

Narrator: Rick Bevilacqua (RB)

Company Affiliations: Canadian Grain Commission (CGC)

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Interviewer: Nancy Perozzo (NP)

Recorder: Monika McNabb (MM)

Transcriber: Rebecca Tulonen

Summary: In his second interview, retired regional director for the Canadian Grain Commission Rick Bevilacqua discusses the latter portion of his career. He begins by continuing his survey of the Thunder Bay waterfront, describing unique features and sharing stories from elevators in Intercity and Current River. He explains the number of CGC inspection staff at each elevator, the process of loading a ship, issues that could occur with loading, the process of sending samples to the Grain Research Lab, and the certifications that accompanied each load of grain. Bevilacqua then discusses his move to Winnipeg as the national training officer in charge of administering inspection exams and creating a training manual, as well as coordinating with the Canadian Wheat Board, grain companies, and Canadian International Grains Institute. He then discusses his move to Vancouver as assistant regional director and his subsequent move back to Thunder Bay in the same position. He describes major challenges with staffing during the period of shifting grain movement to the West Coast and different work cultures in each port. Bevilacqua then discusses his work on the CGC's new International Grain Consultant division, and he shares stories of his travels around the world seeking out customers. Other topics discussed include computerization and automation of grain elevators, the combining of inspection and weighing divisions in the CGC, the growth of private inspection services, and the demise of the Canadian Wheat Board.

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Time, Speaker, Narrative

NP: The second instalment of the interview with Rick Bevilacqua. If you recall because of your experience in all of the elevators in Thunder Bay, I had taken you on a tour of the Kam River elevators, and you had just commented on what you remember about all of the elevators that were there including the Empire fire and working at Searle and at Cargill. I would like to start with moving on to the Intercity strand of elevators, and we will just do the same thing. We will go from elevator to elevator, and if you just make comments about what it was like from what you recall and especially from the standpoint of a grain inspector. We will start with P&H.

RB: P&H was one of the smallest elevators on the waterfront. It was very similar to the ones on the river because of its size and the way they handled grain. When you showed up for work, it was about an hour before you would get any samples to grade because it took that length of time for them to get the system up and running and before the samples were big enough for you to start the grading process, within an hour of showing up. They were an either-or operation where they could either unload cars or load a ship, but not at the same time. They had three legs, that limited their capacity to move and unload. They were at first a group of only a handful of people. They really didn't have a lot of employees. I recall their inspector coming into our office with handfuls of separation that he made on the inspection and because they didn't have the equipment, they would borrow some of our inspection equipment and use what we had to do the grading. The elevator was a very slow and very easy operation. There were always just two people there and that was always nice. It was a perk to get an elevator like that because it was fairly easy work when you were there.

NP: Long-term staffs were there for a long time?

RB: They had been there for a long time. The people that you dealt with had quite a bit of experience, but they didn't have a very large staff, so they kept everyone that they had. It wasn't very modern in terms of elevators. Everything fairly basic.

NP: A shovel house?

RB: At first it was shovel until tank cars showed up on the scene, and that was a real blessing to anyone who worked there. That came about in the '80s. It made the work a lot easier in the track shed. Again, a very slow operation and didn't do a lot of work. It was a fairly easy place.

NP: Because it was so small, was there any trouble with loading ships and were they limited?

RB: They could generally start a lot of vessels, but they didn't have enough water to finish a lot of them. They didn't have the capacity to finish a lot of the vessels either because of the size of the elevator. The stocks in the elevator were always relatively small compared to some of the other bigger houses, so quite often they would start vessels there and get them out.

NP: That particular elevator stopped operation last year. From what you said about that, they would start a ship and I am assuming it would move to elsewhere in the port. So with the demise of the Wheat Board then, is that a factor in closing down that elevator?

RB: No, it had nothing to do with that. The fact is that they probably never had more than two to three or 4,000 tonne of any one particular grade, whether it was wheat or whatever it was they were handling. They could only put that much on at one time, or if there were multiple grades going on they had smaller amounts of those. You could never start and finish a vessel there. Vessels are 25,000 tonnes. That was probably a good chunk of the capacity of the entire plant. So no, that didn't have any impact.

NP: If they were loading canola then they could go over to Richardson's and finish off?

RB: They could go anywhere.

NP: So it didn't matter who owned the grain?

RB: It didn't matter.

NP: They would just work out a deal?

RB: Absolutely. That is how all the vessels loaded. They took portions of grain at different elevators. However, the larger ones had larger stocks and could start and finish a boat. In fact, a lot of them a boat would start at 8:00 in the morning and would be finished about 11:00 at night. That was 25 or 26,000 tonnes of one commodity. At that time, we moved a lot of feed barley. Feed barley was moved off the Prairie and farmers grew barley just for feed purposes to ship it out because they took advantage of the freight rate subsidiary they were getting. The price of barley at that time was about \$120 to \$130 a tonne, and the cost of freight was about \$80 a tonne to move it. A lot of that picked up by the freight rate subsidiary. They would ship it all to Thunder Bay. We handled huge amounts of feed barley back then. Cleaned it up and went out as pig feed mainly.

Shipped overseas as well because of the freight rate subsidies. It was a rather bulky commodity, and a vessel would fill at around 23 to 24,000 tonnes, and most of these vessels will take 28, and there is a new one that takes 30,000 tonnes of wheat. The ships that

took feed barley back then would pull into a place like Pool 4 or Pool 7—the big elevators—UGG A and fill an entire vessel in one day.

They generally took days like a Saturday or a Sunday when there was nothing else going on and they could put a boat in and start and finish it all in one day and away it went. Fairly efficient operation back then. When you have things like that, that is why we moved 17 million tonnes back in 1987. I believe it was somewhere around then 1986 or 1987. Those were the years where we were shipping excessive 15 million tonnes of grain. That is a large part of the reason for that or commodities like that were going out that the freight rate subsidiary was picking up the costs of moving it off the Prairies. As soon as that went, farmers stopped growing a lot of that stuff for export. They grew it and sold it domestically and sold it the nearest buyer because the transportation costs outweighed the costs of the profits. And they found other commodities like corn, which was much cheaper than to feed barley. I remember plant-breeding programs breeding feeds of barley and big programs for that but very little of that. You won't find any of that in Thunder Bay any longer. That changed a lot.

NP: We moved heading north to Manitoba Pool.

RB: Yes, Pool 1 next door, old and new houses and new annex. The place always had the reputation of being the cleanest elevator on the waterfront. Management had a real good philosophy on how they ran the plant. The staff also were very dedicated to the work they did and just a different attitude when you worked there. You could just see the difference. They took pride in the plant, took pride in the work, safety was a big thing there and it wasn't ultra modern, but it was a step above some of the other elevators.

NP: Who were the managers there?

RB: There was Gerald Spier in the '90s and 2000s, and Brian and Bill Mallon, I remember them. Before that, Truin, and before him I don't recall.

NP: Mr. Truin's name has come up previously. Is he still around?

RB: No.

NP: Gerry Spier?

RB: Yes, I have already mentioned Gerald Spier already. He was later. I can't think of the managers were back at that time. Brian Mallon's dad actually as well was a manager. Their whole family were employed there. They were very good managers who did a very good job. Everyone respected them. It was a fairly good place to work.

NP: Next door?

RB: Next door was McCabe's.

NP: Was it McCabe's when you were actually working there as opposed to UGG M?

RB: It was definitely McCabe's. It was UGG M and as far back as I can recall. I don't remember exactly when it changed from McCabe's to UGG M. However, I remember Stan McKay and working on Christmas Eve until 8:00 at night when everyone else went home at noon because they were the only elevator that needed to get a boat loaded and out of the Seaway. It was a laker and they wanted to get it done by Christmas. I got sent there in the morning from Pool 1, and I remember looking at all the inspectors on the other side of the slip. They all waved as they left at noon and had their turkey lunch and everything else and walked out the door, as most other elevators did on Christmas Eve. Generally, you worked a half or day or so and usually you had some snacks or something before you left for the day. But we had a boat and they had to finish it and they wanted to finish it. Otherwise, that boat was going to be stuck there for three extra days and it needed to get through the Seaway by then back then. That was another issue. We stayed and we thought we would be done at 2:00 then it became 4:00 and delays and problems pumping water and other issues, and I remember it being 8:00 at night and thinking "I am going to be here all bloody night loading this thing." That is one memory of UGG M. And an older plant. I feel like Forrest Gump here telling a story. That's all I've got to say about that. Elevators are like a box of chocolates. You never know what you are going to get. [Laughs]

NP: What about Stan McKay? That is a name I have heard often. What can you tell me about him?

RB: Really nothing.

NP: Was he an older guy?

RB: Of course. At the time I was working. Stan, I think, retired shortly after I started and even before I left Thunder Bay for Winnipeg. I think he retired back in the late '70s. I don't remember exactly and possibly the early '80s.

NP: How would you describe the management system there versus the one next door?

RB: It was different, and more production based. They had work to do and they made sure they got the work done. Just a little different attitude there.

NP: At the time that you were working, were any of those elevators such as Parrish & Heimbecker, Pool 1, McCabe's/UGG M, were there ethnic divisions, or by the time you started everything was pretty mixed up?

RB: No ethnic divisions. I didn't see that. Every ethnicity was prominent and there was every nationality in the world represented at all the elevators. I think so many immigrants worked in the elevators and so much of the early work was manual labour and paid fairly well, and hence the attraction to get jobs there. Good hard-working people that I am sure recommended others from their friends and whatnot to apply for jobs and hence you got people from certain parts of the community to work in certain elevators. The Finnish people that were prominent in Port Arthur tended to work at places like UGG A and the North End elevators. There were splits like that. National or Cargill there were more Italians working there. Ukrainians, Poles, and others just about everywhere. Every nationality and European immigrant and every immigrant from Asia were all represented in there. I don't think it was any different than Canada Car, the paper mills, and any other big industries, the railways, they were all the same. I don't believe there was any difference. The elevators weren't unique in that regard.

NP: Was Thunder Bay Elevator still operating when you were there?

RB: No.

NP: It has already closed down?

RB: Yes, it had closed down already.

NP: We leap across the slip.

RB: To Pool 7, and Pool 7 just a mass of huge volumes of grain going through. Large huge numbers of people working there. Everything was volume. Unloading 100 and some cars before lunch hour that kind of thing. They had the capacity to just move so much grain, so fast. They were fairly modern in terms of the equipment. Because of that when you worked in an inspection office, very congested and lots of people bumping into each other and grain dust and lots of activity, cars unloading, boats loading, drying grain, doing this, and doing that, and always something going on there. Busy seven days a week.

NP: Since you are talking about probably at that time one of the busiest elevators if not the busiest elevator on the waterfront, describe a day then as the inspector. You come in the morning and let's say there are cars and a vessel. Were there different inspectors for different jobs?

RB: The crew were made up of a PI-4, the inspector in charge. His job was to inspect the grain going to the vessel. Then they would have anywhere from three or four PI-3 inspectors who were grading the inward cars. Then you would have a whole team of PI-1s, assistant inspectors, who collected samples going to the vessel and others who assisted the inspector grading those samples to the vessel and others writing out the grades on all the documentation, others assisting the inspectors preparing the samples and packaging and all those things.

Then a team of samplers. You had five samplers, one for each track, to either carry the samples in or to make sure the equipment was working. You had a huge team of people, 22 some-odd people just working for the Grain Commission on one shift. Everyone trying to find some place to have lunch, to have a cup of coffee, to get their equipment, to have a locker and getting their work clothes and all of those kinds of issues. Probably one of the smaller offices on the waterfront and all that took place there.

It wasn't really a place anyone wanted to go to when you had choices. If you did work there, you certainly learned a lot. You took a lot of short cuts if you could. You found ways to do things faster while still not trying to compromise accuracy or quality of the work, but you sure found a way to get good at the work you did. It was a good training ground for anyone new if you wanted to learn a bit about grading grain and the work involved from that perspective. The other thing is that they worked seven days a week and all kinds of overtime. If you wanted to make some money, you could make a pile of it there. You could work every day of the week if you wanted to. Overtime was always important. There were always two shifts going on during the busy times. When someone didn't show up, that is how we filled the shifts is by putting a second person on and you would work a double shift. As I said, you could work a pile of overtime there.

NP: Take us through what would happen to get a ship in and out? What would the inspector have to do? Where did they start and when did they wrap it up?

RB: How much tape do you have? [Laughing]

NP: There may not be anybody else to tell this, so take your time.

RB: One of the things that the inspector has to do was to verify that the ship was empty, clean, and dry, and that CFIA had performed their inspection on the vessel and certified to be free of insects and sanitary sufficient to take on a load of grain. They

usually had documentation for that, or they had what we call a pass-on slip, and the first mate always carried the slips that we would make out and give to him so that we had a record of what was on the ship that if it had taken grain at other elevators. It had the location and the grades of all of those and some other notations on that slip. Before the grain trimmers released any of the grain to the vessel, we always had to give the okay, and they always checked with us before they did that to make sure that the spouts were lined up properly, that the right grades were going into the right holes, and everything was okay.

NP: Before the time of cell phones, how was that communication between you and the trimmers?

RB: We were on the ship. We climbed right on the ship. Before the advent of automatic sampling, we had a bucket and a scoop, and we went onto the ship, stood next to the spout, and we had a thing about the length of a hockey stick with a metal cup at the end of it, and as the grain was going on the ship, every draft or every shot of 1,500 tonnes or so we would collect a couple of scoops and keep that in a bucket. And periodically through the loading, at intervals of maybe 1,000 tonnes or so, we would package that up in a bag and have someone carry that back into the inspection office and help the inspector do grading of that lot.

NP: Would that have been the sampler?

RB: That would be the assistant grain inspector doing that, and a second on the vessel, or a third or a fourth depending on the size of the elevator. In some vessels, you may need three assistants and one inspector to do the loading. It was pretty labour intensive.

The inspector then assessed all the quality factors of whatever they were loading—canola wheat, durum, barley, what have you—and advise the elevator if they exceeded any of those specifications. There could be 20 to 25 different specifications that we were testing for. If any one of those was marginal or exceeded, we let them know. If it was very serious, we would stop loading. Occasionally that would happen right on the vessel. Loading barley for example, when we see wheat coming out and occasionally what would happen. Someone would open a wrong bin in the basement. None of these things were foolproof. They were all handwritten and pieces of paper and chalk on a blackboard, and you would rely on all that to make sure that the right stuff was going into the right ship. Occasionally mistakes like that would happen. You had to be alert, to be watching for that. I had it happen to make on more than one occasion where we were out on the vessel and thought we were loading wheat and I see durum coming out of the thing. It happened quite often and hence the need to have the Grain Commission there to do that work during the loading.

When that would happen, the elevator had the option of taking it off and occasionally they did that either with pneumatic equipment like a big vacuum cleaner or getting in there and bagging it and taking it off, and occasionally they did that too. Pool 7 had a marine leg, and it never got used, and so did Richardson's, but they never used that thing, and it was quite antiquated and it didn't really work very well.

The other option was for them to take a lower grade of the grain, and that cost them a lot of money, and they rarely wanted that to happen. They always tried to sweeten it up maybe if they were putting on a No. 2 and a No. 3 came out, maybe sweeten it out with No. 1 in the next shot, something to that effect. There were a number of different ways to correct some of those problems. That was the work of the inspector. Large samples going to the central office on Archibald Street daily. A sample for a vessel was generally about 10 to 20 kilograms in size so fairly heavy and sometimes you had five or six different lots, each sample would weigh for example 20 kilograms and quite a bit of grain ended up in the central office representing those vessel samples.

NP: Why would they go to the central office?

RB: In the central office, and I spent a lot of time there storing them, they went up there because our lab needed samples for all kinds of various testings that they would do. Not our protein lab, but our grain research lab in Winnipeg. They did everything from trace mineral analysis, they actually milled and baked the different shipments, and prepared quarterly reports on the cargo averages for example, the quality of grain leaving Thunder Bay and Vancouver, and they could graph the quality changes when a new crop started to move through the system, and the effects of weather on the quality of the wheat. It was from the samples that we were collecting and all kinds of tests and chemical tests being done on it.

Then it was stored for up to a year in case there were any customer complaints, and they were routine inquiries. Customers also wanted portions to represent what they bought. They wanted to see a physical example of the grain that they bought. They needed someone to prepare an average of that entire loading because some vessels would load at that time as many as seven or eight different elevators, so you needed to do the blending of those samples so that they were proportionally mixed. If you took 7 percent of the load of P&H and 8 percent at Pool 1 and 12 percent at Pool 7A and so on and so forth, someone had to mix the sample as well so that it represented physically what was on that vessel. That is the only representation of what you have that is on that vessel. If it was getting to Montreal, they off loaded the boat and complained that there are finding something in that, and it is not working out properly, we had a vessel sample that showed what was in that shipment. We could compare notes and customers as well if there was ever a complaint made. We had a physical sample that we could go back on. That is the vessel loading and you also asked me about inward cars and all the car samples.

NP: Before you move onto there--.

RB: We are still at Pool 7.

NP: I know I am trying to keep it straight. [Laughs]

RB: It is a good thing we don't have any more elevators! [Laughing]

NP: A couple of things. First of all, that must have been very stressful when loading a ship because you only had a certain amount of time to look at those.

RB: Yes. What was stressful was making a decision if the loading was marginal. You had to deal with an elevator manager and tell him, "Here is the consequence of the problem that you have exceeded the limits, and if you continue like this, I may not be able to give you a certificate for it, and you are going to be in a lot of trouble with your own company, not with me."

We only do the certification basically and consider ourselves like referees, simply report the news. We don't make the news. I am just telling you what you got. That never sat too well with a lot of the elevator managers, particularly older ones. There was always different ways. "Oh, we will just turn a blind eye. Oh, don't worry about it. We are trying to pick it again or do something else. Have a second look or maybe you are in a bad light." You had to physically deal with someone. Some people are hard to deal with. Some people don't have the ability or capacity to do that. Not everyone. Some people are good at grading grain and other people are better at talking to people about the grain. You found that certain people could handle that type of work better than others. Not everyone could do it. Particularly in that industrial environment when you are there.

NP: You may as well name people that do it well. Who did you admire for their ability to do that?

RB: I don't know if anybody really did it well because you are always dealing with others that didn't do it well and elevator managers that were easy to deal with. They understood what the issues were and some of the same people are still there today that are reasonable and understand what everyone's roles were, and others that haven't a clue what you were there for. The fact that you worked for the Grain Commission they really didn't understand why you were doing that or what you were doing, or what it was you were telling them when you gave them the information. I don't think they received a lot of training themselves. That was always a tough thing. You had to work with someone who may have been put on that shift to do that work that wasn't trained properly. When you had to give them the news, they were at a loss themselves as to what to do. Without going into names, I am not going to tell you.

NP: You are not even going to say who the "good" guys are?

RB: I don't recall. There were so many good ones.

NP: You were mentioning about the fellow at the protein lab who really helped you out.

RB: Wally Zarowski.

NP: Exactly. That was the kind of thing I was looking for.

RB: He was a good guy. There were many that were reasonable and easy to deal with. Jerry Franklin was good to deal with, Brain Mallon was good to deal with, and there were many.

NP: I was actually asking about the inspectors that you thought and learned how to deal with those issues. Who was Mr. Diplomacy? That is really what you are looking for, right?

RB: You probably needed people that were definitely good at that. People who could get the respect of the others. Henry Caruso was one. He was good at it. Matter of fact kind of guy. Ernie Duda was good to speak to. Ernie could get managing different activities, which was a little bit difficult for him. Some of the others that were good, Al Reid, who again could get the job done. There was no one that was perfect. I was certainly far from that. Again, some very difficult situations. I don't know if anybody was really good at it. [Laughs]

It was one difficult part of the work. Being on Treasury Board's negotiation team just before I retired, I got to meet some people from Fisheries and Oceans and these guys basically did the same thing we did. They had a video they showed me of having to deal with a ship captain and crew that were over their limits and they were breaking all the rules, where they actually got into a fight and had to board the ship, but it was everything but weapons that were pulled out and he said, "This is the kinds of things our inspectors deal with, so if you think the grain guys had it rough, here is an example of what we deal and being dealing this is good. It used to be worse," he said. When you are the policeman and you have to do that type of work, you can see what we were faced with. I think if you get pulled over for speeding, it is the same type of thing.

And I think that is a good analogy because when you are down the highway and you go over the speed limit a little bit, the cop will usually cut you a little bit of slack, and he'll let you go a little bit over the limit and won't bother you. But when you have gone a little too far, or if he is in a bad mood or what have you, you are going to get a ticket. It was the same thing at the elevators. We always allowed them using a little bit of discretion to exceed the limits. It was never hard and fast. It was always a hard thing for a new person to understand how far I can let them go over before it is a serious problem, before it causes a quality complaint, before everyone is in an uproar about the quality concern. Getting to know what that was and understanding all those dynamics of the work took a little bit of time. It wasn't an easy thing to do.

I know prior to retiring, there was an attempt to try to quantify that. Len Seguin worked hard at doing that and trying to make that part of the job more straight forward, less arbitrary, less open to discussion, and trying to define what the allowable limits were and not leaving it to the inspector's discretion. A tough exercise. I am not sure they ever did get there. There is still a lot of that that goes on. When you are grading grain, it is sometimes not an exacting science because judgement is involved. There is a certain degree of judgement when you are looking at a visual grading factor and that the equipment that we used isn't precise. It has a margin of error built into it as well, collecting the sample and measuring all the constituents. Again, you are getting my opinions on these things.

NP: We get everybody's opinion. We will have another guy next week who will deny. [Laughs] At the same time, companies have their own inspectors?

RB: Of course.

NP: Are they taking different samples or does everybody use the same samples?

RB: Yes, they are. They are taking samples and sometimes both. They take samples generally before it gets to our sampling system so they can see what is coming up because there is a certain amount of blending that takes place, and they have to do that. They have a number of different bins that they will selected to load to a vessel to meet the specifications which contains everything from broken grain and other kinds of things that they are trying to get rid of. They need to see that and to have an understanding of what is going to go on that vessel before it hits our sampling system so that there are no surprises for them. They don't want that.

So much of that is automated now, but back in the day this was all done by hand. It was people taking scoops of samples off the basement belts and bringing them up to the inspector in the elevator and the elevator inspector would check all of that and would tell the people to crack this bin two notches and that one five notches and this one notch and that was the exact blend they needed to load the vessel. It would all hopefully come out in the wash!

NP: If you were starting to experience what you thought was a problem, how would you interact with the company's inspector?

RB: You would advise them as soon as you had that sample. Again, as I mentioned earlier, marginal in any of the quality parameters you would let them know that they are exceeding this, and if it was marginal, you would probably do it verbally. If it was more serious you would issue the letter with the exact information, "Here is what we found and here is what is going to happen. It is on file, signed, sealed, and a record of that." [Laughs]

NP: The ideal then is this certificate final that was something the inspectors here would write up at the very end?

RB: No, the inspector didn't, and a lot of inspectors really didn't know what happened afterward. At that time, we had three divisions. We had the Economics & Statistics division, who did all the administrative work and all the certificates and paperwork involved in moving grain. The Weighing Branch and the Inspection Division. There was very little interaction I can tell you between all those three groups, and once the sample left the elevator, the inspector didn't have a clue what happened to it after that. It was up to the admin people to prepare the certificates.

The people preparing the certificates didn't have a clue where all this information came from. It really was a strange relationship and so many people worked in our admin area had never even been out to a grain elevator, never seen where those samples originated or any of their work came from. They did everything from data entry to preparing certificates and working with the Lake Shippers and all those kinds of things. I suppose they really didn't see the need for it. Really at that time there was so many people and so difficult to do that. People who worked in the central office, the management crew, they certainly did, and they would hope to have a better understanding of what all that meant. I don't believe they really did.

When we did audits and layovers and all the documentation that was involved with any of that, so few of the inspectors at the elevator really knew what any of the work they were doing was producing and what was happening with it. They supplied the samples, they supplied the hand-written sheets, the documents, with all the grades and dockages and moisture, protein, grading factors and all of those kinds of things. All that went to the Econ and Stats division for data entry and that was all. It wasn't keyed at that time. Computers were just coming in, and they just maintained huge reams of paper files with all this stuff. And from that lots of carbon paper and copies of paper that went everywhere. [Laughs]

That was one of the things you needed, a big building for storing reams and reams and reams of paper. Huge amounts of paper. Counting numbers and that was an activity that you saw everywhere you went in the Grain Commission office where people talking to each other relaying information like numbers back and forth, car numbers, weights, grades, lists upon lists upon lists of cards. Which lent itself so well to computerization when it did come in and all the data entry done that way right on site, right at the elevator. With an Apple 2C Computer, the first computer that we had out at the Waterfront.

NP: One thing that you mentioned earlier on that I was curious about and that was you were saying that these samples were collected and one of the reasons was that the Grain Research Lab was interested in differences in the quality of the shipments that would here or the west coast. Did they ever find a difference?

RB: Yes. One of their publications was a quarterly report on exports of grain outside of Canada and out of the St. Lawrence, out of Thunder Bay, off the prairies and off the West Coast. It documented exactly--. This was wheat by the way and I believe malting barley as well. I don't believe feed barley--. Wheat, durum, and malting barley. They measured all of the properties that a miller and a baker would want to know. Everything from gluten strength, to farinographic extensograph, alveograph, ash content, and all those kinds of things in wheat. They would also produce loaves and did bread scoring for those. They produced pasta and scored that. All that contained in a quarterly report that was published in six different languages and went all over the world.

NP: What would be a difference between coming out of eastern ports as opposed to the west?

RB: Because most of the Manitoba grain and a good part of Saskatchewan came through Thunder Bay, you saw the weather factors, climatic factors or environmental factors that impacted crops produced in those two provinces, which could be very different and often were then that produced in Alberta or eastern BC, and different mix of varieties at that time, those that were better suited to Alberta as opposed to those that were better suited to Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Generally, most of the Manitoba grain coming to Thunder Bay and for that reason the quality was different. There was not a lot of mixing of the two. The stuff that was closer to the west went west and vice versa. Because we moved 60 to 70 percent of the country's crop, the bulk of it came through Thunder Bay. You did see the difference. Stuff going through Prince Rupert, for example, came out of the Peace River and a lot of it did and the quality was not that good, primarily because it was wheat that was supposed to grow in 60 days, and it wasn't as good as some of the bread wheats that were grown in Saskatchewan. You could see that.

NP: Did the customers care?

RB: Yes, they did. Historically always talked about, I suppose, they had heard that Manitoba wheat was better than let's say Alberta wheat. When they took shipments out of the east, they could see better quality in that. There may be a bit of truth to that that likely occurred maybe earlier in our evolution, maybe in the '40s and '50s where that was more of the case when it was again probably more difficult to move grain from Alberta into Thunder Bay. Later on, being in the late '70s early '80s, they shipped grain from just about everywhere through Thunder Bay. Volume was the thing, and it was so much being moved and because of the freight rate subsidies it was nothing to move all kinds of grain from Alberta coming to Thunder Bay. That changed.

The other thing was that from one crop year to the next, if you had an early fall frost or a very wet harvest and post harvest sprouting was an issue, post-harvest sprouting, you saw that in the quality and you would see those particular factors start to impact on the qualities reported in their reports. They would see that long before the report was produced. When we knew all about those things, and part of the role of the inspection division back then was to jump on those factors early and make sure the inspectors were well aware of it that sprouting is a problem this year. Be very vigilant and be watching for this stuff, here is what it looks like,

or here a new stain or here is a new grading factor that is prevalent this particular year. One crop year to the next changed dramatically. You need to see about five crop years to get an exposure to the kinds of things that would change from season to season. It changed a lot.

NP: What then would happen if you are getting a substantial difference in the quality of the grain heading out to a customer, what do you do?

RB: It is a major problem. Quality to a customer isn't necessarily always the best, but the most consistent. Because when they are producing flour for example, they have certain settings on all their equipment and they don't want to have to make changes because it represents a direct loss to a flourmill or to a baker, for example. Here is a good thing to consider. The Japanese produce what they call a pullman loaf. It is a loaf of bread that is baked in a square loaf pan with no sides on it and four sides are metal. They pull the pan apart and you are left with a square loaf. In seasons where we have a lot of post-harvest sprouting, it produces an enzyme called alpha-amylase, and this enzyme tends to break down the gluten. And what happens to it after the bread cools is that the sides get caved in on the bread, they slice the sides off the bread before they package it, and in order to do that have to move the sides in and it represents a direct loss to them.

When you go from having the same consistent quality year after year after year and then this happens, it is a major quality concern, and they are paying the same price they were for the wheat, but not getting the same product that they wanted. It is those kinds of issues that would crop up every so many years. Things like that and other things similar to that. That was something that you would have to be vigilant looking for, looking for the new crop year.

NP: Who negotiates with the customer then on how to remediate with the loss?

RB: The Wheat Board is the sales agency or the grain company if it was canola, for example, flax or some other products, malting barley. The Board sold that as well. That's who deals with it.

NP: The research lab would be feeding all the information back to the companies, back to the Wheat Board?

RB: Back to the Wheat Board, and to the customers they would be feeding that information and also doing the testing, collaborative testing. They would get samples from the customers and some of their own people to come to the research lab to do joint testing. We would also go there as well, quite often accompany that the Wheat Board all over the world on these kinds of things because the customers did not want any surprises. My point was that even though it was still number one quality, it was different. It was different than the previous year. That meant different processing for them and our grades, while they tried to measure quality, there

was quite a wide range between the best and the worst, or if one factor, for example, was at the extreme limit that the grade allowed, it could still cause a quality problem for a certain customer. You had to be aware of that.

NP: One last thing before we actually move on to Canada Malting.

RB: Well, we've missed one. You've got 7B right beside.

NP: I was hoping you had actually dealt with them both at once.

RB: Well, they are basically the same. They were joined at the hip. I'd have to think, like early '80s, late '70s they put a cross-belt.

NP: Who sends that certificate final out?

RB: The Grain Commission sends it out.

NP: Sends it to--?

RB: To the Wheat Board who not only use that certificate final but a stack of paper about 10 inches thick. Every certificate under the sun that has to accompany that grain transaction. John Tryon from the Canadian International Grains Institute put a presentation together several years ago called "Documents in the Grain Transaction." This was an interesting one that I remember. He took a farmer's delivery and the paper that accompanied the farmer's delivery to the country elevator and every piece of paper that had to accompany that parcel of grain right through until it reached the final destination of where it was being produced. He had a stack of over 100 and some odd individual pieces of paper that had to accompany that transaction. Government agencies and private industry and banks and others that all had to become involved in that transaction. Actually, it was Lake Shippers that were the agency that would collect a lot of those documents. For the financing of the grain so that it could be forwarded to the next stop, like the transfer elevator for example, and the cancellation and registration of the paper that was there.

We did that, and we did it through Lake Shippers. We issued the negotiable documents that the banks used as collateral that verified that this grain actual exists in this grade and quantity that this piece of paper says it does. That is how the whole transaction took place. But in the meantime, between railways and everyone else who is holding that parcel of grain, documentation has to accompany all of it and follow it all the way through. That was a real interesting presentation that he had. It took him a while to assemble all the pieces of papers and documents that were there and all the examples of them, but it gave you a rough idea of how much administration is involved in moving grain.

NP: With the advent of computers, did that eliminate some of those steps?

RB: Yes. It all became electronic transfers after that and with banks as well.

NP: Was there actually a document that was sent over to the customer?

RB: Yes. They would receive it.

NP: Either electronically or by paper?

RB: Yes, they would receive a copy of the certificate. They would also request certain letters to accompany the shipment. They would ask for a letter that specifies certain quality constitutes that may be there—the percent of this and a percent of that and all of those kinds of things signed by the inspector. We always called them "side letters" that would accompany the certificate. Sometimes you may have as many as 10 different ones because he may be parcelling it out. It might go to Antwerp and from there he has got 30 buyers coming to pick up canola and every one of them wants a government letter and something official and we would issue those side letters.

NP: Did signing your name to anything when you think of working on the waterfront, did you ever lose sleep at night or did you really have no idea what was happening, you just knew that this piece of paper had to go somewhere?

RB: No, we never considered any of that, as long as you did your job properly. Like anything you signed your name throughout the day to everything. Your initials were on everything—every railcar that you graded, every vessel sample you initialled. Yes, it was funny. Every inward car that you did, you did in pencil in Thunder Bay because occasionally they would take a random sampling and take one of thirty and check it again. And if it was in pen, they didn't like that because they had to erase the grade or the factor and write something else in. When I went to Vancouver, it was just the opposite. You had to do it in pen just to make sure you were right. You did it right! Isn't that funny! [Laughing] They would not let us use pens in Thunder Bay, but in Vancouver it was totally pens. You can't use pencils because they were afraid the grade information would get lost. Just a little aside.

NP: Pool 7B, what was it like when you started?

RB: I spent a lot of time there with Wilf Belanger. You like names and I know you keep asking me for names.

NP: Is he still around?

RB: No, Wilf died a few years ago.

NP: Okay.

RB: His son is alive. His son worked at UGG A. Wilf was in the military and had a reputation as a body builder and had a dumb bell, about 50 or 60 pounds, and mid way through the morning, he would walk over to it and grab it and thrust it up in the air and do five on one arm and five on another, then another five. He was in great shape, incredible shape. He ate really well, and he was very physically fit. A real good guy to work with. I really enjoyed my time with him. He is one, you asked about names and people who could deal with people, he was a prince of a guy! He just knew exactly how to deal with the elevator managers on friendly terms. Always on friendly terms. No matter if there were problems, they would try to work those things out. I spent a lot of time with him at 7B.

NP: Was 7B operating just as a separate entity almost?

RB: Yes. It was and it had everything. It was a stand-alone elevator and the only thing that linked it up was the cross belt that they put in between 7A and transferred grain occasionally back and forth, but they operated independently.

NP: What is Wilf's son name?

RB: You always ask the hard questions. [Laughs]

NP: That's okay, I can catch it later. That elevator, 7B, is the mirror image of Canada Malting which is next door which use to be the Bawlf, but it would have been Canada Malting when you were working there.

RB: Yes. It was Canada Malting, and we staffed it with an inspector and whenever they loaded barley and malt out of the plant, generally to Milwaukee and to Lake Michigan, Green Bay, I believe there were other areas on Lake Michigan. Even hauling short distances like Superior for example, and places like that small vessels hauling malt. Occasionally an ocean ship selling and moving both malting barley and malt.

NP: The plant itself was it old or new?

RB: It was average. Nothing unusual about it. About the same vintage of any of the others. Not much work took place there.

NP: One of the quieter places?

RB: One of the quieter places, yes.

NP: Then you moved to which location?

RB: Pool 3 which was kind of the sister ship of Pool 1.

NP: Who was managing there when you were there?

RB: It was Fred Kayser. They moved a few people from Pool 1 back and forth occasionally between that and Pool 3. Pool 3 was a good place to work. Not quite up to the same standards as Pool 1. Still a fairly busy elevator. Typical track shed in the center, a mechanical dumper and tank cars for the most part. They did have a dumper, but that was phased out as soon as boxcars started to go. Maybe they had a couple of dumpers if I recall. We had an average-size crew which was about the same size as you would have at Pool 1.

NP: Before we leap over the ore dock, I want to ask a question about boxcars. They were going out of existence and since you are an East End guy, I always liked the stories of and I don't know if they are true or not, people coming in and augering into boxcars and taking away some feed. Where did those boxcar doors go? Any stories to that?

RB: Where did the doors go?

NP: Some people have said that half of the East End and probably Westfort as well were built with the boxcars.

RB: Yes, the wooden slats that made up the doors. Those were mainly CN, I think. CP used cardboard and metal slats to form the doors, whereas CN used a one by six or a one by eight board actually to form the door. Most of the cars in the East End were CP's. The amount of lumber was huge because the grain door guys worked, and they had three places—one on the Mission and one near Pool 7 and one near the tracks by Clavet Street by McDougall Street crossing. They always burned all the scraps of wood. There was always a fire going on there. That is how they got rid of all the broken pieces. They would take the nails out and stack the lumber and every so often when so much lumber accumulated then it would get hauled away. It would get used back as doors again in some place. That is what I remember about the doors.

NP: We get to Pool 6, an old facility.

RB: Yes, patterned after McCabe's. Basically, the same configuration. The same style of elevator. I was there both for the old inspection office and the new modern office that still exists today. It was built at a time when there was no end in sight. We were going to ship over 15 million tonnes of grain every year. It was fairly modern. With all these places, one of the biggest challenges was modernizing and putting in electronic gates and pneumatic equipment and retrofitting all the existing things that were mechanical. Not the easiest thing to do in those places. It would have been so much easier for them to start with all new equipment. They took old equipment, the old elevator, and had to use what they had and trying to find locations where to run wires and pipes. It was quite a complicated looking thing. Pool 6 nothing special comes to mind other than the location to Cumberland Street. I can't think of anything unique there.

NP: What about Cumberland Street?

RB: It was just handy, I suppose.

NP: Oh, other people have better stories!

RB: Yes, I know because I am not from Cumberland Street. I can tell you a lot about Victoria Avenue. This is supposed to be about grain.

NP: It is the grain industry, which is deep and cultural! [Laughing]

RB: I didn't spend any time in that area. Again Pool 6, again, I didn't spend much time there either.

NP: Were there tile bins there or was it concrete?

RB: That is a good question, but I don't recall.

NP: Then Pool 2.

RB: No. I can't say I ever set foot in Pool 2. Maybe I may have one day. I think for a brief time I am going to say around 1972 or 1973, I do remember Manitoba Pool had it then, and I do remember them handling some wheat around that time. I think they

unloaded just a few cars of wheat back then and that would be in and I am pretty sure in 1972 or 1973 that they did. I was working in the lab I remember, what's this strange elevator that I had never heard of this one. No, I never spent any time there. But did some time at Richardson's. A fair bit of time there. That is where we introduced the first protein testing equipment there.

NP: You had mentioned that when you had left the confines of the office.

RB: That is when they had a prototype to experiment with binning the grain on the basis of protein content. It was my first exposure to the waterfront.

NP: How would you describe Richardson's as an operation?

RB: Very modern. One of the more modern facilities. Their unloading system and they weighed the car full and empty, and they still do, and that is one of the few places that has a track scale capable of doing that, and a TV camera that we can monitor all of that. This is back in the '70s that was space-age at that time to be able to do those kinds of things. They had a TV camera that picked up our sheets as we wrote out the grades and that relayed the information back to their office. That enabled them to know just what we had graded the grain and that helped that as to where they could put it. As I mentioned earlier, they didn't always bin the grain on our grades but always wanted to know where they were. They wouldn't want to fall behind where we were. As long as they were ahead of the game, they were doing their job. They were a step ahead of everyone else in terms of doing that. I worked with Bill Staziuk there for a short time. Bill came from Paterson's and worked briefly there.

NP: Is he still around?

RB: No Bill died just recently. The other fellow I worked and spent a lot of time was Gerry Bougois. Gerry was the general foreman and because I would spend long hours there, he and I. He was very much on top of what was going. Hands on guy who wanted to know every detail, how we graded the grain, what we did and what we were looking at. He wanted to learn as well. He didn't have any background I don't believe, and he wanted to do a good job. I spent a considerable amount of time with him. He was very passionate about his work! He could be a handful to work with.

A fairly good inspection office. Lots of room, fairly modern, automatic sampling which was new at that time as well. That was a real bonus especially in all the cold bad weather. If you were an assistant grain inspector when you went there, the only thing that you had to do was go on the vessel and inspect it before it loaded, and you could collect all your samples in the inspection office, and everything was fully automatic as they all are today. But that one was the first.

NP: Was that the Woodside?

RB: No, this was Diverter Sampler, and this took the crosscut of the grain stream as it went onto the vessel. They are all that way now and they were pioneers putting it in their back then. The late '70s I think is when all that went in. We had a fairly good operation there and a relatively new inspection office for us. It was a very good place to work.

NP: Pool 4A and B?

RB: That is another story! 4A and B. Now 4B always worked the midnight shift because it was so big that they had two sets of tracks and two elevators that were consolidated essentially.

NP: Which one is the most northerly?

RB: 4B is adjacent to Richardson's and 4A is adjacent to the Current River side. 4B was always a midnight shift going because of the way they had their railway spots. They liked to spot the cars at certain times and satisfy the railway's needs to have that done there. It had, from the track shed to collect your samples, and the sampler had to walk about 40 stairs and carry the sample up the stairs to the inspection office. The sampler knew every last step and count 39 steps and they knew exactly how many it was. But if you wanted to get in shape you didn't have to join a gym, all you had was to do that job for a week. Doing those stairs and you were doing them as many as 30 to 40 times a shift. That was really good exercise on your legs, hauling about 40 to 50 pound pail of grain. Men and woman everyone did it, old or young or whoever you were. That was your job. There were a lot harder jobs I can tell you that, so that really wasn't that bad of a job. An older office.

NP: One office serving both A and B?

RB: No. The office was just the car unloading on 4B side. Now the 4A side did the entire vessel loading and it had three spouts coming off the 4B side and two large spouts coming off the A side for vessel loading. It was super fast. When they wanted to load a vessel in a hurry, they could certainly do it, and I spent a lot of days there loading feed barley for example, and all day long doing that. The A side had augers to unload the cars, and these were what they called an "auger mobile" and these were designed I think locally by a company. It had a screw conveyer that once the door of the boxcar was open, an operator would drive it into the wall of grain and auger it out as best they could with the machine and go at from both ends, and then sweep the balance of it out. There was dust everywhere. It was surreal to see what this looked like in this cloud of dust with the guy in the machine and dust and grain everywhere. Very dim lighting and I still recall and can see it today, if there is a hell that's got of be it. That is pretty close to it. The guy working that auger mobile what a job that must have been! Some pretty hard work.

NP: Pool 4.

RB: What I remember about Pool 4 are the hours. I used to keep a log because when you work an hour of overtime, you wanted to make sure you got paid for it. All of these were transposed off of a carbon-copied time sheet and our clerks in the office, sometimes mistook an 8 to be a 5 or something to that affect. You had to keep track of your hours yourself. I kept that book and I still have it and periodically I look at the amount of time. I spent in a month, for example, day by day and there were many days and most days 11 hours, 12 hours, 17.5 hours in one day. Anything over and above 7.5 was overtime and paid at time and a half and then anything over 7.5 of time and a half was paid at double time.

I put in huge numbers of hours and a lot of it at Pool 4 and during those years working day and night and Saturday and Sunday. You knew not to plan anything without having someone standing by for you. If you had a wedding let's say on a Saturday night to go and it was an important family wedding, you had to make sure that you had someone that would work for you in the event that you had to work overtime. So you had to make those arrangements in advance, so you would get a friend or someone to say I will cover for you if you have to go in on that night. Quite often that would happen that you had to depend it and occasionally he was working and so were you. I can recall going to weddings at 11:00 and getting all dressed up because I missed everything. The best I could do was ask the boss to let me off I have to go to a wedding and, "Okay, as soon as we slow down a bit away you go," type of thing. I put lots of hours in.

Then the little gem on the Prairie was Alberta Pool 9, next door. I did spend time there. It was again like a P&H Elevator. They could either unload or load. They couldn't do both. It handled rye, which was a unique thing. They grew a lot of rye in Alberta and moved some rye through there.

NP: Why would it just handle rye?

RB: They didn't just handle rye. They handled Alberta Wheat Pool Grain and because of pooling everybody took their stuff. Not everybody wanted to handle rye because you would have 80 tonnes here and 200 tonnes there and really they didn't want to have it tying up space in their elevator because they would never get a boat for it. They would have to put it back into a car and ship it out somehow. They tried to consolidate the odd commodities like that in places that would have enough to load a vessel. They handled rye and it was a small little elevator, and it was a neat place for that reason. Fairly simple operation.

And then, UGG A was again a good place to work when they built the new inspection office and that was in the late '70s. They had an old inspection office that wasn't really a good place to work. The sampling was in the basement, and I remember going down

there to collect samples and standing up to my knees in dust—dust everywhere. Once they were going it was very busy. There were huge amounts of dust that came out of the basement.

NP: What was it about that particular facility where there was so much dust in the basement? Was it a housekeeping issue?

RB: Partly and the lack of pollution abatement stuff. They had not gotten around to doing any of that kind of thing. Not that any of the others did. It was just where they were collecting the samples and the locations, in a particular dusty part of the elevator which made it very difficult to keep clean and very busy. The superintendent's name was Willy Tarnowski. I spent a lot of time with Bill Green back then. Bill Green was the inspector at that time when I was there.

Very busy elevator. They put a new gallery system in. They have continually spent money on that elevator year after year upgrading it. They built a new annex after it fell into the slip, and for that reason it was a relatively modern elevator with automatic sampling for a vessel. They didn't have the Diverter type samplers. They had the bucket and chain Woodside system. So you did need people up in the gallery to collect the samples. Just understanding where everything was going and which belt was going to which hold and all of that and that was a little bit of a complicated issue till they modernized all of it and put in all on a computer screen. That took some time.

NP: What happened to Pool 9?

RB: It was torn down. It was a parking lot for UGG A. I think they bought the property. I am not sure the reason for it being torn down. Whether or not it needed repairs, whether it was falling into the slip or what the issues were, but it came down and I don't know if it was relatively easy with a crane and a ball and chain type of thing, a wrecker's ball and down it came. UGG bought some of that land and put a millwright's office up and a few buildings on there.

NP: Do you remember Mrs. Frowen? Someone who found us, and her family had worked in the elevators and at that particular elevator. There was one in old pictures that is called "Terminal Elevator." I don't even know if it is the same one because Pool 9 looked fairly new and there apparently was a fire in the early 1930s in an elevator on that land, so whether it was Pool 9 or not, I don't know. So you had not heard anything about it being a replacement elevator?

RB: No.

NP: 1983.

RB: In 1983, I was promoted to inspector-in-charge I think a year prior to that and it might have been 1981 I believe. Lots of openings for positions. A lot of the post-war vets were retiring, and the volume of grain kept increasing every year in Thunder Bay and they needed people. I had the job as PI-4 inspector-in-charge. There was a position that was open in Winnipeg and just kind of on a lark, I threw my hat in the ring so to speak. I don't remember even what the position was for, but I got an interview and really wasn't interested in going to Winnipeg. I just wanted to see if I could qualify, if I was capable of doing it. I really just wanted to stay in Thunder Bay, and I would have taken a supervisor's job if one ever came open. Another position came open at a rank even higher than that, a PI-6 position, the national training officer. I looked at it and saw that position and got a call from Len Seguin and Len had just vacated that position. He was promoted and he asked me if I had questions about the job and had I considered it and you should think about it and it is good living in Winnipeg, et cetera.

We were neighbours and we both lived in Northwood at that time. He lived around the corner from me. I was on Simon Fraser Drive, and he was on Churchill Drive right around the corner, so we knew each other fairly well. He was the pioneer that left the city to go to Winnipeg and I guess I soon followed. I applied for the position and got the job and packed up and sold the house and moved to Winnipeg as the training officer.

When I got there, there was quite a departure from what I was used to. I went out and had to buy suits, and you never wore a suit to the elevator when I worked in the elevator. Although my predecessors did. They told me that years ago in the '30s, '40s, '50s the inspector-in-charge always wore a jacket and tie to the elevator. It wasn't uncommon and that goes back several years. That was a little bit of a change in the type of work I was doing and the people that I was meeting there, and the responsibilities that I had now with this position. The first few years I found it very difficult. I found the work to be really challenging, but I enjoyed it, and I was never afraid to do any of those kinds of things.

I started travelling around Canada because I had to organize the training program, which was really not that good at that time. I am not sure I made it any better. I would like to think I did, but it is a difficult thing to try to organize. We were responsible for setting the examinations that the inspectors took, for scoring them, and then for any of the competitions that were held for inspectors, when unsuccessful staff appealed them, you had to go to the appeal. On more than one occasions, I remember being there and being challenged by the adjudicator. I remember one accusing me and he said, "Well, wait a second, you wrote the exam?" "Yes." "And you scored the exam?" "Yes." "And you picked the successful candidates?" I said, "That's right." "Well, what did the selection board do?" "They simply requested that I supply all this information and that is my job." "So you are the judge, the jury and the executor!" [Laughs]

"I suppose you are right," I said. "Well, you are going to change your system." The system is supplied to us by Agriculture Canada Human Resources. They supply the method, the techniques and how we do this. If you have any issues you have to take it up with

them. We operate under the Public Service Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Staff Employment Act that they administer. It is them that they you are dealing with. Those were always new and challenging things for someone that had no exposure to that type of work before. I had to do this, if I was in Vancouver or Montreal or whatever I had to do this type of work. You had a human resource advisor with you, but you were the guy on the hot seat. You had to defend every question that you asked, every mark that you gave, how they were scored and how you interpreted answers, et cetera, because like a teacher you prepared all the exams and marked them after. That was the kind of work I did.

I dealt with all kinds of projects that the Grain Research Lab initiated. I worked with them on how to collect samples for their work, unique ways that they could do some testing that they could test the system itself, how samples were being collected and sent to them, and generally got to know them very well. I made some very good relationships with our people in the Grain Research Lab.

Much more closely than anyone in the weighing division or anyone in the economics statistic division back then. They also were in our building on 303 Main Street. I liked the work. I really did. It gave you all kinds of opportunities from there. While there I was offered a position with the Wheat Board. They opened a new branch called the Market Development Division and it was at a time when I was being assessed for French language capabilities and had to make a decision if I wanted to do that. It was very interesting work. I was there with some very good people the included Henry Fast, he was the director, and Angus MacDonald, the Deputy Director. Angus is still alive, but Henry died just a few years ago. Both of them from the West Coast and for them living in Winnipeg was painful. They talked to their old friends and other co-workers back in Vancouver when it was 40 below in Winnipeg and you would talk to the people that were going golfing or maybe skiing. They really did not like the idea of living in Winnipeg. They used to say, "This isn't living, this is an existence," and this was Henry's line. Very good friends. The people that I got to know there such as the managers with the inspection branch I had a lot of respect for!

Very proud of the work that we did. That was something that I got working there. They had a huge amount of respect from the grain companies that we dealt with. We dealt with a lot of the companies. Every grain merchant, everyone from the Commodities Exchange to the Wheat Board and had a very close relationship and a friendly relationship with the Wheat Board, that eventually once it turned sour, but eventually became more challenging in later years.

NP: Why do you think that was?

RB: There was some litigation going back and forth between the two of us and the Wheat Board trying to understand what its reduced role was becoming. There were some issues over quality than we were being sued instead of them. The Grain Commission having to defend itself in court over different quality issues and different documents and things that were said and done. I think that soured the relationship to a certain degree. I remember that exactly with some of the people, but we really cooperated a lot with

people at the Board. I would say the Grains Institute was the conduit that brought us all together whether there were overseas missions, whether we were hosting grain buyers, technical specialist, and merchants from other countries they would come in at the Board's request and spent a fair bit of time with the Grain Commission in our grain research lab and in our inspection area. That was some of the work that I did while I was there.

NP: I want to deal with a couple of things that you have mentioned. Had there been a good training program?

RB: No. Up to that point it really wasn't organized very well. We were trying to find a way to put it together in a manual. We prepared a training manual. We tried to do things that were novel. There was always training, and it really didn't look any different from one year to the next. They would hand out copies of the Canada Grain Act and people knew them verbatim. They were asked questions such as, "Cite Section 5, subsection 2(1) please." I am serious those were questions that you were asked. I am not sure anyone knew what any of those things meant, but those were things that we were teaching young inspectors, learning the grades and other types of things. Trying to make it clear and more easily understood and better introduced to new people was a challenge. It was very difficult to do that.

Some people had a good knack at doing that and they knew how to teach others. They knew how to be a mentor to another person, for example, and found better ways of doing it. It seems everyone had a different approach to it and a different idea. Everyone that I met would be asking, "So what ideas do you have to make this better?" They kept looking for someone with a better idea to do this training job better. It was never done very well. It is always a difficult thing. I think every industry has that challenge to train people and finding good ways of doing it. I don't know if anybody has a good way.

NP: When you look—and I am curious about the difference of perspective because you would have viewed training from the other side when you were working on the waterfront—was there an ethic of people appreciating training or like any organization, was it a real annoyance?

RB: It was a prerequisite. You had to maintain a certain standing, or you could lose the ability to grade grain. First of all you had to maintain your ability to recognize small oil seeds and that was a test that was administered annually and that a part of the training officer's responsibility to prepare the test samples and these were selecting all the different types of seeds from all the different mustard seeds and canola and then all the admixtures the weed seeds that grew with them like wild mustard and cockle and all the other kinds of seeds. To be able to under microscope and distinguish those. Then there was a grading test that was administered to the inspectors and then there was a box of 25 different varieties of wheat and barley and that was very difficult. It was intended to allow you the ability to distinguish the registered from the non-registered varieties. But we different have many non-registered types at that time and people would be given packets to be able to name the variety and if you could do that and get a score of more

than 80 percent that was quite an achievement. That test was administered for the assistant inspectors—a grading tests administered every year. Then all of those same tests were used again for competitions whenever there were openings for inspector positions or more senior positions. You had to demonstrate your ability to create grain in conjunction with a written test and do all those physical tests as well.

NP: How did you see those when you were on the receiving end of them?

RB: I have always been a competitive person. I liked doing tests. I like doing things like that now. I like doing Scrabble and I don't mind it. I am not sure that everyone does. Some people hate doing those things. They don't bother me. I always looked forward to them. If I didn't do well, I would want to know why and do better the next time.

NP: Going to Winnipeg also broadened your perspective on various operations, out west, Churchill and on the St. Lawrence. What was surprising to you, eye openers?

RB: Nothing really surprised me. I had spent time in the Prairies even when I was a PI-3 inspector in Thunder Bay. I had gone to Toronto to Maple Leaf Mills, and we did a weigh-over of grain right next to the CN Tower. Maple Leaf there, I think it is Leavor Mushrooms now. There was a Maple Leaf Mills and Canada Malting Elevator side by side. We didn't do Canada Malting, but we did Canada Maple Leaf Mills. We spent three weeks there and I was staying at the Royal York, and we were expected to stay a week and only given enough money for a week. After the two weeks--. And this is before Interact and before credit cards. I think I might have had a Master Charge, but I am not sure. This is 1974 and 1975, running out of money and waiting for the cheques to arrive from Thunder Bay in the mail or some type of courier back then, and then going to the bank and try to cash the cheque so that we could have some money to live. Just how absurd that was while working for the government. At that time the bank manager says "I can't cash the cheque but here is what I will do. I will phone your bank in Thunder Bay, Fort William at that time, and I will speak to the manager." He got a hold of the manager, and the manager knew who I was and gave me a loan. Yes, that's what he did. Gave me a loan and mailed the cheque back to Thunder Bay, which never got back to Thunder Bay. Never arrived in Thunder Bay and I don't know where it went.

About three months later I got a phone call from the bank manager here and he said, "Rick I never did see that cheque. The cheque never arrived, so you owe me interest on the loan that I have given you." We'll try to deal with the Grain Commission with that. I had to go to the Justice of the Peace with Ken Caruso who was an office guy in admin a CPR in the Thunder Bay office. I had to swear before a Justice of the Peace that if I ever came in contact with that cheque that I would surrender it back to the government and that I wouldn't run off with the money. It wasn't a lot of money. I think it was maybe \$500 or \$600 and it might not even have

been that much. It was to extend our travel to allow us to live while we were there, having to pay the hotel bill which had to be paid up front. The first guy that got paid was the hotel manager.

After telling the elevator manager that story, he said, "You should have just gave me the cheque. I would have cashed it myself. We would have done it. We know you guys are legit and working for us." Well, I never thought. There was a branch of the Bank of Montreal in the Royal York, so I simply went there. I never did get that cheque back, never did see it again and fought and fought and fought with the government to settle up because I paid the interest. How about squaring me up for that? No. [Laughing]

You know how things just stick in your mind. That one I will never forget. That is how we were treated. Very strange how government travel has changed, especially now when I see how the Senators were travelling and I think back to the early '70s when I travelled on government travel how bad it was. Oh, my god, it was not the best. Oh well, we stayed at a beautiful hotel while we were there and other places that I had gone, I had spent time in Saskatoon as an inspector and in Moose Jaw, so I was familiar with it.

NP: And Churchill?

RB: No, never gone up to Churchill. I was able to avoid that. The weighing staff did go to Churchill, and they were responsible for staffing it but not the inspectors. We spent a fair bit of time on the audits in eastern Canada on the St. Lawrence and all the Bay Ports area. They all handled western wheat at that time and so they needed to be audited—all these little places, like Meaford and Port Carling, Sarnia, Goderich, Midland, Owen Sound, you name it. They all had a little elevator, every little town did, and they all handled some western Canadian wheat and had to be audited. The Grain Commission had to do the audit, weigh and inspect everything. Many of us from Thunder Bay, especially the weighing branch, spent most of their winters down in those areas going from place to place to place and were gone for two to three months at a time. Spending the whole winter in Southern Ontario.

I did have some exposure to that, so when I did go to Winnipeg it wasn't that I was totally a fish out of water, but kind of new to that environment and having to organize the training program it was quite a challenge because I had never really thought that at some point I would have to do this. So I worked well with Len, and Len was quite helpful.

NP: What position had he moved into?

RB: He had moved into the deputy director of standards and technology. That was the title of that job. In terms of pecking order, it would be third in line. We had the director, the deputy director of operations and deputy director of standards and technology.

NP: Did you feel that whether you were working at an elevator on the St. Lawrence or at Vancouver or Prince Rupert or in Thunder Bay, it was as if you were just transported in distance, but were they really all the same?

RB: That is exactly what it was. I was accepted and was well known in Thunder Bay. Any time I went out to a place in Vancouver, Prince Rupert, Prairies, what have you, Montreal or the St. Lawrence, I was the new guy and always being tested wherever you go. They always want to know what you are all about.

NP: Were the cultures the same?

RB: I think so. The Thunder Bay people thought that the grain industry revolved around them because for so many years it did. The volumes that they handled allowed them to produce very good inspectors, people, the weighers were good. The amount of work that they did enhanced their credibility in the industry. They knew the work because of the amount that they did. They had so much more experience than anyone else in the industry in Canada in doing that type of work. The people from Thunder Bay had that. Then there was the other side of the coin, where you had people from Vancouver, which was our director and deputy director. We would exchange barbs all the time, in a friendly way. There was no animosity. But they would always joke that Thunder Bay guys think the world revolves around you and you are differently. There was always that friendly rivalry that existed there.

Moving out to Vancouver, then you could see the writing on the wall that things were going in the other direction. As soon as railway was able to do the twinning of Roger's Pass and the upgrades there and the removal of the freight rate subsidy, then the amount of volume through there and the new elevator in Prince Rupert. Wow, what a change just almost overnight. How things changed.

NP: When did you move out there and what was the position there in Vancouver?

RB: In Vancouver I was the assistant regional manager, assistant regional director at that time. My responsibility was inwards. They had second assistant regional director who looked after shipments and then the regional director. That was '89, and I had spent some time in an acting basis back and forth. It took about a year to sell the house in Winnipeg. At that time the house prices were as depressed as they had ever been. I have always had the unfortunate experience of buying high and selling low in the real estate market and that held true when I was in Winnipeg. It bottomed out when I tried to leave there, and the house sat for over a year. It was a brand-new house in a brand-new subdivision. There was nothing wrong with the house. It was a four-bedroom house, four bathrooms and it was a very nice house, and I didn't want that much money for it either. It was tough to sell a house back then.

Winnipeg's economy was very poor at that time. It just completely flipped and flopped in the '90s. The mid '90s, I think, it just turned around. They just had a different direction. A lot of high-tech companies moved into Winnipeg. Some national labs were located and some federal money went into Winnipeg, which all helped their economy and now they are doing well. But that's another story.

NP: The job in Vancouver was inward?

RB: Yes. I lived in Surrey and drove to the Sky Train station, and I'd take a car and then a bus to cross the Pattullo Bridge over the Fraser River, then I would take a train downtown. I did everything but take a boat. Occasional a boat even the Sea-Bus to get across to North Vancouver. Every mode of transportation all in one trip. Quite an ordeal that I did daily. In my car about 5:30 in the morning.

NP: Did you go out to Prince Rupert?

RB: Occasionally but not often. No.

NP: Was Victoria operating at that time?

RB: No, it had already been closed a lot time before that.

NP: How would you describe the facilities?

RB: The facilities were in transition. They were gearing up for the bigger volumes that they were seeing, and we were hiring huge numbers of people. We needed a quick training program for them—all young, new people. A whole change in demographics. In Thunder Bay we saw older staff and lots of experience and there no experience—new staff and new challenges. There was a very good training officer out there that I had to work with that had all kinds of new ideas, good ideas to improve the training program. It was a very well-run, tight ship.

NP: Who were the owners of the elevators?

RB: Sask Pool, Alberta Pool had a big elevator, Pacific 1 and 3. Pacific was owned by Man Pool, and I believe Pioneer had a piece of it. Pioneer had their own elevator. It was part of Richardson Company. Paterson had Pacific as well. There were three owners of

that. You had the five elevators. Pacific 1 and 3, UGG was next door, Alberta Pool, Sask Pool, and Richardson's on the north shore. The other three were on the south shore.

The elevators were identical and very similar, similar looking offices and similar type of work and very similar staff. The amount of work was increasing, shifts were going on, people were being denied vacations, overtime was getting to be more of a problem. Those were all the kinds of things we had to deal with back then. It was changing a lot, and it was, again, a real different job for myself personally coming out of the training officer job where I had closer contact with the grain companies and the Wheat Board and the senior management of the Grain Commission and then working more closely with the inspectors and vessel loading and all those issues that I was familiar with in Thunder Bay. Here we are again back in a Thunder Bay type of operation.

NP: Why did you make the move?

RB: You know, at that time I had advice from my boss that, "This is good for you. I think you will like it out there. I think you need more experience in your resume, let's say, managing an operation such as that." I'm not sure to be honest with you. I kind of thought it was a good place to live. I really had a nice house, a brand-new house, lived in a gated subdivision. Everything was great and I really enjoyed it there.

What I didn't like was living in a big city. And if you have never had to coming out of living here in Thunder Bay all my life, living there was quite a challenge. In Winnipeg I was 40 minutes to work and in Vancouver it was one and a half hour. Some days even more and that are difficult to adjust to. I probably could still be out there today. I think I could have eventually become used to that compute. It was a great place. There is no better city in the country than Vancouver to live in. You literally can do things such as golf and ski in the same day! You can do that I had a good position, and I liked the work.

NP: What were the challenges of that work?

RB: The challenges were being the new kid on the block. Getting the respect of the staff, getting familiar with what they needed out there, and trying to fit in was what the challenges were. When you go out there as a new employee at the bottom of the ladder is one thing, but when you go out there and they don't know who you are and you are their boss, it is a difficult thing to get someone to open up to you and for them to get comfortable with you because there is always this apprehension of what is his motive, why is he here, why did he come out here, what does he want to do, what is he going to change for me, is he going to make it work harder for me, is he going to make more life more miserable than it is? That is how people see you, so you have to dispel that and make them comfortable with you. I was younger then and in my thirties and able to go in golf tournaments, hockey tournaments all those kinds of things with the majority of the staff. I got along fairly well with people. I still liked it. I liked the industry, people in the industry.

NP: The shipment balance was changing from here to there. Why was staff just not transferred out there? Were there opportunities for people in Thunder Bay?

RB: Yes, there were opportunities, and some took the opportunity to go out there—some being a handful, perhaps five to seven not more than that. They ended up liking it. Those that did go out there adapted fairly well. We needed more staff than that and a lot more staff. What we ended up doing was that the terminals quickly put a seven-day work week together so that there was no longer any Saturdays or Sundays. But when you work for the federal government, they all have collective agreements that apply to everyone—not just people working in the grain business. So those same collective agreements apply to people who are in hospitals, Fisheries and Oceans and other technicians in all walks of government life.

So, we devised a unique system where we had them working six and three—six days on and three days off and then overlapping shifts and the scheduling was a bloody nightmare. We hired about 30 percent more people who came on stream that had no clue as what any of the work was and it was quite a challenge trying to bring them up to speed, to accommodate all this extra work that was taking place.

The nature of the work—and this was the peculiar thing—it would just collapse all of a sudden for various reasons. There could be that the ship owners are on strike, the railways on strike, the dockworkers have an issue, the weighers are on strike or inspectors this time. Then the elevator companies, they would have a labour disruption. Trying to manage through all of that. It was quite challenging.

Even in Thunder Bay they saw the work drop off, and they have way more staff than they needed. Back in Thunder Bay, we would hear of issues of how they deal with staff on a seasonal basis. What do they do when they lay them off in the winter and how do you get around those things. In the federal government, if you are a fulltime employee, there is no such thing as a short-term layoff. Either there is no work or there is work. So, they came up with new classifications for some employees and seasonal work for others. It was quite a challenge during all that period. I had some exposure to that and dealt through a lot of that particular issue.

NP: You moved back to Thunder Bay?

RB: Yes, and that was at a time when an identical position came open in Thunder Bay. I applied and my boss learned that I was interested as well in the job and rather than having a competition from within, moved me lateral from Vancouver, there.

It was shortly after that time that Dennis Wallace came on stream and consolidated the inspection and the weighing. At that time the Conservatives had just taken over. Brian Mulroney had just taken over the government, and it was a new initiative for government departments to make money. They should be out trying to generate revenue and increasing their fees for service provided and they should be cost neutral. One of the things that the government tried to do was they increased our user fees but passed a user's fee act that froze the fees shortly thereafter, and we found ourselves in later years losing money and continually going to government for appropriation to fund the deficit that we incurred every year.

What came out of that new initiative was another initiative to look at international grain consulting. I was interested at that time. I had travelled a bit, but interested in taking part and my former boss who was the former director of the Inspection Division, Angus MacDonald, also took part as did Marilyn Kapitany, who was at that time wasn't the Director of the Economics Statistics Division but held the senior position there. So the three of us got busy and started writing proposals to all the various banks and merchant banks offering any type of service that we saw that we could generate some revenue through exchanges, through technical assistance and whatever we could. We visited banks. We tried to work with companies like SNC Lavalin and other big companies that were in developing countries and accessing funds from agencies like CIDA and world banks and those kinds of things. That was some of the best years that I had because it was an exciting, different type of work that we were doing. It was lots of fun and I learned quite a bit.

NP: I would like to do one more session. I want to finish off the question about the combination of weighing and the inspection. Tell us about how it panned out. Did it work?

RB: Yes, I think it did.

NP: Why was it considered?

RB: We shared a lot of the same interests. It was not only the inspection/weighing but it was all the related administrative things that accompanied the work we did. Anything that aligned itself with working in terminals in industry was consolidated together. We maintained our separate roles, our separate functions in the terminals, but we managed it through one central body. We managed it through a regional director and did it in regions across the country. Reporting through to one director.

NP: So it was efficiency and cost saving?

RB: Just the different approach to the work we did. It had been talked about for many years but never really acted upon. I think that the time was ripe to make that move, to switch over to that type of look. For the most part there were certainly lots of issues initially.

NP: Such as?

RB: We really didn't share much in terms of expertise. The inspectors did their own thing, the weighers did theirs, and the admin people did their own. No one really saw any advantage to knowing what the other person's role was, because there wasn't a natural progression. If you were a weigher and you moved through the system, you could never become an inspector or vice versa. Not never, but you followed two different streams of work that took you to two different directions. People did it. We had some people that started as weighers and became inspectors later and not many went the other way, but there were a few that went that route. They consolidated in terms of name but in terms of function everybody did the same as they had done before.

NP: What was the name?

RB: Industry Services.

NP: So, at senior management you might have saved some positions?

RB: Yes. That is open for debate. That never happens! It never did. They found ways of increasing that. Everything you tried to consolidate and streamline, it might work, but in a couple of years you are back to where you were before.

NP: How much time do we have left? Do you think you can finish off your international work in a half hour and finish it off tonight? Where were you?

RB: I am back in Thunder Bay and am the assistant regional manager.

NP: Do you have a date?

RB: 1991 or 1992 I believe around that time. At around that time, as I said, they formed this group called International Grain Consultant, and its role was to see if there were business opportunities that the Grain Commission could become involved in internationally as well as domestically. It was a marketing approach to the work we did and really a different role. I was fun for me, and I really enjoyed that. It was like selling the business. Not everyone agreed with it. Some of the scientist came to me and said, "I

don't think we should be giving away all of our secrets. I don't think you guys should be going over there trying to sell the stuff we have been guarding for so many years. Whose crazy idea is this anyway?" That is the attitude that we had and what we had to deal with.

NP: What were you selling essentially?

RB: We were selling services. We would sell our expertise in the grain industry, whatever that might be, whether it be technical advice, training, exchanges having some of their specialist technicians visit us, providing them assistance in processing, in grain handling, in any of those kinds of things where we have developed an internationally recognized status as being one of the best in the world.

NP: Was it a hard sell selling your reputation?

RB: No, not really. With International Grain Consultation, we went after the fact that in 1993 the UN opened up a bank called the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) that was based in London, England. They were dispersing UN funds in the hundreds of millions of dollars to companies like SNC Lavalin, like others to help the emerging democracies like Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Romania, and all of those that were in the former communist marketing idea. Well, there is no marketing there, but from the former Soviet Union to do some trade with Western Europe, to do some trade with the rest of the world and to help them get their feet on the ground.

It was quite an exposure for us to travel to all of these countries and to spend time with flour millers, bakers, storage, cookie makers, cracker producers, bread makers and everyone under the sun. We met with people, we stayed at farms, and we stayed at ports, little tiny hotels and travelled in small vans with no fuel through Ukraine. It was very spartan the places that we visited. In 1993 visiting places in Russia for example, were like going back into the '40s and '50s. I wasn't around in the '40s but '50s in Thunder Bay. Things that I saw then, nothing had really changed much for them. That was quite an exposure to see all of that.

NP: Just to go back to the scientists. You said they came up to you, "We don't think this is a good idea." Did the scientist feel that it would destroy Canada's advantage?

RB: No. They questioned why we would be wanting to sell something that we had guarded for so long and helping countries who, in the future, might be our competitor like Ukraine and Russia who would also be selling it to the same market possibly. That would take at least 50 years or longer for that to occur. From our own observations. They are so far behind that it would take a long, long time for them to ever compete with the quality of Canadian grain. The system evolved so long in Canada to get to where it is, and

they have such a lack of infrastructure and handling facilities and basically the lack of money to do all of this work. There is very little private money that is going in there. No one wants to invest in Ukraine, Russia, Poland. Hungary is a different story. Romania is another one that is bad shape. All of those countries what we saw was very difficult for them to ever want to compete with Canada.

NP: Who headed up the group?

RB: It was headed up by Marilyn Kapitany, and Marilyn went on to be the director of the Industry Services. She was the Director of Corporate Services, which was the former Economics Statistics Division and moved over to Industry Services. Then later left and was promoted to assistant deputy Minister with Indian Northern Affairs and then left that for Department of Regional Economic Expansion in the federal government and retired now.

NP: Not going into great length, but how did the strategy unfold and how did you actually make contact with the clients? How did it happen?

RB: We dealt primarily with the banks. We would make appointments with certain banks. We got to know the agricultural representatives at the various embassies, in Warsaw, in Kiev, in Moscow, in Budapest, and in London, England. Based on their advice and some research we did ourselves and talking to the various companies and put it all together.

NP: Various companies being the grain companies?

RB: Some grain companies, processors for example, and others that we knew in the business, others that were customers of Canadian grain that knew others in the processing and handling of grain. Just understanding where, who is who in the business. Once we would land in Poland, for example, we would set our meetings and do our research when we were there, as to who are the movers and shakers in the business and how is this business run, where does it originate, who controls it?

Essentially, we did a huge amount of work and lots of notes and lots of writing I did when we were there. The three of us all taking notes and recording information from every interview that we had. This was a daily thing, three or four times a day, with different people. Relying to a certain degree on the embassy to set up a lot of those contacts. From those contacts, finding other contacts and essentially doing the networking that you need to do in order to understand what the business is all about. That is how that part of that international grain consultation took place.

And marketing the Grain Commission, going to conventions where we tried to sell our services, it was a whole different approach to being the regulator. Everyone was fighting with what we were. Are we a regulator or are we a service provider? That was the big question that we had to deal with. Can we be both? Can we make money by selling services and still enforce regulations and charge for the services? To this industry is that something we can do?

NP: Were you selling the services nationally as well or was it all internationally?

RB: Yes, if it wasn't in conflict with the regulation that we were enforcing. If someone needed protein tests on samples of wheat and we had the capacity to do it in our labs, "Send the samples, we will do them, and here is the bill." This was all new for us. We had never done things like that before. There was a little bit of revenue generated that way.

We did score a few jobs with Hungary. One particular trip, and this I will never forget. I had to sign a deal with the Minister of Agriculture of Hungary and this trip had been planned, we had done all the leg work, had done several trips before that. On the flight over had suit and clothes and everything else in my suitcase, but a pair of jeans and a sweatshirt or a pair of Dockers and a sweatshirt on the way over so I was comfortable. The meeting was the next morning and I got to Budapest, but my bag didn't. No place that I could buy clothes that early in the morning. This entourage of people show up, a black limousine and out comes the minister and there I am some guy from Canada with a Roots t-shirt and pair of khakis on. [Laughing]

"You are the representative from the Grain Commission? Is that the best you guys can do?" I felt so embarrassed! But I went through and introduced myself and thanked him and went through all the protocol stuff that we needed to do. We signed the document, and he was there for about 10 minutes, and he had a prepared talk, and he said a few kind words and away he went. It's one I will never forget! And I didn't get that suitcase for about three days. Most of my work was done. It was just that morning that was a formality.

NP: And what was the service contract?

RB: It was to do with the exchanges we were going to have some of their scientists spend some time in Canada and ours were going to on exchange deal and funded by CIDA. At that time, CIDA funded a lot of the things that we were doing. I suppose they were one of the easier organizations to appeal to fund the kind of work that we were doing. It was more difficult to get money out of other banks, and much more formal. I think what a lot of the foreign banks were wanting were the bricks and mortar types of things. Where we would be building buildings, as opposed to providing the paper. Doing reports and those kinds of things. It was always difficult to write a proposal that the product of our proposal was a report, for example. They would like the report to

accompany a building or some physical thing to go with it. We were always looking to partner ourselves with some other larger project where that would be provided.

NP: Were any of them interested in the inspection system like setting up one?

RB: Absolutely they were. That's where we spent a fair bit of time trying to explain that that is the kind of thing that we can help you with. You send your people to Winnipeg, for example, and we will have a reciprocal arrangement and do the same with you. Very interesting work doing that. I did see a lot of Eastern Europe that way.

NP: Any long-term effects of the work?

RB: Some of those things never came into fruition until almost 10 or 12 years later. I remember the guy who took over for me when I left that, I happened to be in Winnipeg, and he said, "You have to come for dinner tonight. Remember the project in Hungary? Well, they are here." I said, "That was 10 years ago." "Yes, well, they are here, and you were one of the ones that initiated some of the work and finally got paid. It's taking place and we are having dinner tonight, so you come and join us." I thought that was kind of funny.

It went on for 10 or 12 years after it started. One guy ran the entire thing when I was in Thunder Bay, and I had left all that. It really didn't be a revenue-generating agency. It was something on the side that they eventually got rid of. It was a different idea, and it was an idea for that time when the Conservatives were running things. The Liberals took over and again we went back to be a regulator and not the service provider.

NP: Why would you think that it didn't become a revenue generator? What worked against it?

RB: Basically, it didn't. The facts were that it wasn't making money. There were not enough projects. There wasn't enough revenue coming through that consulting thing to warrant it continuing on.

NP: Are there stories about the travel?

RB: I did get the opportunity to do a lot of travel. I made a note of it because I have been to quite a few places. The Grains Institute, as I said, we worked very closely with them, they being one floor away from where we were. With every group they supplied or every group that they hosted, we supplied a presentation and got to know quite a few of their students as well as the people who ran the Institute.

I participated on a few international missions that they went on. One in 1987 to Mexico, when canola was first being developed. The Mexicans bought a considerable amount of canola from us at that time. We were there with Ken Sarsons from XCAN Grain. He was the CEO of XCAN at that time. XCAN were the big sellers of canola. They were the marketing arm of Sask Pool. I was there with George Leith who was the Chief Commissioner of the Grain Commission and Keith Tipples, and Keith Tipples was the chief chemist with the Grain Research Lab. We spent a couple of weeks in Mexico working with the processors, the buyers, the Government Reps and others there.

Because I spent time at the Grains Institute there was a group of Italian flour millers that came through and at the sponsorship of the Wheat Board, that I got to know. One of the university professors from Sicily invited me to make a presentation in Palermo. His theme was to try to exclude some of the poorer durum varieties that were being grown in the area by trying to distinguish them when they are collected and excluding them from the stuff going into pasta, because it was deteriorating the quality of the pasta. At that time, the European Union were forming and trying to harmonize standards. The Italians were very much against that. They didn't want them touching any of their pasta standards, their wine standards, or any of these other things. The EEC wanted to have some harmonization of some of these things and they were very much against it.

Monetary policy was another thing they were trying to do. This thing was being held for agricultural standards. This was in Palermo and over 1,000 people. I remember it being 43 degrees one day and 44 degrees the next day, and it was in a semi-circular stadium, and they had electronic marquee behind the speaker and when I got up to talk, when they translated—I was at that time still a training officer—and I think when they translated into Italian it came out professori, and I was Dr. Dick Bevilacqua for a short time. [Laughing]

It made my presentation, and I had an interpreter with me, and she helped. I wanted to do a bit in Italian, and I can't speak Italian. I have a limited vocabulary in Italian, but I wanted to do a few lines, and she helped me to do that. I thought doing that it went over some of them, but they kind of looked at me funny because I know my pronunciation was probably not very good. I spent a few days with him on more than one occasion. I made a few trips at his request to visit with him. He was working on this project to try to exclude, visually distinguish the poorer wheat varieties. I got to know him very well and spent, again, more than one trip to Poland, Hungary, and Ukraine with the consulting group.

I made a trip to Porto Alegre and Sao Paulo, Brazil, and their issues were fumigation of grain and really bad insects and the storage facilities that they have. The climate lends itself so well to insects. And the bugs that they have had to be fumigated continually every three months or just simply walk away with the grain that they have in store. I made a presentation on our storing methods

and the ecosystem of insects in Canada and some of the techniques that we use in Canada to keep insects down. I actually made a couple of trips actually to Brazil on that.

Back to Hungary, working on a project that they had on testing gluten, and sharing some of our samples and their samples. They had equipment like a farinograph that was invented back in the '30s. They were the pioneers on [inaudible] on a lot of the equipment that our labs were still using.

While we were just wrapping some of the grain consulting things, Keith Broder from Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was Sask Wheat Pool's—I guess he was their marketing guy—He put a group together of people that were agronomists, scientists, people from grain elevators, and people from the entire grain industry from every aspect of the grain industry. We had a team of about a dozen, and we spent time all over Russia that talked to you about the visit out to the Chechnya area and down in that part of the country, where we went on a picnic and were toasting with vodka. Just the amount of vodka that gets consumed in Russia is just unbelievable. It is everyone. The difficulties for people who are not accustomed to all this toasting and having to deal with them. There was more than one person who was getting sick on a daily basis, because this was the way of life. It really was the way of life for them.

Everything had to be toasted and you didn't drink vodka to drink vodka. It was usually a ceremony around it and always accompanied with food of any type. Whether it is hard-boiled eggs, some bread and cheese, some meats, sausage and that kind of thing. This can occur on a trunk of a car. It could occur on a tree stump or whatever it was, and it always followed a formal process of the host toasting you with a very passionate toast and expecting you to reciprocate and respond in kind. It wasn't water they wanted.

They wanted you to drink vodka and if you didn't, it was almost insulting and on more than one occasion when we couldn't do it, we couldn't do it physically anymore, we were chastised by them. That was disrespectful for us not to accept their hospitality. We were taken out to dinners and physically after doing for 25 days, we just simply couldn't do it anymore. A person just physically can't, and it is just the way of life. Made a few trips with Keith Broder and Sask Wheat Pool to Russia.

On another occasion driving all through Ukraine with a van that had a right-hand drive and driving on the right-hand side of the road. I guess it was intended for England, and no fuel other than the fuel that we had in 5-gallon jerry cans, stashed all through the van that we had to buy from a farmer. Five hundred US cash, we paid for the gas, because no one had gas at that time, and the Soviet Union had just fallen apart. Russia and Ukraine, as they are now, were at odds. The Black Sea fleet was in Odessa and that is where we were.

We went from Kiev to Odessa and to a place called Melitopol in Southern Ukraine and set foot in the Azov Sea. We wanted to see the sea, so we have the guy take us out and rolled up our pants and said we are going to step in the sea before this day is over, and sure enough we did all the way to Kiev, and it is a long drive. I recall the driver—and not a very good driver—couldn't speak a word of English, and he would pull out into traffic because he couldn't see if anyone was coming and try to pass vehicles. We are sitting on 30 gallons of gasoline that if he hit anything, if that thing had rolled or we hit a ditch, we were all finished. With Angus MacDonald and Marilyn Kapitany and the three of us in that van. How we came out of that one alive. We still laughed about that! It was quite the experience.

Under another occasion on an exchange dealing with the Ministry of Agriculture in Russia, they took us to Rostov, Southern Russia. Rostov's not far from Sochi and that area was kind of area where Russians go for holidays. They have underground springs and health spas—a beautiful area. Presentation was supposed to be in front of a handful, we were told this before we left, a handful of university students. We thought maybe five or six. It turned out we were in an auditorium with about 50 or 60 with TV cameras, radio reporters. We were on the TV and the news and in the newspaper. We were doing interviews and doing all of this while trying to battle all of that they were trying to force on us. I can tell you that those days, I just remember like it was yesterday! Trying to make presentations and just me and another fellow one after the other. We each take a turn, and that was difficult.

NP: What was the intent of the trip?

RB: The intent was we were dealing with our grading and handling system, our classification system, registration of wheat varieties and those kinds of things. The university students were there. It was a lecture that had been promoted in the university and when we showed up, we thought it was just a small panel that we would be speaking to and didn't realize that. The next day we see our picture on the front page of the local paper in Rostov and the TV that we were in one of the professors' offices later and he said "There, look, you're on TV." It's on the local news. [Laughs] That was quite exciting. That was just one of the trips there.

We dealt with the FAO in Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization in the UN. We did that through International Grain consultation, trying to partner with them. We didn't find much success. In Romania, I went with Dr. Phil Williams. I made a couple of trips with him. This one in particular Romanians out of Alberta called Agri-team asked us to come to make presentations in Bucharest to the various grain companies. There were people from government agencies, agriculture-grain industries there. We spoke about and we had one of our GRL scientists our grain research lab scientist come and make presentations about imaging. He talked about the techniques they have now for imaging techniques that they use to do some of the work identifying proteins, and we did similar presentations.

In Southern Russia with Keith Broder, we went to Krasnodar—Krasnodar and Stavropol—again near Rostov, again near Southern Russia in that area speaking to farmers and others. We got a sense for the poverty that farmers live in Ukraine and the state of the infrastructure that they have, the lack of mechanization, how old the farms are, the lack of fuel. We saw fields of sunflowers that couldn't be harvested because they just ran out of fuel for the tractors, and it just looked so old and so depressing. It took you back to the '50s here or older actually than that. It was kind of like time stood still in those areas, and they really didn't advance, and they were so closed-in and had no exposure to the rest of the world. You got a sense of that even in Ukraine. I remember little schoolgirls just fascinated when they saw me. Just looking to see a different looking face—a person who spoke English, for example, and no exposure to that kind of thing. Very different.

NP: That would have been early 2000s.

RB: That is right.

NP: I am curious then because at the time you started your career, things were going gangbusters here, largely because Russia was buying grain here and a lot of it was being shipped out of Thunder Bay.

RB: Right.

NP: Then over time Russia became--?

RB: Russia defaulted. They owed the Wheat Board about \$2 billion for grain and never paid a nickel for it. The Wheat Board never did see any money for any of that wheat they sold them. We sold them all kinds of stuff like Glenlea—extra strong wheat. They developed varieties for them. The plant breeders program developed varieties. The plant breeders would have to start a program. Let's say we were selling wheat to the Iranians, which was another program that they started called the 3M Program. They would plan 8 to 10 years in advance, and it would take that long to move a variety far enough that would suit their end use needs. So, if they were making something, they needed wheat that would produce couscous or chapatis, or the kinds of flat breads that they were familiar with. The stuff that we use for our white bread doesn't work very well. They can do it but there is better stuff for that.

The plant breeders start producing those things and it takes a long time. They will grow a variety four times or three times in a year to select the seeds that they need and then do things to them to move them along, so that they can get them registered and have farmers produce the. We were good friends with the Iranians, and we were selling them all kinds of wheat until they had all the hostages, the American hostages, and all of a sudden that old program went out the window and all the work that the scientists did

went with it. They still kept the program going. They came up with the medium-class wheat, and they ended up selling a lot of that to the Asians. It did them fairly well, as well

One other trip I didn't mention was that I chased down deer excreta all through China. There was a year I think around 2001 or 2002 or even before that, where we produced a lot and had to store it on the ground. For that reason, deer droppings were getting in the wheat, in the barley, whatever it might be. A lot of it was malting barley, and as a result the Japanese found some. Word got out internationally, "Canadian barley has deer droppings." So they looked extra hard for them.

We worked on all kinds of methods to try to get the terminals to put better cleaning methods in to get rid of this stuff and so on. I followed a ship from Vancouver to China. I went to the ports it unloaded at, observed the unloading. They have a sample-collection system and worked with their inspectors and spent about three weeks there. The Wheat Board had an office at Beijing at that time and I worked with that office as well. That was a rather unique kind of trip. Never did really find any excreta of any consequence. So, I just needed a report, and they needed something to say that, "He didn't find any." So it gave them more ammunition, I think, when they were negotiating. And with so many of these grain deals, that was always the issue. The seller better have his chequebook with him because, "We don't think we are getting everything we paid for."

NP: I would like to end with a couple of more general questions. But before I do, one question I have is, back to Thunder Bay. Here people madly doing the inspections and getting the ship ready to go. When you got into Winnipeg, and this is where this all comes together, how accurate were the inspections?

RB: Better than anyone else. It wasn't perfect but is still better than anything anyone else had. It was better than what the FGIS people were doing at that time.

NP: FGIS?

RB: Federal Grain Inspection Services that was part of the USDA, the Americans. It was better than what they were doing. At least from our perspective, it was. They had a slightly different system. Our system relied on judgment and comparing samples to a standard sample for that particular grain. They had nothing like that. Their system didn't require any judgement at all. It was very hard and fast and no discretion at all.

We eventually went to a system similar to theirs, really, we did. However, at that time we still had a much better inspection system. And I think again it is impossible to get it perfect. No one, when you are taking a sub-sample of such a large quantity of 25,000 tonnes, and it is being represented let's say 1 kilogram or less of grain, the likelihood that it is going to represent everything that is

in there, is fairly remote. It is such a small sub-sampling of that entire parcel that you may find who knows what. You hear about this all the time. When they tell you that the McDonald's hamburger contains so much of this or that, and these are all bad things and you see YouTube and videos and news reports about those kinds of things, grain is the same. You might find a stone, a rock, or who knows what might be in 25,000 tonnes. That one kilogram sample that you have representing all of that is not going to be perfect. That is what I am saying is the whole premise behind that. There has to be some discretion.

NP: Did Canada suffer because it was saying that, "This is what we are guaranteeing and other countries are not guaranteeing?" Did we suffer?

RB: When it came to doing protein, we guaranteed, and we guaranteed the grade, and we met all that. I don't ever recall us not meeting the grade and the protein, those two basics things. It would be rare for us to have missed any of those. The system was built that we are going to hit it just about every time.

NP: We have talked about your dealings with some of the grain companies, particularly when you were working on the waterfront and with the ships. You talked about researchers. What about railways? Did you have any connections with them?

RB: Not really. We would make contact with the GTA once a week. We would go to a meeting with the Grain Transportation Agency when they organized the unloading of cars in the city. Eventually they were dissolved and the companies were left to do that work themselves. That was the only contact we had with the railways. It was through the GTA.

NP: Good. We don't have time for you to give a whole history with the railways. That is somebody else's issue. [Laughs] I learned a lot about Canada's grain industry from this project. It amazes me that such a big country with not the best of climate managed to become one of the world's major grain traders. What is your sense of the role that you played, doing your work, in helping Canada being successful?

RB: I think that even though you thought you were doing a small part of the whole thing, I always got a sense and I was always quite impressed when I would see a boat load of wheat to know how much that represents. If they were to take all of the wheat that moved through the city in a year and made one big pile of it, it would bury half of the city and people can't fathom the volumes of grain that moved through the city. It is 10 million tonnes of wheat for example, is one monstrous pile and if you were to collect it all in one area and observe it, you would get a sense then as to the size of the volume but you don't see it because it is enclosed in rail cars and leaves in ships and you don't have a sense of that and I did get an opportunity to stand on decks of vessels and see these large piles and to know that I inspected all of that. It gives you a certain sense of pride that you had some involvement in that work.

I think that each individual probably has a different viewpoint on what their contribution was and their role in the whole thing. I have found that I liked it. I enjoyed it and I was quite happy. I think largely because I wasn't afraid to move places, to try different things, and threw my hat in the ring whenever there was an opportunity. I enjoyed my career with the grain business. I met so many nice people. It was very enjoyable.

NP: When you--. Back on the challenges that you faced, and you have talked about a number of them in the interview. Is there any challenge that you have not talked about that was in your mind the major challenge that you had to face?

RB: I always had to try to look to secure your future. I always wanted to make sure I had a job tomorrow. This business did not stay static. You could see it changing and evolving every week and different things happening. You needed to stay current in the business. You needed to stay relevant, and you needed to ensure that you were relevant as well and that you remained that way. I saw so many people that I knew that became irrelevant in the business that chose not to move, chose to take a different career path or do something different and the bottom fell out of the business let's say. I was quite happy, and I thought that stood me well to make sure I stayed relevant in the business.

NP: The changes that have occurred or were starting to occur just as you were retiring as far as the changes in the Canadian Grain Act and also in the industry with the Pools disappearing and so on. Any of that have any impact? Could you see that coming?

RB: Not really. I will say at some point I knew it would get there but I didn't think it would get there that quick. It went faster than I would have expected. But I knew at some point this whole thing was going to change. It was going to look differently, and I may not have changed it in the way that it looks today.

NP: When you say the "it" is that--?

RB: The remnants of the Grain Commission what's left. That seems like a real major knee-jerk, radical change in direction from where they once were. I might have taken a little more of a gradual approach to that. But you could see those kinds of things. The winds had changed. Generally, we're at the whim of the governing party, and I am not saying it is not a bad thing. I think those that ended up leaving the Grain Commission to work for private business are doing well, and they are all happy and they found work. In fact, I spoke to Al Coffey the other day that is running the Intertek Company that does the inspection work. He has more employees than the Grain Commission does. I think he told me 27 or 28 employees. I don't think the Grain Commission has that many right now. For some people it is a good thing.

NP: That is good news. I wonder in the longer term because all of these people that went into private industry do things on a cost-for-service basis. They were well trained. Will they continue to get that training because there is no big organization behind it?

RB: Hard to say. Unlikely and I don't think they will. I think you will have to do it yourself if you want to do it. You will have to see if you have the initiative to want to do it.

NP: This is just a general question. In your mind what were the most significant events that happened during your time on the job?

RB: Ah, significant events to the industry. I would have to say when, personally, when I left cities to move to other cities, well that certainly had a profound change in what you are doing and the people that you know and the things that you do made a huge change. The switch of movement from Thunder Bay to Vancouver for grain flowing that had a traumatic, huge change for everyone and those that chose to move to Vancouver at that time benefited. They kept relevant in the industry. They could see where this whole thing was ending up.

NP: Are there any other questions I should have asked you that I haven't asked? [Laughs] Anything you would like to say that you haven't said?

MM: What is broken grain that you mentioned?

RB: Broken grain is some of the material that gets removed when they clean the grain. They will take out seeds and impurities and along with those are particles of broken grain of the same size. You might pull out a little round canola seed but you will also get a little piece of broken wheat at the same time. Now they have different types of cleaning equipment that they can separate that as well that the seeds can go one way and the broken grain another. So that they can reintroduce the broken wheat in with whole wheat and the seeds can end up going into animal feed. Those are some of the things. They have broken grain of all various sizes from very tiny to larger sizes.

NP: I have one more question about your move back here. You came back and how do you keep them down on the farm after they have seen Vancouver, so when you came back here, were there things that you were trying to accomplish that you felt needed to be accomplished here?

RB: No, not really at all. When I came back to Thunder Bay, it was really I thought if I am ever going to get back to Thunder Bay, if I ever choose to move back to Thunder Bay, this is the last opportunity. The government won't move me back there. In fact, that was one of the last lateral transfers that we did because the government pays for your move. They will move you on a promotion,

but they won't move you if you are going from the same position to the same position in another city. That was one of the last times they did that, and they did that. My thinking at that time was if I am going to do it, I am going to do it now. The kids were small, 3 and 10, easy for them to move. So if we do move back, this is an easier time than if one is 18 and the other is 13 or 12 when they have made more mature relationships with people are a little more difficult for them to pull up stakes.

I probably still would be there, and I will be honest with you, it was a real coin toss whether or not we go. I left it up to my wife, and she left it up to me, and we debated the merits of staying and moving back. Raising kids in a small town like Thunder Bay we thought was a good thing. Our parents and family are here and roots are here. Job-wise about the same and maybe a little bit better and at that same time entertaining an idea to move back to Winnipeg because I had been offered a job with the Wheat Board. I had all those three things to consider, and I chose to come back here. As far as a career move, it might not have been the best. I don't know. I thought it was okay. Again, I got the opportunity to do the Grain Consulting work for a few years and it was very enjoyable. I enjoyed that. That was five, six seven good years.

NP: Better than the choice of moving to the Wheat Board.

RB: Yes, that's right. You see there was no thought at that time. The Wheat Board was as solid as Sears! They were rock solid, and nothing was changing there. There was no consideration to open up the Wheat Board Act and to look at their relevance. They were just going gangbusters. They lost oats at that time and because the companies were saying, "We are doing a better job at selling oats than you guys are," so they took that away from them. Then they lost malting barley, and the writing was on the wall that farmers want these guys out of the business, and we can do the same thing. We don't need you guys to do this. Not everybody believed that. I think they are still split 50/50 on that one. Time will tell. In fact, it is working. Both systems are working. The Wheat Board is selling grain and they are almost in competition with the companies and that is what they were afraid of. They didn't want to compete to the same customers, selling the same product and that was their philosophy. The government's philosophy is stay out of business where private business should be doing these things. The government should not be in the business of business. Again, you get different philosophies on that whole thing depending on who you speak to.

NP: Thank you very much.

RB: You're welcome.

NP: It has been a great two interviews.

RB: Well, I am glad we finished them. [Laughs]

NP: A lot of very useful information that I don't think other people would be able to provide.

RB: Thanks. If anyone has insomnia at any time! [Laughs]

NP: Thanks to Monika McNabb who I didn't introduce in the beginning, who was running the equipment and taking notes.

End of interview.