentleman committed suicide. There was people in the courts that were involved and people higher up in the organization that were involved. In all the years, aside from the one I was telling you about—Jimmy Vescio and the Prairies—those are the only ones that were--. That was the most significant one, and funny it came early in my career.

NP: What did you learn from that?

JB: That the CGC had to be there. Because it wasn't enacted, parts of the Act weren't--. The legislation wasn't enacted past Thunder Bay, so we weren't involved in all the operations in those areas. So, they ran independently, which leads me to believe that when you let them work independently, you know, if they can do a little bit of this and a little bit of that--. I mean it was always a joke, as a weighman, that on inward grain the government weighman balanced the beam. The elevator guy would set it up for you, and you'd balance the last little bit. On shipping it was the other way around, but you both watched each other. But that was kind of the check and balance.

I recall that it was always they balanced the beam, and then the elevator guy, just as you're about to write the weight down, would tap it over 10 kilograms or 10 pounds—give it a little bit more or a little bit less, drop it back 10 pounds, 20 pounds. "What happened?" "Oh, no, no, it's balanced." Let the grain go. And of course you can't put it back in the scale again. And they'd say, "Well no that's--." So that was our job, to make sure that once it was balanced in the middle of the nose iron that that was balanced. And you both agreed on it. You both wrote the weight down. But it was always if you turned your back for a second, they'd tap it back a little bit. Say, "Well, it's only 10 pounds." But it's 10 pounds over a whole shipment, which might be 1,000 drafts, over a season might be 10,000 drafts. The funny part was, it's not like an elevator operator was going to get a cut at the end of the year. But their pride of working for their organization and stuff, just, you know, they had to work it.

[1:50:06]

And a lot of times, it was production. They just didn't have time to do stuff. We were always a part of that. But when they went to electronics, it kind of fudged that need because it's being recorded. So then you had to talk about--. Well, it wasn't the elevator operator, it's the machine that may not be balancing the scale anymore properly. So you had to actually understand the language of the scale tapes and read into it what the scale was physically doing. Because even though you're down here looking at a monitor, the scale is still upstairs weighing the grain off. And it's no different than standing there with a scale jockey and opening and closing the garner.

NP: Because of your background in weighing as opposed to inspection, this may not be the question for you, but it comes up all the time in talking to several staff people—both with companies and with the Commission—and that is the whole idea of blending and it being a fine line between the tolerances. When you're legitimately blending a grain that's being shipped, you're allowed a certain tolerance, and it's wise business practice to get it to the maximum limit.

JB: Well, an elevator operator would say, "The tolerance is there for me. That's what I get to push to, to the tolerance. And if I can get it a little over the tolerance, so be it." And it's the inspector's responsibility to make sure it falls within the tolerance. Not being an inspector, I can't even speak to the technology or how they go about doing that. But yeah, there's obviously tolerances in everything that they do, and it's the inspector's job to make sure they stay within those tolerances. When it gets on the line that's what makes the inspector's job so difficult, because is it over or is it not, because it could be one kernel of grain, or one piece of something, that could make it the other thing, right? If that piece of stuff disappears, well, then it's okay. If it stays in the sample, it's good, right? And the elevator guy would like to see it disappear, and the inspector wants to make sure this is the sample.

The next sample from that exact same car, can be taken right beside it, could be completely different in terms of that one kernel of grain. Might be a totally different grade. But this is the piece that I inspect, and that's the official sample. It will be what it is. But I wasn't an inspector so, but a piece of it. We had tolerances as well on the weighing side. I mean the scales were allowed to work within certain tolerances. Those were the things that generated—for here in Thunder Bay in particular—would generate the investigations. Garnet had his own tolerance between shipment from here and a receipt. And that's the way he would check elevators. He would check weighmen. He would do all of that. And he made us accountable for all of those. It may or may not be anything, but you were held to account for everything that you did if it came outside those tolerances. He'd be the guy to talk about what the tolerances were and how he came to those, but--.

NP: Okay. [Laughs] We still haven't passed Halifax. All right, so we're moving now with the next one. This is my quiz here to keep myself alert. So, Baie-Comeau would be next?

JB: Baie-Comeau, I only visited. I never actually worked there. My brother did. I believe he did an audit there. I visited there with Gordy Mandigo, when he became the chief inspector, and I became the trainer. We went there just to tour through. Gentleman by the name of Richard Fortin, who was the manager of weighing at the time, he introduced us to all the staff and to what they were doing. But I never actually worked there. I worked in Saint John. I did inward cars there.

NP: And what do you remember about that elevator? Or operation?

JB: It's exactly the kind of operation you'd expect from the Maritimes. It was pretty laid back. I didn't have--. I wasn't loading a boat, so there was--. It was a special order for cars, and they needed government supervision. The buyer or the seller wanted government supervision of it. Very unique elevator. The car shed was like halfway across the set of tracks and way over there, and they moved the grain all the way to the elevator. And it was manual scales. There was two of us that went, and we spent a week or 10 days there. The thing I remember about that was one of the elevator guys halfway through the trip brought in scallops for us, fresh scallops, and he cooked them on the scale floor with us. Put them in a pot and salted the water and did whatever he had to do. And we had fresh scallops. He just caught them in the morning and brought them in for us. And I'll always remember that. That and James Ready beer. [Laughing]

[1:55:10]

NP: What would they be handling there?

JB: It would have been eastern grain I believe. It could have been a special shipment of western. God, that's so many years ago.

NP: Or barley? For the beer you were drinking?

JB: No, I don't think so. It might have been. I know some of the barley went through Toronto. I don't think it went too far east. A lot of barley went through Thunder Bay to Jefferson Junction for Anheuser-Busch. I don't know if they had a lot of barley down there or not.

NP: Where was the junction? Jefferson Junction?

JB: That's the name of the city that it went to. That's where Anheuser-Busch--. That's where we would have shipped it, and then they'd disseminate it from there in the States. But it all went through Canada Malt. And when we shipped our barley from the terminals, it would have been two-row, six-row barley, whatever they needed for malting barely. We shipped that for years in the wintertime, lots of times, out of Thunder Bay. But I remember it went to--. I know it was for Anheuser-Busch. Special orders.

NP: When you were talking about Baie-Comeau—and it was only very brief because you had only visited there—I can remember someone from the central office, I think it was the inspection staff. I could have the person wrong, but we do have it on tape. One of the responsibilities of the Grain Commission is the cleanliness of the elevators--.

JB: That would have been the inspection staff.

NP: And he had talked about at least up to your knees and possibly higher of grain dust. Because we were talking about how well-maintained or how clean these places were kept, and I thought it would just be sort of standard and everybody was the same. But he said, "No." Even in Thunder Bay you would have elevators that pay more attention to that than others.

JB: Oh, absolutely.

NP: So, as you go along and you're talking about these elevators, you can also comment on, you know, the--. [Laughing]

JB: Okay. Halifax and Saint John. I mean, let's put it this way, Saint John--. Halifax was not the cleanest elevator in the world. That's for sure, because it was a small, independent elevator, and they had their staff--. Basically, they hired people—farmers—to do the trimming and stuff. Then when the boat was finished, they'd laid them off, and they were gone. Pretty much that was the standard for a lot of the places. Bay Ports was the same way. They didn't have trimmers like we have here that you'd call up, and they're professionals. These guys were professionals to the extent that they were farmers with nothing to do in the off-season, and they came in and trimmed the boats.

NP: When you say Bay Ports, was that actually a name of a place?

JB: No, that's Chatham, the Chatham area. Generally speaking, the Bay Ports--. Sarnia, Collingwood, Owen Sound, they called that the Bay Port area. That was the region, the Bay Port. So anyway, Saint John's was--. I remember when we left, if you didn't get out of the elevator by five o'clock, they shut the lights in the elevator--the hoist down. They turned the main power off. I remember one night we had to walk down in the dark, the weighman and I, because the government guys are always the last guys out of there because we had to finish up the paperwork. The elevator guys, once the thing was finished, they were gone. But I remember one time in particular we had to walk halfway down the spiral staircase in the dark because they'd shut the power off and everybody was gone.

But I mean they were as clean as clean could be. You had to put it in perspective. In the '70s and '80s, all elevators were dusty and dirty. They had aspiration systems that were not to the same technology that we have now. They were fairly clean. Back then they had cyclones, and basically it was a thing that picked up the dust and blew it somewhere else. It didn't really help much. But, at the same time, we also didn't wear dust masks, hardhats, and anything else. That's just the way it was. You worked in an elevator. It was dusty. It was dirty. Get used to it. Pretty much everywhere I went.

Cargill Grain was one of the first ones that I remember having a real high level of safety when they first came in. Their cleanliness requirements were a little bit higher. But each of the companies had their own level of cleanliness. And it varied sometime depending on what their workload was like. You have to remember, back when I first started, the wintertime they loaded cars. I mean, we were just about as busy in the winter as we were in the summer because we loaded cars to Montreal all winter. But that's when they cleaned up the elevator and got it ready for the springtime. And then eventually they stopped doing that. But the cyclones didn't go away yet, right? So that piles of stuff on top of the roof and in the basement. It became a health and safety issue. And then as health and safety standards started to elevate, then the elevators became more stringent, more require--. Then things like ISO [International Organization for Standardisation] came in where they had to meet standards to meet their requirements. Places like Canada Malt, you could eat off the floor in Canada Malt because of the business that they did. Always. Everywhere you went in their elevator it was immaculate.

[2:00:21]

Manitoba Pool? Immaculate. You could work there, anywhere in the elevator. They had guys, cleaning-up guys. They were kind of like the family operation. People loved to work there. Government guys liked to work there. They were more of a family. They were still a production, but they got their production out of treating their people, what they felt was, like family. Other companies were more business oriented and less employee-oriented, and so they fluctuated between whether they got cooperation or not. But most Manitoba Pool employees were pretty happy employees. They treated them very well. They treated us government people very well. I remember when I first weighed, that's where I learned how to weigh because the elevator guy would be weighing in the thing, and I had two scales of my own. He'd weigh two, and I'd weigh two, and we'd keep track of it. And if you got experienced enough, he'd go for a coffee, and you could bin a car or two. We just worked collaboratively, and there was never any problems.

NP: Are there any of those Manitoba Pool elevator guys still around?

JB: Well the Mallons are probably still around. There'd be some huge--.

NP: Yeah, we've interviewed them.

JB: Have you, yeah? [Inaudible] Charbonneau.

NP: I was thinking of the weigh staff.

JB: Oh, for the elevator workers? Hmm. I imagine they are, but it's been so long. It's been 17 years since I worked in the elevators, I wouldn't know the names anymore. I mean some of the guys I worked with I know are still alive. Vicky Foster, who worked on our staff, married--. I can't think of his name. They all had nicknames. I called him T-Bone, but I can't remember what his last name was. And I know he's still alive, I seen him at Home Depot. But most in Manitoba--. Charbonneau, I mean I see him but he's getting pretty old now—been around a long time. They're all around Mallon's age. But that's the guys I remember. I wasn't in the elevators later on, so I don't know who the ones that were there when they changed names.

NP: Then we're moving—and I get a little bit mixed up—is there anything--? No, Quebec would be next. Bunge.

JB: Yeah, I worked--. What did I do in Bunge? I did a weigh-over. I think I worked in a weigh-over in Bunge. Mostly went there for administration, for training, and stuff like that. I was there on business, and we had some of our first official--. Or, sorry, second official national weigh meeting—because we never even had meetings before Gordy Mandigo—was in Quebec City, and that's where Bunge is. We did some work at Bunge as part of the training and part of the meetings.

NP: Anything strike you about the elevator?

JB: Very busy. Very high production, stand alone, unique. The gentleman that ran the place, Guy Saint Lorange, apparently was quite the character. I really had little or no doings with him, but he was--. Apparently what Guy said pretty much controlled everything that happened in that region. What Bunge did, what Guy did, that's what everybody did. That's my understanding, I only met the gentleman just to say hello to him and have a bit of a meeting.

NP: Would he still be around you think?

JB: Gee, I don't know. He would be quite the storyteller I could tell you. He's got a lot--.

NP: Saint Lorange?

JB: Saint Lorange, yes. Saint Lorange.

NP: I'll check that out. We interviewed Patrick Chandler. I visited Quebec and normally where there's an elevator, I bring a recorder and interviewed him there. And now that I think about it, I think I was asking him if he could set something up with me with somebody from Bunge. And I have another trip to Quebec City, so maybe I'll re-establish contact.

JB: Well, Guy is obviously no longer with Bunge, but I think he's still alive. I haven't heard of anything other than that. I mean most of the people that work there now--. I don't know if you know Martin? They're back to my days, and he's still the manager of inspection there, and he worked all those back in the day. He worked all those elevators.

NP: He managed to escape my clutches. Because I initially had sent him a--.

JB: Oh, is that right? He's a pretty aloof guy. He's not--.

NP: So, he put me in touch with Patrick instead. And Patrick was good. He was just new. I'll try him as well.

JB: Another person that was my colleague, a really good friend of mine—but he doesn't live in Montreal or anything. He moved to one of the little enclaves. He called it the farm originally, but I think he finally built a place out there—Reynold--. I'm trying to think of his last name, good grief.

[2:05:16]

NP: Patrick or Martin would know?

JB: Yup. Reynold. It'll come to me before we leave. But he doesn't live in the area anymore. He was my counterpart. He was an inspector. He came up through the inspection side, obviously, because they didn't have weighers originally. But he was the operations manager for the eastern region before he retired.

[Audio pauses]

NP: Okay, back at it. Just off-tape we were talking about the regional set up for the Grain Commission, and it changed over the time that you were working for them. So, what can you comment on there?

JB: Well, my previous recollection was that there was five regions. So, there was Eastern region—which would have been the Montreal area—the Bay Port region, Thunder Bay region, and then there would have been Winnipeg headquarters, and then there was the Prairie region, and then the Pacific region. Around about the time that I was moving into management, I'm not sure what the timeframe would have been, there was a decision to reduce it. We weren't sure exactly what that would look like, but they needed to reduce it. There was thoughts about reducing it to one region and then anything in between that and five. The

conclusion was that it probably should be two regions, but to make that jump all at once was probably unreasonable for the industry and for the organization itself.

So, the decision was made to reduce it to three regions. Montreal took over responsibility for what was historically the Bay Port region and the original Eastern region. Thunder Bay took over responsibility for the Prairies and Churchill and Thunder Bay. Then Vancouver, of course the operation was so huge there, that just taking care of the Pacific region was--. I'm sorry, they took over a portion of the Prairies too, the most western province.

NP: Alberta?

JB: Alberta, yeah. The Thunder Bay region was responsible from Weyburn east to Thunder Bay, and Eastern region was responsible for everything east of Thunder Bay. And at the same time, they reduced the management teams in the region and went from a directorship—there was a director for each one of the five regions—and as each of those people retired or moved on, they changed the management chemistry to what they called a regional management team. There was no one person to say, "This is what we're going to do." It was a team of four: Manager of inspection services, manager of weighing services, manager of operation services, and manager of administration. We had to work jointly to come up with decisions on what would affect the region. And if it was a technical thing, then obviously the expert would have been the manager in that technical aspect. If it was an operational thing--. But we had to discuss them first because there's always implications on everything you do. It was complicated, some would say it may or may not have worked as well as some had thought. But what it did do is it connected Winnipeg more with the regions because you had a more direct route to your counterpart, who was your boss. Everybody had a boss in Winnipeg, instead of just one person having a boss in Winnipeg.

The belief at the time was when they went to the directors, because I lived through that piece too—they started as coordinators, and they became directors when Jack Robertson would have been in Thunder Bay. When they did that, it was because they said that Winnipeg couldn't possibly dictate into the regions about what was going to happen when you have no idea what happens in this region. And each region is unique unto itself. In fact, the elevators themselves are unique in how to deal with them. So, the decision was that it would be better to have a director there because they had an ear to the rail, so to speak, in the region. And then they could communicate that to Winnipeg and then decisions could be made coordinated.

They believed that there was too much autonomy in the regions at some point in time, and they said, "Well this is no good because we can't tell you what to do anymore! You keep telling us that we don't know what it is we're doing." So, then they decided to go back to the management team and then have them report directly to Winnipeg. I had my boss in Winnipeg, and Al Coffey would have had his boss, obviously the chief inspector, and so forth. It worked like that for quite a while.

[2:10:06]

I thought it was fairly effective. Some of the teams struggled, I believe, in some of the other regions, getting the chemistry to work and communicating between themselves. But I had the good fortune of having four great people to work with. We did a lot of hard work. We had a lot of fun. If there was any place that I would say it worked well--. I think the other regions in time they gelled a little bit later on. I think Thunder Bay gelled quickly for whatever reason. I'm not sure what the recipe was that made it work. We maybe were just lucky to have four people that got together that were agreeable.

It wasn't always easy. It's hard to make a decision when there's no final say. You can't just go and plead your case and have someone say, "Okay, this is what we're going to do then." You had to fight it out, you had to argue. And if you couldn't satisfy it in the region then you had to take that decision up above and then bring in the management team there, which was also a four-team management team there. So, it had its difficulties, but I think the results from it were really effective because it was very inclusive.

NP: Can you think of a situation where it was particularly difficult to arrive at a decision?

JB: The cross-training thing was a--. [Telephone rings] Sorry. **[Audio pauses]** Sorry about that. Where was I? I lost my--.

NP: You were saying that the cross-training thing was an example.

JB: The cross-training was a good example of having to work out some of the difficulties because there was the technical history and the pride that those individuals have, and that manager has, in his discipline. The weighers on the other side was the same thing. To try to get a consensus amongst us about what was the best thing to do was difficult to do. But we worked at it. We worked hard. It wasn't easy. It's not like it was perfect. It wasn't. Our group of four, we came up together which was one good thing. I shouldn't say that because when we first started Garnet was the manager of operations, and so he was a generation ahead of us. But when we got to the people that were around the same age in the group--. Every Friday we would have our regional meeting which would prepare us for the next week. We'd plan for the next week. "This is what I think we're doing in operations. This is the technical stuff that's coming through. This is the training that's going to happen," and so on and so forth.

We used to call it the Fight Club. We'd close the door and the four of us would get in there, and we would hammer it out. We didn't leave until we had some agreement. Never once do I ever remember anyone on the team ever leaving the room saying, "Yeah, well, I didn't want to do it, but he had to do it." We came out of it, we had a consensus, and we compromised. Always,

always we had some type, someone would have to compromise. In the end, I was the very huge advocate for the cross-training. It kind of was my baby. I'd started it when I did training, and I was a very huge proponent of it. But in the end, the truth of it was it just was not the best thing for the organization at the time. So, I needed to concede at some point. But we took it to the fullest extent. We had many national meetings about it, and other regions were having similar issues.

What it did do was it cemented the operations people. It cemented the inspection people because they had their meetings as well, right? And so being able to maintain the same operations in each of the regions was a lot easier to do because you had those entities in each one of the regions now. Whereas before it was more difficult because they evolved on their own. And if you remember in the conversation earlier, that became an issue in all regions because there was nobody being accountable for what was happening. We had our national meetings. We had our regional meetings, and we had regional bosses. You created a family within your operation but also in your region. It expanded it. Before we would have only had the regional family. Sure, we were part of the Canadian Grain--. But we're from Thunder Bay. But when you made it an operation, or a technical aspect, you had to share that information in the regions and so that gave the chiefs chances to say, "Well, no, we're not doing that anymore. I know you used to do that there, but we need to change how we're going to do this." I thought in that way it was really effective.

[2:14:40]

NP: Can we look at, then, the next change which would have been just before you retired? What transpired there? I mean big, big time change.

JB: Well, it's not a secret that the industry had been pushing for a long, long time, that they believed that some of the services we provided were valuable, but not necessarily necessary anymore. I remember—I meant to say this at the beginning, and I don't want to go back too far, but—the first week I was on the job I was at Pool 15, and I remember my boss, the walking boss, came out and said, "Hi Jim, how ya doing?" He knew my dad. He says, "Good to have you on the job." He said, "This is only a summer job for you, right?" And I said, "Yeah, yeah. Just here for a couple of months, and we'll see how it goes." And he says, "Well that's good, because," he says, "weighing's going to be gone within the next couple of years." And I lived that belief for almost the rest of my career until just recently when they finally did away with weighing. But I made a full career out of what they said was going to be gone in a year or two.

The industry had been pushing for the longest time with the belief, especially when the scales went electronic and the need for us to be there all the time. And then the organizations, the elevators obviously, the companies, were handling their own grain and so, "Why do I need a third party when I'm handling my own product? I want to ship it. I don't want to ship it. I want to cheat myself. I'm not hurting anybody but myself." So, there was lots of pressure, and it grew. And then of course the political will was there at

one point in time, so the organization as a whole decided that they were going to amend the Act, which was the only way that they could change it. And I still think it goes back to starting with the exemptions and how are we going to power our way through these times when we can't provide services and reduction in staff where we didn't always have enough people. What are we going to do when we don't? We can't tell a boat that they can't load. I mean there's $10,000 every hour sitting out there waiting to get grain. You can't be the one responsible for it. I think that that was another driving force. It was just the right time. It was the time to do it.

NP: What did they do? What change did they make then? What the industry calls the inward weighing or inspection was no longer being done.

JB: Well, I think it goes back a little bit farther. They started with exemptions. For those times when we couldn't provide service then they would offer an exemption. And the elevator had criteria that they had to meet and specific reporting. There was a bit of a transition. It wasn't a shut off and tomorrow you guys aren't doing it. Two reasons for that. Obviously, the Commission had to get itself in line for the long-term change, but the industry also had to get--. They were on the upswing, right? They had to pick up all that service that we were providing. They had to cover up for that, to compensate for it. And I'm not sure that they really knew what that was really going to look like until they were actually into it. The Commission and the industry, they spoke at length and came up with a plan that they thought would allow them to transition it a little bit slower. I mean, it still came fairly quickly. Lot of animosity amongst the staff, reductions in the number of staff, people who lost their jobs. It was the first time that the organization had ever gone through anything where full-time employees actually had the potential of losing their positions.

My personal opinion, I thought it was done extremely benevolently and with as much open transparency as one could possibly do and with as much caring and benevolence as an organization can provide. But, when you're on the other side of that layoff slip, it doesn't ever equate that way. Very difficult for the management team because we all grew up with the people that we were now telling that their jobs were now being eliminated. Big hurt in terms of pride because everything that you believed was important, someone's now telling you is no longer important. How can that possibly be? And everything in between. You can imagine what it was like. There was a lot of animosity. We were trying to go through the process, which is difficult in itself, just logistically. And to do it when people now got their backs up and do not want to cooperate with anything of what you're doing. There's the haves and the have-nots, and they staged it out.

In the full course of time, I think people are either working in their discipline still or happy that they got their retirement. Some of them got--. Some of their contractual incentives were there, so they picked up there. But it was a very difficult four or five years that we went through, and it was slow to wrap up. Some would say, "Well you dragged it on too--. Why didn't you just do something quicker and get it over with? This is like pulling off a bandage." But we thought it was the most benevolent way to do

it is to slowly do it. And I think a lot of it was by attrition. People were pretty close to ready to go. For them it worked out fairly well. I'm not sure they went on their own terms. Mine worked out that I was going at 55. It's debatable whether I would have went at 55 or not, but I certainly wasn't hurt by it. I had a full career in and for me, it was the organization was changing, and it was probably time for me to move on anyway.

[2:20:08]

NP: So, what--. Because we were talking about the administrative set-up, and we were looking at the high levels. We had five regions which became three, and then there must have been a regional shuffling at the time they did all these--.

JB: What I'd said originally was they were going to go to two, but instead of doing that they went to three because they thought that two was too much of a jump. And most would say that Thunder Bay is the centre of the grain industry. Everything goes west or go east. They've always talked about it being east or west and everything in between was more logistics for the Commission. It's always been the eastern grain industry and the western grain industry, and so they decided to go with the two. That was a bit difficult for the management teams. Thunder Bay and Fort William-Port Arthur, we always had the history that we were the centre of the Earth when it came to the CGC, and all of a sudden now we're in the same boat that the Bay Ports were when they were assimilated, or the Prairies were assimilated.

We lost some of our responsibilities, and it went to Montreal. What they went down to was two, and Thunder Bay became a service centre. We had a service centre in Thunder Bay, Chatham, and a couple of other places, but Montreal was now the headquarters. They had their RMT—regional management team—and they now assumed all these new responsibilities for places like Thunder Bay. You have to appreciate that Thunder Bay's workload had decreased considerably because most of the work was lakers and inwards. Of course, that was being eliminated through the legislative change, which in itself was a transition that came in two phases as well. It was a phase-in for them and a phase-out for us. So now, I was just talking to someone the other day there, and I think we'll be down to like 19 staff. And when I was working at the waterfront in the heyday, I think we had 250 CGC employees, just in Fort William-Port Arthur.

Now it's two regions. Vancouver's responsible for all of the Prairies, and Montreal's responsible for Churchill and Thunder Bay east. And they go through their RMT, and they have just supervisors in the work unit. And most recently they've compacted even one step farther in the last little month. I don't know if I should speak to that. It wasn't under my purview.

NP: What did they do? As far as you know.

JB: Well, the people that reported directly to me when I left—Bob Crow, Mark Lalonde—the operations supervisors were responsible for the inspection staff. Of course, originally, they were responsible for weighers, inspectors, and anything that was operational at the waterfront. Then they went down to just outward inspection, so they only had the inspection staff. Now their jobs have been, as I understand it—don't quote me on this because I don't know what the terminology would have been, whether they've been surplused or whether they were given options or what—but their jobs have been eliminated. They're going to staff up what they call a PI-5, which would have been the old inspector, walking boss for the inspection staff, because it's just inspection services now. They believe that you don't really need the operational people, that can be done from Montreal.

They're going back, in Thunder Bay basically, to the old system where it's just inspection. You report to a PI-5 and they'll probably do some of the paperwork and daily housekeeping stuff, some performance reviewing work and things like that. That's my gist on it, but again it's not under my purview.

NP: And the inspection staff would be doing whatever's left of weighing, which would be essentially weighing for shipping? Ocean-going ships?

JB: Good point. I'm sorry there is still two weighers. If you still want to term it. There's still the systems inspector, which is the person who tests the scale, Ted, and Bill is the person who does the oversight for outward weighing. There's two weighers in Thunder Bay, I forgot about that.

NP: Bill Graham?

JB: Bill Graham, yeah. And so that's their responsibility, and they both report directly to Winnipeg. Ah sorry, that's not true. They may actually now report to Montreal as well. I'm not sure how that one works.

NP: Had you already gone before the switch had been made over to the Montreal head office?

JB: No, I was part of the transition. I transitioned my job to Dennis Tongly, who's my counterpart. He would have replaced Reynold. He came in as a young person from Vancouver. He was the operation supervisor with Reynold, and then when Reynold retired, I think they were the first group. Dennis Tongly took his position, competed for it and was successful. He was young into the position. He was young in the job, period, for Montreal. Fully bilingual, moved from Vancouver out there. He mentored with Reynold as long as he could, and then he took Reynold's job over. And then when we made the transition for Thunder Bay, I mentored him on operations in Thunder Bay, and then he took the whole nine yards.

[2:25:13]

NP: So, this is your take on it. That person or persons operating then out of Montreal had done field trips to Thunder Bay?

JB: Yes, yeah.

NP: Any idea of their reactions to the Thunder Bay operations? Any, “Oh, gee!” Because most of them had probably never been to Thunder Bay.

JB: Martin, who’s more my generation—probably just the beginning of my generation, he came in a little bit later but he’s still probably in his fifties—he would have had an understanding. He probably came to Thunder Bay for meetings earlier and that. But Dennis Tongly had probably never been here in his life. In fact, he admitted, he said, “Wow, this is a lot bigger city than I kind of envisioned. I thought it was more like an eastern township, a small little place.” But he was really quite enamored by the city which he found surprising. He wasn’t expecting that to be the case. He thought he was going to come here and have to live in some tiny little hotel somewhere. He found out that, really, we’re fairly a major centre.

Anyway, long story short, because they’d evolved totally different--. He came from Vancouver, went to Montreal, wasn’t even really in Montreal for very long before he started to take on some of the other responsibilities. But I think he was surprised. He never got the full appreciation of what Thunder Bay did because by the time he started to assimilate, there was no inward weighing going on. We were going through exemptions. When I left, most of the labour-relations stuff went with me. We closed off a lot of the stuff. And that was the whole plan. Jim Stewart did similar at a higher level. Kind of took all the bad news with him so that the new people could start afresh. I think that Dennis was--. Dennis Einhorn did the same thing with Vancouver. He kind of cleaned up a lot of the stuff that was outstanding for years, all this hardship, and kind of left them with a clean slate when he left, not perfectly clean, but at least in better shape. But the last little while was just so many things, so many layers of hardship and difficulties and disgruntled employees and changes. Just people in general not too happy with what was going on and afraid for their futures. They didn’t know what was next.

NP: And, of course, they paid you big bucks to deal with these hassles didn’t they?

JB: Uh, no. [Laughing]

NP: No bonuses for outplacement?

JB: Mm-mm.

NP: When you think about it, eh, what a pressure that is on you people?

JB: It was, it was very, very, very difficult on us. We were fortunate that the organization had wisdom way back when—and I still say that might even go back to Dennis Wallace—that they hired HR people whose job it was responsible to make sure that keeping the health of the organization as a whole and to make sure that people didn't just bowl ahead, which is always the easiest, but not necessarily the best approach. And I think people like Doug Langrell and Christine Rogers and those people that worked with us and made sure that our temperaments didn't get in the way of our decision making and our need to get this thing over with. They made sure we walked through it properly and took the right steps, and we thought of the organization. The organization has always thought of itself as a people organization anyway. We always thought of ourselves as one large family--through all of the changes of administration and managers and directors and chief operating--. It's always change the person into the organization.

Gordy Miles is probably one of the best ones that can probably speak to that, that he never appreciated exactly what the organization--. Because he came from the grain industry, he was a businessman coming in. I think that he, a number of times, had said, "Yeah, it changed my thinking of how to run the organization. Put the people first." Now he'd heard about it and talked about it, but he'd never really seen it in play.

NP: Is he still there or did he retire too?

JB: No, as far as I know he's still there, yeah.

NP: Yeah. I've always felt middle management, which you would have been, has really the toughest row to hoe. For one thing you're here and dealing with it day to day, and secondly you know these people.

JB: Yeah.

NP: Whereas the more senior, you've usually been away from--. You either didn't come from the place, or you'd been away from it, and so you just--. You're not dealing with your friends.

[2:29:57]

JB: Being at arm's length--. If you're away, you don't see it. You don't see it in their faces. You don't talk to them everyday. You're not the one responsible for handing the letter. But Winnipeg was very understanding. I mean Jim Stewart was an incredible director. I don't know if I could have worked for anybody better than him. Considering the time that we went through, and what he had to do—and his breadth of knowledge was absolutely stellar.

NP: And where did he come from?

JB: He came up through the organization. He came from out east, or Montreal. I believe. I think he became the director out there, then moved and took over for Elizabeth Larmond, who was kind of surprised because Montreal wasn't the mover and the shaker of the organization at that time--probably exceeded everybody's expectations as a manager. I know that him and Gord Miles worked so closely together and were on the same page all the time. But he did some incredible stuff over the years, and I know that he took the weight of the world on for a long, long time there. As we went through this process, he was the one that would say, "Nope, we're not going to do it in a week. We're going to do this over three weeks, and this is the reason why we're going to do it." And as much as I know in his heart of hearts he just wanted to move forward and get this done, he held the line. He was kind of the core of the organization, and he took a lot with him when he left.

I would say there's been a few of them over the years that have done that. Jack Robertson, there was always a fear when he left because he had such a breadth of knowledge, and always seemed like he could answer any question. He knew everything about everything. But then when Rick came in. He did the same thing. It's incredible how they did that.

NP: In retrospect, do you think--. Going through a situation like this—and I've worked for government for a number of years, through downsizing which seemed to be ever ongoing—it takes a while for people to just get emotionally adjusted and look at things from a more practical viewpoint and sort of get on with their lives. Do you think you've come to that point? Do you think that there are people that will never understand what it was like to be you during this time, because we all think about what it's like to be me when we're going through situations.

JB: I don't know. My three colleagues, we probably have the same thing to say. After a few, couple, three, four years of being in the job and then moving into some of the more difficult times when the directors finally left, and so on and so forth, most people said, "So there's a promotion coming up. I'll do anything, but I don't want Jim Ball's job." They would've done anything not to have my position. But when I think back, Jack Robertson did my position plus he did inspection services and weighing services. He did the whole nine yards, right? I know he had a little bit of insulation, and there wasn't as much rhetoric, and certainly not as much transparency in the way things operated. It was a little easier to direct things and make things happen without--. With us it

was not. You couldn't just tell someone, "You have to do it." You have to explain it. You had to quantify it. You had to have meetings about it, and you had to record it, and do all those things.

There was a lot of things came in during that period that made it difficult. It was a very difficult job at a very difficult time. But very rewarding because if you did do something right, and someone did, you could feel good about it because you knew you were a piece of that. It was rewarding that way. I have a lot of really good friends that work in some--. I always talk about working the trenches, and I certainly don't want to say its like--. I'm not saying I'm World War I or World War II, I'm not saying I'm at that level, but when you're working in the trenches with other people you have a great appreciation, and they have a great appreciation. And I think that's where you get your uplift. That's the people that keep blowing wind under your wings. It is the people that are in the same boat as you and recognize that.

And Jim Stewart was that in spades. He was a tremendous motivator. He did what he said. He didn't expect you to do anything he wouldn't already done himself or done twice as much himself. He never expected any more, and if you couldn't do it, he wanted to hear that. If you could do it, he wanted to know how. I always felt like he listened to everything we had to say. He didn't always do it our way, but he would explain why. But he took time to do it which was phenomenal. I don't know how he--. Because his job was so encompassing, like he was just on the go all the time. How he ever--. He would never say no to a meeting. You could walk into his office at anytime. It was just an open door. And Jack Robertson, actually, when I think about it, was probably the first person I ever seen do that and that's--. Gord Mandigo and--. So that's how that all came about.

[2:35:02]

NP: When you look back, or when you look forward, do you feel--. Or not to put it in a yes or no phrasing, will history prove that these changes—and I'm thinking not so much of the administrative changes but the changes in how the inward weighing and so on—history will bear out that that was not only necessary but actually intelligent?

JB: I think so. I think in the full course of time. It'll be difficult because they're already starting to talk about, "Well, we had these difficulties, and this shipment wasn't quite right, and that one's not that." We had those before, just that nobody had advertised them or talked about it. There's still probably some sour grapes out there. I mean, the truth of it is we're never going to--. Well, I shouldn't say never. We're back to where we started from basically, so I can never say never. But I would say that it was going to happen eventually. I'm kind of glad it happened when I was there because if they had waited until my generation was gone it would have been much more complicated to do. We could take all that dirty energy with us when we left.

And it’s no accident that the three of us retired. I mean some of us were just hanging in there until the end, but it’s no surprise that a lot of people left in that period, because if they had waited until all that experience and knowledge disappeared—not just the operations people, but the Jeff Tibonis, and all those people that brought all that experience and history with them but knew where we were headed—if they didn’t do that at the time. So, it left all this opportunity--. To me, for the Commission itself, it’s the brushfire. Burn it all down, and then new growth grows. Because we weren’t growing, we were just stagnating. People were struggling, little or no opportunities. Well now, it’s just starting. I’m hearing now that there’s PI-5 job coming up, so someone’s going to get a chance or an opportunity to get a promotion. So now it’s starting to rebuild again. They’ll grow that pride and that--. Some people may have to retire yet before that happens because they’re still heartbroken by what happened. But I think that the younger people coming up will have an opportunity to move forward. And I think that as an industry, I think we’re where we should be, and it’ll probably change again yet still.

NP: And I would assume the demise of the Wheat Board made a lot of this possible?

JB: Yeah. Oh yeah. Absolutely. I think the jury’s still out on whether that’s beneficial or not. Certainly beneficial for the business, for the companies, but we’ll see if it’s beneficial for Canada as a whole. If it’s going to make the grain industry better, I don’t know.

NP: What do you think that issues are there? That are yet to be determined?

JB: I have no doubt in my mind that the organizations like Richardson’s and Viterra and the larger groups that own those—well, not Richardson’s—but own Viterra, that they know how to sell and buy grain. I think that it’s probably more efficient that they be buying and selling their own grain. Whether they can sell it as effectively as the Wheat Board did when they had the monopoly over the wheats and the barleys, whether they can do that and maintain that high level of quality, is debatable. And more importantly is maintaining that high level of quality as important as we like to believe it is? Because other countries sell grain with less quality, but they’re still selling it, and they’re still making lots of money at it. I don’t know. I’m kind of torn on that one. I thought the Wheat Board was unique to Canada. Other countries, Australia, they did away with them a long time ago. I don’t know if that was because of pressure from the industry or whether it was the right thing to do or whether it was just lack of will. But I would say, it’s--. Letting enterprise take care of the commerce is probably the best thing. But they are going to have problems.

NP: Any thought—and we might as well lump this all together, but we’ll start with the question—any thought of what the result might be for the farmer, the individual producer? And what was your connection with the individual producer, if any, while you were working?

JB: Well, I would have thought when I started working that we had a direct relationship with the producer, but in reality, we have little or none when you're in the larger regions. The people that had the direct relationship with the farmers are our service centres in the Prairies, which we had reduced years ago down to nil or none. Their requirements for services--. We had inward services and out--. They were the first ones to actually be devolved out. We did inwards and outwards and all kinds of things there too. For different reasons and at different operations, obviously there's no lakers or salties to load, but we loaded cars, we unloaded trucks, we monitored it all.

[2:40:26]

But they were the ones that were there talking to the farmers at the exhibitions. They had their finger to the pulse. The producers felt like they were speaking to the CGC when they spoke to those people. We had--. What was the name of the people that were out there? Assistant commissioners. Originally, we had them, and they were the spokespeople. There was debate as to whether they were being effective or not. I don't know. I didn't have much to do with it at that time. But that was the people that talked to the producers.

The producer, I think, they're highly educated university graduates. They're not people that grew up on a farm and that's all they ever did. They know that their business is with the person out there, and what happens here at the terminals may or may not affect them. What they're worried about is maintaining the qualities and the standards in the grain and that that doesn't get lost so that nobody can sell their grain. As long as someone's selling it and they're getting a decent price for it, I think that they're going to be pretty happy going forward. But if someone blows the system, and they move to some other country to buy grain, or not what they're growing, then they're going to be challenging it.

I laugh. I was talking to Murdoch Mackay in a meeting when he was standing up trying to explain about the transition and going to that high throughput, and he said, "You know, and so then the farmers are going to be at the operations." And he was speaking, and I said, "So, let's see Murdoch, how's that going to look? You think that we're going to have these farmers, and they're going to group together and they're going to open up larger elevator systems on the Prairies?" "Yeah." And I says, "Okay, and so then they would get together, and they would have like a board or something like that? They'd speak and so--. Would it be kind of be like a cooperative? Would it be like Sask Wheat Pool?" [Laughing] And he laughed, he says, "You bugger." He says, "No, I don't think that's what it's going to be like." So anyway.

I don't know, if it's--. Garnet Watkins always told me we were going to re-cycle. And he lived long enough and stayed in the organization long enough—he was there for 43 and a half years—that he actually saw it coming back around to when he first

started. And I’m a firm believer that we don’t always learn from our history. We should, but we don’t. And I think it’ll come back around. Someone will make a mistake somewhere and they’ll need someone else to regulate. And someone will suggest it. Somewhere down the road, probably long after I’m gone, we’ll be doing something similar and the same.

It certainly was a--. I say this, I don’t know if you’ll be able to relate to it or not. When they had the CLE [Canadian Lakehead Exhibition] here, they always had the rides, and it was a one-coupon ride and a two-coupon ride. The most thrilling was always a four-coupon ride. So, it might be five dollars for four coupons. The last 37 years was a four-coupon ride. [Laughing]

NP: That’s a very good wrap-up. [Laughs] We like quotable quotes.

JB: It is the most interesting industry. I can’t imagine anything being as unpredictable and affected by so many different things.

NP: And while we’re on--. And we still haven’t gotten past Bunge. [Laughs]

JB: Oh, jeez!

NP: But while we’re on it--. We talked about the farmers, we talked about Wheat Board. Did you have connections to the Wheat Board in your positions at all? Just not directly?

JB: No. I mean we did--. People like Bill’s predecessor, Bill Graham’s predecessor, did have connections with the traffic officers in the grain industry and the Wheat Board because they were doing car investigations and resolving issues on shipments of grain and stuff like that. But me in particular, no. I mean if I had been acting in a division, I might have talked to somebody. I had a tour there. It was very interesting. No, it would have been headquarters, there’s more directly related to the Wheat Board.

NP: And what about shipping? Let’s start with the railways. What would your connections have been other than standing there—I still see you standing there all day long with the cars coming in—but throughout your career what did you learn about the railways? What worked well with the railways? What were always issues with the railways as they related to work that was done by the CGC?

[2:44:52]

JB: Well, the CGC provided--. We have the least control over what we may or may not be doing at any given time. We’re at the beck and call of the elevators. If they’re not doing anything, then we’re not doing anything. If they’re busy, we’re busy. The

railroads, if they didn't push in, then we didn't have cars to do. If we had any relationship with them, it would have been on a safety basis, just to make sure that we're operating in amongst their cars and the rail, and while they're pushing in, we follow their safety procedures and the elevator's safety procedures. Our relationship with the railway, we did a lot of--. When we checked all their railcars, they didn't have to do it anymore—for leaks. We provided them with documentation that related to the conditioning of the cars, if there's grain still in them, so they wouldn't have to worry about doing any of that. We reported that. At one point in time they were depending on that. We actually developed an electronic link with them, like a computer link with them, so that they were getting the data live-time as we were producing it. We produced exception reports. So if there's missing car numbers or if the cars were damaged in any way, they made all their repairs based on what we provided them. That was on the weighing side.

NP: So now they'll be doing that for themselves, or the elevators will have to do that?

JB: Once inwards was done with the weighers? Yeah, they would have had to assume that responsibility themselves. And the elevator would have said, "Well, we were doing that anyway. We check our cars for empty." Well, we know they didn't. Whether they do now or not? I don't know. Maybe they do, maybe they don't. The worst thing that'll happen is that the grain goes all the way back out west and someone goes to load it in the Prairies and either unloads it into their elevator and nobody noticed it, or they say, "I can't load this car," which causes a big jam-up in the process, right?

NP: Or have the shipments lost or have a leak.

JB: Yeah. Well somebody will question it, but I don't know who investigates it anymore. And who would be able to say whether it's right or wrong, because if I load it and say I put 90 tonnes in, you unload it say you got 29 tonnes, I don't know how you rectify that. That was always the reason why they maintained the Commission's presence there, is because it reduced the need for any type of litigation. We were the last word on whether it was there, or it wasn't there.

NP: And now, with the elevators shipping from their own primary elevators to their terminals, whether that could just be an internal argument between the prairie guy and the port guy.

JB: Some would say it's as easy--. "Well it's just one company, don't worry about it." But we know, and they won't admit, there's huge debate between the primary--. Who has the bottom line to maintain? In a terminal, who has a bottom line to maintain? Neither one of them are going to give in. I don't know, I guess they resolve it internally. But I don't know whether they just say, "You know what, from now on terminals are going to be the last say," or, "From now on, primaries," or whatever. Or, "We're just going to split the difference." But in the end, they're only hurting themselves.

NP: Over time--.

JB: Keep in mind that, aside from inwards, the private sector is pretty much providing all the services that we did including on the weighing side. The lakers, we still provide weighing services. And most of the people that I worked with are now working on the private-sector side. And much to Al Coffey's surprise, he says, "A lot of our business is weighing." Done differently of course, but with the same processes, similar or same processes.

NP: When would they be brought in? Of course, I can talk to Al about this. When would they be brought in on an inward car?

JB: You'd have to discuss that with Al. I believe that in most cases, it's one of the parties wants to have third-party presence there. Not that they're uncomfortable or whatever, but it just makes it easier--. Removes the need for litigation later on if I've got someone there on my behalf, which was the whole premise of having the Commission there because the farmer, who originally loaded the car and was affected in some way, shape, or form from it being unloaded. We were there on their behalf, and the primary. And at that time, more companies were shipping to other companies, so if Sask Wheat Pool was unloading Bunge cars or vice versa, then someone had to be there to make sure that Sask Wheat Pool wasn't doing something with P&H's [Parrish & Heimbecker] cars, because they pooled the cars, right?

NP: You may not be the person to answer this because it deals more with the primary elevators, but the primary elevators also have issues with farmers coming in and having discussions about what the grade is, as an example. There must still be service provided there are far as any kind of dispute?

JB: Well we have service centres there, but they've removed the need for--. Because we're not there procuring an official sample, unless we're requested to go there, which we aren't anymore. For a while we were providing services to Mexico because they were export. But there was a lot of grain going over the border that we weren't even involved in, which was one of the other deciding factors about, if we're not doing it there, and a certain percentage is going over with nobody even monitoring it, why do we need to do it when we're going from Thunder Bay to Montreal or whatever? So, that was another one of those things.

But they can bring a sample in and say, "Can you grade this?" And you may or may not get an official grade, but I can't tell you that it's from that car because I didn't procure it. It's not an official sample. It's not a guaranteed sample. It's nothing. It's just a submitted sample.

[2:50:36]

NP: And weighing the same thing then? No third-party?

JB: The elevator, it's theoretically the truck drivers there to watch the thing being weighed, so if there's a debate, he can debate it right then and there. But the grade is one of those ones, "Well, I think it's this," and, "I think it's that." They can submit a sample, and it's subject to inspector's grade or dockage. But how they do that now, I'm not sure what the logistics are anymore now that the legislation's changed. We've removed ourselves from a lot of that stuff. We'd like to, and I know that my colleagues that worked, the people that reported from the service centres, are madder than a hatter because most of them are farmers to begin with, and they're working with the farmers. They want to help them out, but the cost is exorbitant because the fees changed. And that's one of the reasons. Once the fees got real, it eliminated the motivation to take up some of that--. Because it was cheap; it was almost free.

NP: And who would pay it now? The farmer or the business or both? Or whoever was wrong?

JB: Ultimately, the farmer because everybody passes the money on down. If it's a cost incurred, then it's going to be passed down to the farmer. But a lot of the things that they did without even thinking about it, now they have to really consider whether they want it done because the fees are exponentially larger for the CGC.

NP: Now, what are the fees--. Can the inspector be contracted to, let's say a ship loading, a laker—where they're not required to—can they accept a contract? Is there that fee-for-service potential for the CGC?

JB: I believe there is, but why would they do that? They can get that from the private sector less expensive.

NP: That was going to be my next question.

JB: I'm not sure. I can't remember what the decision—because it was right on the cusp of me leaving there—whether they were going to allow that to happen, or whether it was a conflict of interest. I mean we only have so many inspectors. We don't have people--. That was one of the things the elevator wanted. They wanted us on-call. "Well, if we need you this is what we want." That was kind of the first thing. "If we need you for cars, can you come in and do the cars?" Or, "If we need you for a boat? We don't need you all the time. You stay at your office and come out when we need you." Well, we can't maintain a qualified staff at the size to maintain that. It was just impossible for us to do that.

NP: And the other issue that relates to that and is something, as you just referred to, as the cost. Intertek, is that the only game in town?

JB: No. SGS [Society of General Inspection Services] is the other one.

NP: Okay. How can they provide the service for less? What's operating here that allows them to have a fee for service that is less?

JB: Their wages are less. I don't believe that they're unionized, for one thing. So, they work when there's work, and they don't work--. Basically, what I understand--. And I shouldn't speak to this because it's Al's area of expertise. I can't think of the other gentleman's name who runs SGS. What I understand is for the most part most of their employees are retired or Commission employees that lost their job. If you're retired, well obviously you don't need a full wage, so you don't really care if you're working 12 months a year or not. You're not bringing up a family. You're not buying a house. So, they're happy to work just piecemeal. The other ones are younger people who have, from what I understand, have acquired full-time jobs. They are working almost full-time in the private sector, but there are very few that are doing that. It works out well for them, and so it's less expensive. They don't have to maintain all of the benefits that the Commission does.

The federal government has huge contracts and cover a lot of different things. Health and safety regulations, the administrations that surrounds all of that. There's a lot of overhead in maintaining our operations, which private sector they don't have to. It can be a small mom and pop shop. And they'll say that they do it more efficiently and that they're a little more effective because they don't have all this other things that they have to worry about paying for—union contract negotiations. So, they can do it more efficiently, so they can afford to charge a little bit less.

[2:55:17]

NP: And who is responsible for updating training?

JB: For them? That's their responsibility. There was some thought, at one point in time, that the Commission would take that on because--. But the truth of the matter is eventually we won't have the skillset to do the training, right, because we're not doing the inspecting and the grading all the time. I mean we had the premiere—there's no doubt in my mind—the premiere inspectors in the world because most of them had worked 30 years looking at grain, inspecting grain, seeing it in different way, shapes, and forms. But where they're going to do that going forward, I think is going to be one of their conundrums. They're going to have to develop the same infrastructure that the Commission had at some point in time to maintain that same level. Otherwise you will be exactly where I said. You're going to start getting boats that are being turned down and people questioning the grading on it because they're not that keen eyed.

They're in a great place now. They've got the best of the best working for them. Where they're going to be when those people are gone? I guess the hope is that they'll train and mentor people like we used to. I mean they didn't have all that training back in the day. Al Coffey didn't go through some fancy training thing to become one of the best inspectors in the country. They'll learn. They'll develop a system, and if trainers are required then they'll end up with trainers. And if they need HR people, I guess they'll have to hire that. And the next thing you know they'll be right where everybody else was, and they'll be paying--. But, now that the Commission's out, they can afford to expand it.

I remember SGS when they first came in here. They had no hope in hell of ever getting in. I mean the legislation said who was going to be doing all that grading. But they came in and of course it's a huge multinational organization. They're into everything. They can afford to lose money for years on end. And they picked up the chief inspector for Canada as their boss for Canada, Fraser Gilbert. He was a disgruntled Commission employee leaving, not sure exactly whether he was asked to leave or not. Rumour would have it that he didn't exactly leave on the best of terms. Not that they didn't have a relationship with him later because I think they did once he went to the private sector. But he disagreed with some of the things the Commission was proposing, and he moved on to greener pastures. And he worked for years at doing that—a handful of people. They did some Prairie work, and little bit of this and everything.

NP: And where does he live, do you know? Out of Winnipeg?

JB: Gee, he was out of Winnipeg, but I don't know if he's still there or not. He was in Thunder Bay actually last year. I hadn't seen him in years and years. They've hired a number of high-level Commission employees. Norm Woodbeck went to SGS. I think he might be with Intertek now. He would be a wealth of knowledge. He's a really well-spoken man too.

NP: And he's here?

JB: No, he's not, I believe he's still in Winnipeg. He was from Chatham. That's what I was saying. He was in Chatham. He worked in Baie-Comeau, and then he went to Winnipeg. Very knowledgeable, very astute inspector, but he ended up--. I can't remember what his title was in the end. I think he was head of all the quality assurance part but did a lot of presentations, so he's really well-spoken. He knows the industry. He'll probably be willing to have a conversation with you, too.

NP: Good. I'll try to track him down.

JB: I heard he went to private sector, and I think he changed companies or something. I don't think it worked out. I think he retired to the private sector, so I don't know where he is now. But anybody in Winnipeg, if you asked anybody from inspection, they'd be able to tell you where he is because he's still out and about.

NP: Shipping on the other side. What did you learn about the grain industry in Canada based upon knowing the ships that came into our port that you didn't know when you were a young lad starting out in the weighing department? What do you know about Canada's international grain trade, essentially, that you didn't know then?

JB: Hm, interesting question. In terms of the shipping itself?

NP: In terms of anything you'd like to say about who our customers are.

JB: Well, yeah, it's intriguing. I guess when I first started, I always thought that where we shipped the grain there's someone there who's got the same job as me only on the other end of it, because I always understood that Montreal unloaded. They had grain inspectors there, and they graded the grain in, and we debated about who's doing what. It always was a big surprise to me that when it got over to some of these places, it got dumped in a lorry, and then someone hauled it halfway into the continent. Somebody's questioning how I weighed my grain here, and they haven't even weighed it.

[3:00:05]

I was also very surprised that--. I always thought we were the most sophisticated in North America, but some of the European countries and Asian countries were, if not as sophisticated in some cases, more sophisticated in terms of their operations. I find that the grain industry, internationally, the people that I met, which is not a great number because I didn't do a lot of international travel--. I met people in the ports maybe or whatnot—grain industry is a grain industry is a grain industry. Whether you're from Pakistan or if you're from Australia, they all talk the same language, and they all have the same issues. They all have the same belief that it's important and all those types of things.

The interesting piece is the end user. The one that takes your product that you've done all this hard work to get it there and how important it is that it be in the form that they want, and be the amount that they want, and how critical that is to them. So that was always a surprise. I never really even thought about that end of it when I first started. Like I said, I wasn't even allowed on the scale floor, never mind where the grain went after it left the elevator. [Laughs] I always marvel at how the industry itself can work with such unpredictability and how it can be so efficient in reality when you talk about the amount of grain we move in a season or a year, when you're talking about Vancouver, and yet be affected by everything under the sun. Politics, weather, strikes,

movement of the grain railroads, the shipping lines, the lake, the ocean, the politics outside our country, politics inside our country. Everything affects it. Everyday it's something else.

It's the most unpredictable. It's the hardest thing for the employees. I remember my wife used to drive me. She used to ask me everyday, "Are you working tonight?" "I don't know." "How do you mean you don't know? Everybody knows. You've got to know at least one night." "No, I'll let you know at 3:30 because I won't know what the elevator's doing until 3:30." The side of that is that the elevator guys were in the same boat as me. They were waiting to find out whether they have to work. Everything about it is that way. It blows around in the wind and yet, somehow or another, everybody gets all of their pieces of the puzzle together. It's amazing the way we put the boats into the elevators, they put all the grain in, with very little—when you look at it from the 30,000 [inaudible]—very little difficulties. Sure, we have to unload the odd boat and we have to do this and that. When you look at it from the larger scale, we do it extremely efficiently right across the whole country. And it's so sophisticated and so complicated. You wonder how it all comes together in the end and I always marvelled at it. I had my little piece of it, and I know what I had to do to do that, but they're all separate entities and they all seem to come together to get it out there. I hope they continue doing it.

NP: Speaking of that, and speaking of shipping, another organization that was around for most of your career was the Lake Shippers.

JB: That's what made me think about when I was talking about coordinating it.

NP: Yeah. So, what about Lake Shippers Clearance? Or Canadian Ports Clearance Association, as it became.

JB: I honestly wondered how we'd function without them, and yet somehow or another we did. I know it was a difficult transition to get it going because the elevators were having a tough time getting the intel that they needed to know to get the boats. But my sense would be, now since I've been gone, is that enough of the boats are going just to the one elevator because it's their shipment, and they're taking it on. They don't have to coordinate all: 1,000 tonnes of this and 2,000 tonnes of that and make sure it gets to the right elevator at the right time and everybody's there. So, I think the need changed with the elimination of the port authority.

NP: Of the Wheat Board?

JB: Of the Canada Ports. They're the ones that coordinated where the boats were going to go and who's taking what where.

NP: And they disappeared because of the disappearance of the Wheat Board?

JB: That was the biggest piece of it, yeah. And the elevators said that we can coordinate that ourselves.

NP: Because of my wonderful panoramic view of most of the port of Thunder Bay, there were times where seven ships were sitting in harbour—and many of them, days at a time.

JB: Yeah, it's funny. I travelled quite a bit, and not that I loaded any vessels in Vancouver, but if you go to Vancouver there's ships in the port all the time, because they're salties. They're contracted. They can't come into port. They can't work overtime. They need to go here this date. It takes tugs to go get them and bring them in. Lakers? They move around like cars. I could never get any of the other regions to understand that it's a lot different when you're working with lakers because they're shifting around. They're taking two--. When you load a boat in Vancouver, it might be there for two days, three days, which is what they're doing here because they're putting on--. And then they've got to trim it properly. Lakers? They load them and then they're gone.

[3:05:16]

And so, we were constantly shifting staff, every day. Three times a day we shift staff, four times a day actually. We shift staff at 8:00 because you've got to find out the boat didn't get where it was supposed to be. We heard at four o'clock we were going to have a boat, but it's not there. It's somewhere else. Move people around. They shift at lunchtime, they shift at suppertime, and they shift again at nighttime for the next day. And they may shift in between, too, but those are the key things. With the salties, I mean they don't just get up and move to another elevator. They need coordination. They need someone to come and tug them over there. And now they're a lot more agile than before. They've got a lot of--. They've got to phone Albania to find out if the funding's in place. So, when I used to--. The only time I ever experienced that--.

NP: They had to phone who?

JB: [Laughs] I just used that as a name. It's never simple because the ship crew is from a different country and the captain's from somewhere else and the agent's from a different country. Everybody's from all over the map on it, right? And so, they have to coordinate all that and they can't drop a kernel of grain until this guy signs off on that and sends it to Belgium to find out if Argentina's okay with doing it. So that's what I always say. I say that, I don't know if those are the names, but it always seemed like that's what it was. But I remember going down east to load boats and waiting around in a hotel room for three, four, five days. We had to rush down there because the boat's at the dock. Yeah, the boat's at the dock. They wouldn't do anything, days on end. Wait, go down to the elevator, "You ready to go yet?" "No." Sit, wait at the elevator. "No." "How about tonight?" "Maybe. Half

an hour, we're supposed to get a phone call. We've got to get the funding." Or this isn't in place, or that's not in place. And then we had to wait for the port warden to come inspect the vessel and make sure it can take a load in Canada. CFIA [Canadian Food Inspection Agency] has to come and do checks.

NP: Now when you were saying that they would shift changes--. So, if a boat was coming in—in the case of when the Lake Shippers or Canada Ports Clearance was still operating, and because the Wheat Board would have grain stored at various elevators—so if a ship came in, if they didn't have it all at Pool 15, they could go and get some more from elsewhere, because it really didn't matter. So, when a boat started loading, let's say whatever elevator it was, and then it moved to another, did the weighing or did the inspection staff go with the boat to the various elevators?

JB: Back in the day, when we were busy, each elevator has a staff. And, yes, if there was some on booked sick or it was holidays and stuff, they might shift people, and if we were tight, people would move around with boats. The smaller the staff got, yes, then we started moving people. But we tried, to the best of our ability, to keep the two supervisors—the weighing supervisor and inspection supervisor—would have a unit. That was the continuity in the operation at the elevator. And then we would rotate those people every year, they would get a new assignment. So, there's no perception that there's some type of friendship or agreement coming between the elevator and the government. We would shift them every year. Most times they would do a full year there. For the inspector, it was also important because they could see the grain coming in, and they knew what was in the elevator, so they knew when they were shipping it out what to expect, right, because they saw it being graded in. There was some logistical pieces to it as well. And for the weighers it was they also did the weigh-over at the end of the year and so that weigher was responsible for all the grain moving through, in and out. They took over the weigh-over at the end, and they would make sure everything was accounted for. Even in the end, we still tried to, until just recently, now everybody's staffed at the downtown. And now, wherever the boat is, that's where the team goes.

NP: So, if you have a boat, does it need to be inspected by the same person, regardless of--.

JB: No, no. An inspector and a weigher can weigh grain anywhere in Canada or inspect grain anywhere in Canada.

NP: But in the instance where it had to go from—some people said in the early days it might have to go to seven different elevators to load up what they wanted--.

JB: Oh god, yeah, grocery list.

NP: But it would be a different inspector at each elevator?

JB: Yep. Yep.

NP: Whereas now that wouldn't be the case. If it for some--. If Richardson's—because it's got two elevators—if it was loading a part at its main operation and then the ship, for whatever silly reason, would have to go over to the old UGG [United Grain Growers], then the inspectors would go from one to the other and follow the boat around?

JB: Yeah, but it wouldn't necessarily have to be the same inspector.

NP: Okay.

JB: Any inspector that's qualified—and you have to be appropriately qualified to do the boat—but if you're a qualified grain inspector? Halfway through--.

NP: No, there wasn't any kind of consistency that was required for the other than the general consistency you'd get from equally trained people?

[3:10:11]

JB: Actually, they tried to stay away from that. We would move people purposely so there's no complacency, so you don't get used to an operation. You want to be keen to everything you're doing. You want to maintain it as best you could. But you should be able to bring an inspector in from Vancouver and at two o'clock in the afternoon go to an elevator here and take over the boat, the loading.

NP: And in your experience, that could happen?

JB: Oh, and did. Our guys would fly down east at four o'clock--. 4:00 to 12:00 shift, you're on 4:00 to 12:00, go in and take over the boat and finish the boat. They'd pass on information, "This is the problem I'm having. This is the way the grain's going." And, of course, they talk, and they update each other. And they did the same thing here, they had pass-on slips where if there was any issues or concerns those pass-on slips had to go from one elevator to the next. So, the next inspector would get it, and he'd sign off on it and it would come with a signature from the last inspector. If there's any issues arising, they would call each other and update each other. But the boat can go from here--.

And yeah, seven was not unusual. And those boats would be switching. This boat would go to that elevator, and that elevator's boat would come to your elevator. And you'd be doing barley in the morning and wheat and durum in the afternoon. There was no--. Some of the elevators, sometimes they would stay with consistent grades, like they'd stay with grain. They might not handle canola or something. Maybe somebody else just does canola or primarily does canola. But for the most part, yeah, it was anything under the sun, and you had to know what it is.

NP: Now, number of ships. I'm trying to think. This year was a very good year for ships. But I can't remember what hundreds it was. You said very seldom was there a problem. We did have one situation just recently where the ship had to be unloaded. In an average year, would you even have to have--. Would you ever have a ship unloading? Or it was lake a once every five years situation?

JB: Oh no, no, no. There was always--. Each year there was always some misloading that would have occurred. You have to remember, in Thunder Bay because they were pooled grain, and each elevator was completing a shipment. Like not one elevator--. Sometimes it was a full load, sometimes it'd be a full lot—like one hold—but lots of times you'd put 1,000 tonne on, someone else will put 1,000 tonne on, and a third company would put another 1 000, and that'd make your three. But if one, early enough in the process, if the grade went south, then they would make a deal with the other company to sweeten it up. And so of course the inspector gets the composite sample. So overall the hold is right. But there was all kinds of issues came from that. It would go to the mill, and they would only dip only halfway in, and it was good, but when they got to the bottom, it was bad. And it was too sweet at the top and poor at the bottom, so there was some issue about the loading protocols. So, the Commission developed protocols so that if this happened--. When I first started, we did some unloading. For years, we went without unloading at all. They would make deals with the mill, and then we'd make deals internally here in Thunder Bay. They'd sweeten it up, or fix it up, or report it differently, or sell it as something else, or whatever.

Vancouver, I know they are regularly offloading, but they have the facilities to do it. We don't have--. There's no facilities. We used to have a self-unloader at 7A, but they finally worked it so hard they decommissioned it. It wasn't safe to use anymore. But when I first started, we, once or twice a year, we'd have to. But they were the only one. So maybe P&H [Parrish & Heimbecker] screwed the boat up, but Sask Pool would get all the money for the offload, and they'd just charge to beat the band on it, right? It was a really slow process and very time consuming and difficult to do because we didn't have that type of facilities. Down east? Different story. They're built to unload boats and load boats, so to clam a boat off wouldn't be a big deal for them at all. That's what they do; they unload boats. Here it was more complicated, so they had to come up with different ways of doing it.

NP: And that would be negotiations that might be worked out at head office?

JB: Well, it would be in coordination with the CGC. Whoever the quality assurance person for the inspection staff, whether it was Rick Bevilacqua or Brian Storry, they'd work hand in hand with them. "Okay, look, if we move this over, we put this on it, how will that work out? Is that going to work out in terms of the overall grade for the hold?" The logistics of the costs and stuff, the company does that internally. We would never hear about that. We don't really care how they straighten it out. As long as when that hold leaves--. And if it's not, we're going to call it this. It's not going to be called what you want it to be. Your tough luck. They could fix it up even, the last stroke, they could fix it up down east if it was going on a saltie. They could blend it down there with other grain down there and then maybe fix it up at that end. Vancouver didn't have that luxury. It's on the boat, it's on its way wherever, and we can't fix it. So, they'd have to clam it off and change it.

[3:15:21]

It's not that easy to fix a hold of grain because it's just the way grain handles. When you pour it in you think it'd be sitting on top, but it doesn't. It drives into the grain. It might be perfectly okay a third of the way up, and then you put on this little piece of bad grain, but it's driven right into the good grain all the way. So, you have to try and sample it and determine whether it's meeting spec. It's a very time consuming and difficult to get the grain off they have vaculators or whatever they call it. Suck it off like ten kilograms at a time; it takes forever. They don't want to do that if they don't have to.

I remember one time we had one at Pool 4, I swear to God it was the beginning of the end for Sask Wheat Pool. We were loading a boat of I believe it was wheat. And I remember the sampler was sampling on the D floor at that time, so there was no automatic sampler for the outwards, but there was a delivery system from the D floor down. So, the government sampler would sample on the D floor from the spout, and they would go along to each of the spouts. And she caught that there was I think it was durum in the wheat, and a lot. She was not a really experienced inspector, but she said, "I can tell there's a problem here." Of course, they caught it and it was on a saltie, and we don't have any facilities to unload it. So they had to hire and use the clam off of the saltie itself, they had to hire an operator from Keefer Terminal. And I remember my brother and I—it's, again, one of the few times I worked with him—spent the whole long weekend unloading that one hold--day and night. I was there for 24 hours a day for three solid days. My brother and I relieved each other off, but we stayed at the elevator and we worked right through the weekend.

When it got to the end, they finally straightened it all out. They got it to the point where the inspector was happy with the grade, and they went and put the exact same grain back on the boat again and they did it twice. When I came back—because I finally went home to get some sleep—and when I came back after a day off, they were back at the same thing. Doing exactly the same thing again. That was right around the time that Sask Pool, they had trouble with canola—losing canola. Big whack of canola disappeared, and they believe it went out through the aspiration. It was sucking up too much in the aspiration. But it disappeared.

And then shortly after that, Sask Wheat Pool struggled, and the next thing you know there was no Sask Wheat Pool. Whether that--. That obviously wasn't the only reason why, but it was probably one of the straws that broke the camel's back.

NP: How could that possibly happen, doing the exact same thing twice?

JB: Well because when you're binning it in the elevator, you believe that these bins have the grain that you put in them. But if there's a mix in the annex, and nobody tells anybody that they mixed it in the annex, then it comes out on the boat. And if they thought that it was mixed for one reason, but really and truly the mix was right in the bin itself, you start loading again and here you're putting the same stuff that you thought was going to be correct. That's my understanding, is that they went to another bin, but it had the same mix in it that the first bin had, and it gets in. You've got four or five spouts going. It's not like all five of them are screwed up. It's just the one screwing up all five.

NP: Isn't life exciting? Anything else you want to say about shipping, or we have to go back to Montreal now? [Laughs]

JB: No, not too much. I think for both staffs, that's where you evolved to, is the shipping. You cut your teeth on inwards. On both staffs, you learnt how to do inwards. So, you're doing equipment on the weighing, and you're learning how to weigh inward cars and then two of you mentor on how to ship the grain out export. And inspection is a similar but different learning process. But same thing, you don't load boats until you get to do cars. Until you can do them consistently.

NP: Because signing your name to something that has potentially big consequences, you want to know what you're doing.

JB: Right. Inward cars--. We did load out cars, shipped to railcars to exports to the States—barley in the wintertime and stuff like that. And for some reason those took on a different line. We were not more careful, but more senior staff did the loading even though it was just to a railcar. But it became one small shipment instead of--. So, the responsibilities were different and different people did those than did the inward cars. It was the thing, when you first started, that you wanted to get to. You wanted to be able to load that boat. Not everybody was able to do it. Like I said, on inspection they're making quick decisions on things that can affect a lot of money, a lot of people, a lot of the organization. So, they prided themselves. The shipping was the thing to aspire to, I guess. It always was the one thing that they kind of held out as their--. And today it's the same thing. They're still inspecting the export grain; they haven't let that go yet.

[3:20:54]

NP: Did any people find the strain of having to sign and be so confident, find that difficult?

JB: Oh, I'm sure. Yeah, certainly they did. Not everybody's made to do that. It doesn't mean that not everybody didn't get to do that, wasn't made to do that, they just by sheer desire or forcing themselves into it. I'm sure there were. And there's a lot of drinking and a lot of stuff like that. Stress got to them. I know that when I first started there was a lot of divorces, a lot of separations because of the hours and the stress and everything that came with it. Not to look at—like you say—to look at the elevators from here, how could it be stressful? But it is, there's a lot of pressure to be productive. A lot of people, especially the inspectors, they're being pressured hugely by the elevator to go their way and to change your mind and challenge your decision making. They were always under the gun.

Some of them were made for it. Al Coffey? You couldn't sway him off with a stick. He made his mind up, he made his mind up. There was many of them that were that good. I mean he's not the only one, but he's one I'm familiar with. They were just confident, you know? They were confident. But there were some I'm sure--. And those ones normally, they stopped, did inwards, they didn't--.

NP: Happily?

JB: Yeah, yeah.

NP: I'm going to shift gears completely here now. We're coming to our last 30 minutes of tape. You were also at the Grain Commission when they started to bring on women on the staff. From speaking to others, that was not always an easy transition. But on the other side of it, the Grain Commission had far more female employees than any of the grain companies ever had. So, I'll leave that open to you to say whatever you'd like about that. Women in the workforce.

JB: Women actually started on the job, before I started. There was women working. I can't remember the names now. I worked with some of them later on, but they didn't stay on for very long. It became more prevalent, there was an initiative—I don't know where it came from, Employment Canada or something—non-traditional jobs. In the early '70s was when it started and then I started in the mid to late '70s. There was a fairly large initiative to bring on people, non-traditional. I don't know as much about the inspection piece of it because they were two silos, two hiring. But inspection had minimum education requirement and weighing did not. Weighing, oftentimes we hired just from Unemployment sending us 20 people, and we'll take a look at them; inspection you had to have Grade 12 to get on. There was a bit of a screening in the whole process.

Difficult? Yes. It was difficult, but for the women that came on the job. I'm sure some of the men were hesitant or whatever, but they were for the most part wartime guys, so it's difficult for them to accept that. But at the same time, for the most of them, they're trying to be respectful to the best of their ability. It was difficult. It was difficult for the women. You had to be a certain type of woman to want to come and work in the grain elevators because the elevator, they were old school. They weren't willing to change, and they didn't change the pictures that were up on the wall or the calendars that were out or the conversations that they had. In a lot of cases, the women had to assimilate into the organization instead of the organization assimilating to them.

[3:25:17]

The Commission was a little bit different. Certainly, being a federal government agency, they were a little bit more progressive, but we couldn't change the environment that you were working in. It's difficult to get the elevators. But it did evolve. We had some fabulous women come on, and they stayed and worked with us today, and probably just retired just recently. But some came and went. But as far as compared to the elevators, the elevators only had a handful of women in all the years that I worked there. To this day, I don't think there's any women working in the elevator.

NP: There was a lawsuit at one time, someone had told me, against the Commission related to un--. What? I don't think unfriendly workplace is quite the way to put it. Is that something that may have been before your time in administration? Long before your time in administration.

JB: It was definitely before my time in management, and I'm not prepared to talk about it. I know what you're talking about, but I wasn't involved in it. I was in the union at the time. So, I know a little bit about it.

NP: Did things change over time?

JB: Yeah. But they were changing anyway. What happened was they didn't change quickly enough. It was a slow evolution because we were trying to change ourselves at the same time, we were trying to stop smoking in the elevators. We were trying to become a modern organization. But we were not mainstream, federal public service. We were blue-collar workers in an elevator. We saw ourselves as blue-collar workers. We never saw ourselves as regulators, we saw ourselves as working hand in hand with the elevator guys, prided ourselves in getting dirty and getting dusty and working in the cold, working in a grain inspection lab. That's what we did. It was difficult when the women came on.

Some were able to do it more easily. That's a poor choice of words. For some they were more successful at making the transition in. Others, much more difficult. And some changed completely to be like the men, and other ones just couldn't because they just

could not make that transition. It was not very hospitable for that at the very beginning. The industry was difficult. The whole place didn't want to shift. But one that I can pick out, and she's regrettably passed away, but Susie Galvin was one of the first grain weighers. She was successful in getting promotions. Unfortunately, she got breast cancer and passed away. She was the flagship of the people. She was very soft spoken, but you didn't cross her. If she had to be assertive, she could be assertive, but she was friends of everybody, and people were respectful around her. But she was also resilient, and so she made exceptions where exceptions were necessary, but where she needed to make a stand, she would, and people would change it. And they would change it right away. Other people fought tooth and nail and couldn't get things done.

The organization changed for sure, but the elevators also had to change. They didn't have washrooms and they couldn't care less. When I started the job, there was places I went to the washroom on the scale floor where there was no washroom. Can't get women to do that. It was okay for guys, go outside? But when we brought women in, what were they going to do? Build a washroom today just because we hired a--? So, we had to put them at certain elevators. Those women were--. What would call them? Not frontier, not voyageur--.

NP: Pioneers?

JB: Pioneers! They forced change. That's what they did, by essentially being there and sticking it out. And some of them we're strong enough to make a stand and say, "I'm not willing to put up. You have to do this. You have to have two washrooms. You're not going to go with one washroom anymore. Or make inappropriate washrooms." So, they actually grew the change. The industry and the organizations were forced to by the legislation. What are you going to do? Fight tooth and nail against something you know you're doing wrong? A lot of times, because it was systemic, they didn't even know they were doing anything wrong. Like, "What do you mean? So, it's a dirty picture, but she doesn't have to come in here, right?" "Well okay, that's not right. She has to come in here because it's part of her job." "Well tell someone else. Get the guy to come in here." "No, you've got to take the pictures down." It's not the Commission's pictures, it's not the Commission's office, it's not the Commission's--. In our offices everything had to change. We knew that.

[3:30:03]

And it did, it changed. Some of those women did work in the elevators, but for the most part the women didn't stay in the elevators. They worked for a couple, three, four years. The only one that really stuck it out was Christine, and she ended up working at MTI. She started with Sask Pool, but she went straight to a supervisor's position. So, she didn't really work out in the waterfront. There were some women, they lasted a season or two. Cargill had women they hired on, and one of them was actually one of our staff, and she ended up being the Op-Sup there at one point. Now she works for Beendigan I think.

NP: For who?

JB: Beendigan. It's like Faye Peterson, but it's an Aboriginal-centred facility. It's not exactly like Faye, I shouldn't say that. It's not exactly like Faye, but it's similar. They work with women and children but more of an Aboriginal-centred piece. Her name was Debbie Vermette, and she was one of my--. I remember when we hired her—I don't know if I was on the board at the time—and at that time we were trying to increase the number of Aboriginal people to be more reflective of the demographics of the city. And so, at that time one of the wisdoms of the government was we'll hire six of these, and you have to hire six Aboriginal people, or whatever. Okay, whatever you've got to do. So, we had two lists, and I remember Debbie was university educated, very smart, very hardworking individual. We said, "Oh Debbie we'd like to congratulate you. You're going to be hired on to the Commission." "Oh great, good, good. So, where'd I come out?" "Well, you were first on the Aboriginal list." And she said, "What do you mean Aboriginal list?" "Well, yeah, we've got two lists. It's part of our initiative to improve our demographics." She said, "I don't want to be hired--. I want to be hired on the list. Don't hire me because I'm Aboriginal. I want to be hired because I'm the best employee."

As times turned out, we found out why because she was. She would've actually been moved up in the organization very quickly. She was very well respected, and she was a hard worker, very smart. But she went to work for Cargill. And she met her eventual husband there and she ended up being the operation supervisor. I lost track of her after a while, but I know she works with my wife, so I see her once in a while. We chat about the old times.

NP: So, she might be a good person to interview?

JB: She would be actually. That would be an interesting interview. She's very well spoken obviously. I always thought that someday she was going to be somebody in the organization, but she moved on for whatever reason. And it might be interesting to ask her what her--. Why she moved on. Why she would go to the elevator for one thing. But Cargill has no women working for them now and they had three or four at one time. And they were working the frontend loader and they were doing anything anybody else could do. The one woman I talked to when she left, she said she couldn't handle the shift work. The shift work just killed her. We had our difficulties. It was very difficult when they got to having children. A lot of the non-traditional people were older, so their child-rearing days were behind them. Their kids were older. They tried a number of different things, maybe they were single or divorced and their kids were older. It might have been a little bit easier for them because they didn't have to worry about all the logistics of the house.

So those people maybe did a little bit better. But when those younger women started to have kids, that was difficult, because we had a job and we had to provide service. It was never--. "How can you do that? Why don't we hire more staff? Why don't you do this? Why don't you do that?"

NP: Not an issue that's really gone away.

JB: No, and I don't think it's--.

NP: It's gotten better, but it--. And it's not just with the grain industry.

JB: Well, it has gone away. We removed ourselves from the requirement of providing the service. Those same women will be working in the private sector someday with children, and they'll be faced with the same issues. But the elevator's faced with the same issues, Abitibi, Great Lakes Paper was. I'm sure Bombardier, if they had a non-traditional, they'd be having difficulties as well trying to back-fill maternity leave, and all the things, the logistics--. And the Commission--. Part of the problem I guess that comes with the Commission—not that it's special to them, but—you can't get a grain inspector from Con College [Confederation College]. To become a grain inspector, you've got to grade grain for x-number of years and mentor and tutor. So, to fill, back-fill, how many would you have to hire in anticipation of those?

[3:34:57]

And that's what the Commission I don't think did well. They didn't anticipate who was going to be doing what, where. In particular, those types of need for leave, and the shift work, and the travel. For the most part, they worked with it a little bit. They tried not to travel women any more than they had to, which caused problems because then the men were complaining that they weren't travelling as much as they were and, "How come you don't have to work overtime?" So, they defaulted back to policy and said, "Well policy says you have to work unless you got a doctor's appointment." Blah blah blah. You can imagine where we were. I imagine the elevators struggled with the same thing, but they didn't have all that legislation, and they could be a little bit more strong-armed about it.

NP: And they didn't have the critical mass of women to complain about lack of accommodation.

JB: Well, the federal government has to be a leader in the things that they propose. If they say we're going to have employment equity, you better damn well be doing it yourself. You can't expect the employer to do it if the government itself won't do it. So, you have to always be the first to move forward. We had to hire women. We had to hire Vis-Mins, and so on and so forth to the

demographics. Whereas they elevators said, "Yeah, we got to," but they weren't being policed. They didn't have to hold up that expectation. We grew with it. I wouldn't say we were 100 percent successful, but I don't think we were the worst-case scenario either. I think other organizations might not have had problems, that's because they didn't have any women working for them. So, nobody to complain, right? We had people move up. It was difficult to get promotions, for sure because they couldn't commit to the travel. And, of course, who are we looking? We're looking for the ones who are available all the time. Of course, that was always the guys. So, I'm sure there was that there, too.

NP: I'm going to switch now to the elevators in Thunder Bay. We're going to skip over Montreal and the Bay region. Do you have a favourite elevator in Thunder Bay?

JB: I liked Saskatchewan Wheat Pool 7A. I liked them all for different reasons. P&H [Parrish & Heimbecker] was the easiest elevator for us to do work at, and I didn't care to go there at all. They were really backwoods and a very different management team back in the day. They were very assertive and very aggressive and didn't want to do anything you wanted to do. They were Bill Parrish personified in an elevator. The whole elevator was like Bill Parrish. Other elevators were much more accommodating. I liked working at the busy elevators, and 7A was the place to work. When you worked there, all the people that were working there were people that liked to work at the busy elevator, and so we kind of built a kind of a reputation. And so, we stayed busy, and there was little or no downtime. You didn't really have a choice in where you were working. You were put where you were put.

I liked Pool 4 back in the day, because they were a little more modern, they had the first computers and control room and all that stuff, so that was kind of neat and new and unique. I liked McCabe's because they were all characters there. I liked the staff at Grain Growers [UGG] were kind of grassroots-y, down to--. Funny characters, eh? So, it was fun to work at Grain Growers [UGG]. And Manitoba Pool it was just that they were a great place to work for. It was nice and clean, and they asked permission to do stuff. They didn't just go ahead and do it. You worked hand in hand with them, so the job was a little bit easier. I don't know. I liked all the elevators for all different reasons.

NP: Physically were there any differences as far as ease of doing what you needed to do? Or difficulty doing what you needed to do?

JB: As time moved on--. I moved out of the elevators when there became a huge disparity in the way that they were kept. Back in the day they were all dirty. They were all old. There was nothing that was really preferred. There was busy, there was a little bit busy, and then there wasn't so busy. And that's where people--. And there was Port Arthur and Fort William. I was closer to my house I don't have to travel as far. You know, when you're working overtime you've got to get home and get back or whatever the

case may be. You either wanted to work overtime, so you'd go to the busy house; you didn't want to work overtime, you wanted to be in a less busy house. But everybody had to work everywhere. They kept shifting you to make sure you got--. In case they needed you, you needed to know how to work at that elevator.

But I liked 7A was just--. The group of us that worked there was fun. The inspection staff were busy when we worked. It was hard, and so everybody had to kind--. It was like hunker down and just do your job. We had lots of fun there. Cooked lots of dinners, the scale floor always cooked meals at the elevator, and we cooked meals downstairs. But we did the same thing at the other elevators, just to a smaller degree.

[3:40:15]

NP: So, elevators were starting to be decommissioned throughout your career. You have the pictures that you brought of Pool 5, formerly known as Western Grain.

JB: Yeah, I guess Pool 5 was the first one to go down. [Pool] 2 was gone and Pool 4 was still really vibrant and busy.

NP: Thunder Bay Elevator would have--.

JB: Thunder Bay was gone by the time I started. I went there with my dad. I went to Empire. I went to a lot of those old elevators when they were still operating, but I went there with my dad to see. We've got a few remnants of some of those places. My brother's got some of the original firehose, brass fire-hose nozzle. Both of us have a tow rope hanging in our garage that comes form the old ropes that used to drive I think it was Empire Elevator. One of the millwrights knew how to--. You know how you tie the knots so that it makes the loop? That was one of the things they used to do, make those up and give them away as a--. We both got one of those. I'm really not 100 percent sure which elevator it comes from. They were off the drive ropes from the original either diesel or steam, but the drive ropes. And I remember going and seeing the ropes. Western Grain was the one that lasted the longest. It was still rope-drive when I started there.

NP: You're speaking of Western Grain By-Products?

JB: Yes, yeah.

NP: What about that elevator in particular? Because that's one that we have a fondness for.

JB: Well. Not everybody liked going there. I loved working there, because it was like old school. It was like going back when I first started. I liked Kevin. I liked the guys that worked there were all--. And it was like old school. It was like going back in time. Locked in a time warp there. I liked going there. It was busy. Because it was all manual. It was dirty, and it was hard if you had to put long days in. Or if it was cold out that was a long day working at Western Grain.

NP: Where was the office—the CGC office—at the Fort William Elevator F, as it says on the sign. Was it still in the house where Maurice is now?

JB: You're stretching my memory. It was--. Where the heck were we originally before Kevin built the one upstairs? Where the heck did we--? Maybe you're right, maybe we were across in the old one. I'm not sure, I've forgotten now.

NP: When my dad worked there—and that would've been between '50 and '75--.

JB: It was downstairs in the--.

NP: It was--. No, he was up in Maurice's office. That was the grain inspection office, but that may have changed between that time and the new one.

JB: I'm trying to think of where we started with--. When we first started going there to provide the partial service, when they opened back up again as By-Product. And I can't remember where the weighers were. The weighers were still upstairs. That's what it was. The weighers were still upstairs but it was just a little cubbyhole, it was like a clothes closet. And the inspectors? Maybe they were still over on the other side, maybe that's what it was. And then they amalgamated us in the newer office.

NP: And so, when you said upstairs, you meant upstairs on the weighing floor?

JB: No, no. Upstairs in the office across the way, I think that's where the inspectors were. I don't think they were in the powerhouse building or down where Kevin works. I think they were across the way in Maurice's office, and it might have been upstairs. You'd have to ask an inspector. It's funny I can't remember.

NP: Because I sort of have a sense that between Maurice's office and the new one, that it's somewhere in between.

JB: Well, I remember being thrilled when they built that office. It was fabulous! He was way ahead of his time. He put in a dishwasher and the whole nine yards.

NP: Yes, I know. Just in time to close it up.

JB: To close it up. [Laughs] I did work once in [Pool] 10 as well. I went there once to work. [Pool] 11 and 10. So Western Grain and Turner's place. Well Mailhot and Turner. In the end, Mailhot called Western his and Turner's was the other one, and they ended up fighting between the two of them, and that's how they went. That was a court case for years and years and years. I don't know all the ins and outs of it.

[3:45:00]

NP: We interviewed Mr. Turner.

JB: Did you? He used to work for us.

NP: Yes, he did. And he was in charge of Western terminals and the Prairie ones. Now, fortunately we have already dealt with what were the challenges, major changes that you saw. You may just wrap this question up by saying, "We've already talked about that," but just in case there's something else. In your mind, what were the most significant events that happened during your time on the job?

JB: Went from manual scales to electronics, that had a significant impact on the number of staff the weighers needed at the time. And it completely changed how we delivered our service. Regulatory review and ultimately ending up in the legislation. The first of them was—I can't remember all the terminology—regulatory review was one that they called it. They were all the same thing. They were to look at whether the Commission was providing a service of value to the industry. I think that that had the overall largest impact. Obviously, it ultimately ended up changing the legislation.

NP: Now we're down to our last four minutes so I'm going to ask a question. What are you most proud of in your career when you think back on it?

JB: [Laughs] Funny. Well, I'm obviously most proud of--. This is kind of a two-phase question. Looking at my entire career? I retired and nobody under my supervision was ever hurt worse that a broken leg. I never lost an employee. I never lost an employee to health-related, that was directly related to anything we may or may not have had them do. So that when I think back--. Because when I was in the union, I was the chair of the Health and Safety committee. When I became operations manager, I was responsible for health and safety. That was one of my portfolios. And during my whole career, nobody ever was maimed or lost

their life as a result of anything that we required them to do or had them doing. So that was good. And I can't take credit for that all by myself, I mean obviously there was a lot of people that did that.

As far as looking back over my career? The operation manager's job was very demanding, but again, like I said before, it was rewarding in terms of where things could be done when we worked--. Finally got the new office at MTI after all those years. As difficult as it was and as complicated as it was for the relationship for me and Paul [Kennedy]—he worked with us, but it was difficult. He wasn't always onside, and I wasn't always onside, but when we completed it, he did everything he possibly could do to make that the best office. And it was by far, I mean many will argue, the worst office in Canada and became, in my mind, the best office in Canada.

Now, despite all of that there was still rhetoric after which I know was much to Paul's chagrin. But he spared no expense getting it done, and he did things that were not even asked for. It took a long time, lots of coordination, much money spent, back and forths. But it took most of my ten years to get it started. I thought by the time--. I remember Al Coffey and I sitting down when we first started saying, "These are the things we're going to change. We're going to change our offices. We're going to make them more modern." And it's not that other companies didn't do things. Richardson's was very progressive. They modified our offices and renovated. But there was other ones that were bad.

But MTI was basically we worked in a hallway for years. And it was because when Rick—Rick was the one that did it—when they recommissioned from Pool 15, and it went to be a pellet plant for wood pellets or something, and then MTI bought it, it was only supposed to be open like ten times a year just to unload some cars and maybe load a boat a year. Well it became one of the busiest outfits in Thunder Bay, and we were still stuck in that hallway that we worked at. It created so much labour relations and animosity and dreadful things. But when he finished it, that was a major accomplishment for me.

NP: You have one minute left, so you have to speak fast. What is your feeling about what you contributed to Canada's success as a grain trader?

JB: Hm. That's an interesting question. No, go ahead, I think I got it. I think what I would say I contributed to the Canadian grain industry as a whole is I learnt that the most important thing for the Canadian Grain Commission to help the industry was to maintain that integrity. And I think I stayed completely--. My integrity stayed intact all the way through, and I tried to mentor that with the people that I worked with and the people that I supervised and the people that I delivered a service to. And I think that because of that integrity, I think that Canadian grain industry was trusted. Because of the Commission.

NP: Thank you very much. We have run out of time.

End of interview.