

**Narrator:** Cam Brown (CB)

**Company Affiliations:** Manitoba Pool Elevators, Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), Feed-Rite

**Interview Date:** 16 February 2009

**Interviewer:** Nancy Perozzo (NP)

**Recorder:** Nancy Perozzo (NP)

**Transcriber:** Rebecca Tulonen

**Summary:** Former director of market development for the Canadian Wheat Board Cam Brown discusses his career in grain marketing for various companies. He begins by describing his family's history of homesteading in the Prairie provinces, the hardships of farming in the early 1900s, and the new varieties of grains coming out to be more useful in Canadian climates. He recalls his brief work with the Department of Agriculture as an extension worker recommending best practices to farmer before becoming a field supervisor for Manitoba Pool Elevators. As field supervisor, Brown attended farm meetings and was tasked with helping farmers understand company and government policies. He then discusses his move to the CWB as director of market development, travelling the world to open new markets to sell Canadian grain and developing grain varieties that were in demand. He reflects on his success in introducing durum and malt barley into new markets, and he shares the story of the Great Russian Grain Robbery—a result of grain traders' extreme secrecy. Brown then describes his move to Feed-Rite as their vice president of marketing selling feed grains to livestock farmers. Other topics discussed include a story of visiting Ottawa with 1,000 farmer delegates, the Canadian Grain Commission's role in quality control and administering the Canada Grain Act, his sadness at the demise of the Pools and protective regulations, visits Thunder Bay with farmers, and his pride in working for the Canadian farmer.

**Keywords:** Manitoba Pool Elevator; Canadian Wheat Board (CWB); Feed-Rite; Grain marketing; Farmer cooperatives; Agricultural policy; Grain trade—Laws and legislation; Grain farmers/producers; Grain varieties; Farming—Equipment and supplies; Farmer meetings; Canada Grain Act (1912); Grain transportation—Rail; Grain transportation—ships; Crow's Nest Pass freight rate; Canadian Grain Commission (CGC); Grain prices; Grain buyers; Grain export destinations; Feed grain; Livestock industry; Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; MPE Pool 3

Time, Speaker, Narrative

NP: I am talking this morning with Cam Brown. We would like to start with your review of your history related to the grain trade.

CB: I was born on a farm in St. Boniface, Manitoba, just across the river, and my dad worked with his brother, Brown Brothers, we grew grain and fed pigs. We were also market gardeners and grew potatoes, tomatoes, cabbage, the whole bit. If you want to do farming the hard way, try market gardening. That was tough. The grain part of it was the easiest because you sat in the tractor. We were involved in all aspects of agricultural.

My dad homesteaded in Alberta in 1907. He was the first graduate in agriculture from the University of Alberta. My mother was a school teacher, and they put a great deal of emphasis on education. You've got to get to school, and you have to go to university. So all four of us—my two brothers and my sister—we all went to the University of Manitoba. Three of us graduated from the faculty of Agriculture, my sister included. She is in Alberta now and my younger brother took geology. He was the apostate, the geologist. He lives over here in St. Vital. My other brother passed away with cancer about 20 years ago. That was the history.

I went to university, and I was the district agriculturist in Alberta for two or three years. I stayed in Hanna, Alberta, which is the town that an author wrote *Next Year Country*, which gives an insight into the social economic aspect of western Canada that a lot of us are not aware of. Hanna was a rail hub and a divisional point for the Canadian National Railway [CNR] from Saskatoon to Calgary. The mainline of the Canadian Pacific [CPR] runs east to west and south of that. The town was really something. I really enjoyed it there. I came back from Hanna, and I started with Manitoba Pool Elevators. They offered me a job in Virden, Manitoba, which is where I met my wife.

NP: Can I just go back to Hanna and inquire about *Next Year's Country*. What does that mean?

CB: I have a picture on a book here by A.H. Reginald Buller, and there is a photo of a man standing in a field of Marquis wheat, and it's "the banner year 1915" they call it. There used to be a saying in western Canada that the best crop in western Canada ever was 1915 and next year. That is the way farmers always talked about next year we will get a crop. That is the basic psychology of hope springs eternal. A farmer puts the grain in the ground in the spring, he hopes for a crop again and they call it next year we will have a big crop. Because a lot of years we didn't get a big crop. Drought was a major, major problem in the agriculture of western Canada and in the livelihood of people in Vancouver, Prince Rupert, Thunder Bay and Churchill. That's the thing that I grew up on was rain, and we always looked around to the sky. It's inbred in you to watch the weather. It had enormous impact on people.

In that area of Hanna there is a big special [inaudible] area and they homesteaded that in 1907 to 1909. It was the latest area in western Canada to be homesteaded. It should not have been homesteaded. It should never have been homesteaded because some

of that soil in Hanna, which has a hardpan down about six inches and the moisture does not permeate that hard pan. What would happen in the spring when the moisture areas start the crops going well, then along come June and July when the hot winds would come by, and the crops would wilt. They put it all into pasture and into livestock and they grew chaff. You had to grow some grain to re-seed the pasture. It was a real area to come out of the guts of western Canada to find out how people lived. People actually died on homesteads in that area. It was so bad, so bad!

NP: Meaning they died why?

CB: They died of no food. The homesteading of western Canada is really a tragedy in many ways. I think only about 30 percent of the original homesteaders actually stayed there. There was a tremendous movement of people in and out of western Canada and going up to the Peace River District. They went up from that "Next Year Country" at Hanna, up to the Peace River of Alberta. If you look at western Canada, all of the south from Winnipeg west is all Anglo-Saxon people that came from Ontario or from Britain or wherever. Everything north if you go from here north from the southeast Manitoba up to Edmonton, the Ukrainians came in, the Germans in, and the Polish people came in, and there were some Americans that came in. But the character of the people and the social part of it changes as you go north and south. The reason was because the CNR came in late. It wasn't called that then, but it came in after the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885. The history of western Canada is the railways.

NP: You mentioned that your grandfather started out in 1907.

CB: My grandfather had passed away at that time. He had died a young man, heart failure or something in Ontario. My dad, his brother and two sisters went to Vermillion with their mother to set up farming. That is why he went to the University of Alberta in Vermillion.

NP: How did you end up in St. Boniface?

CB: They got dried and frozen out many times because they didn't have these early maturing varieties of grain up in Nelson Township in 1955. You get up north and the frost-free days are not too good. It was right at the top of the Palliser Triangle. Lloyd Minister is the top and it runs down here to Melita, Manitoba, and down to Calgary. That is called "The Palliser Triangle." John Palliser came here and surveyed western Canada. That is a very dry area. So they came down here lock, stock and barrel to Manitoba because you get more moisture here and it is a lower altitude. You are up 1500 feet at Vermillion and down here you are at 700 feet. We have warmer summers here.

NP: Did they have family connections here or did they make a scientific decision then?

CB: No family. Everything was farming in those days, everything! There was not any industry in western Canada at all. It was simply homesteads. The grain, wheat, was number one. Where wheat came in was that the markets in Europe started to move upward for wheat. They used to grow Red Fife here. It was long maturing and didn't have the frost-free days that were needed for most of western Canada. Then Marquis wheat came in and was developed by Dr. Saunders and it was world beater. It was grown down in Minnesota, down in South Dakota, Montana and North Dakota. Everybody had Marquis wheat because it had high quality. Then in 1936 we got rust and we had frost, that sort of thing. It was tough going developing these grains. Wheat was number one, and it was king!

NP: Where was Marquis wheat developed?

CB: In Canada.

NP: In Canada.

CB: The wheat that succeeded it was not developed in Canada. I remember Thatcher wheat came in after 1936. They had to get wheat and it came out from the University of Minnesota because they were working on it down there. It was resistant to the races of rust at that time. The next big rust outbreak was 1954, and Selkirk wheat came in. Now they are so sophisticated, and they anticipate the changes in the rust races that they have the variety ahead of time. We have had a stability of grain, wheat particularly, and other crops of barley, oats and canola have fallen. Wheat generally is grown in the southern parts of the Prairies and canola in the north. It has changed everything.

You say you are from Thunder Bay. Well, Thunder Bay was actually the gateway to the world markets and always has been. The first shipload of wheat for Ontario went out in 1874, wheat to Ontario. There was no railway here, so it went down by barge on the Red River to Fargo, North Dakota, and then it was put on their transcontinental railway through northern Michigan to Ontario. That is the way it went. After that, the CP came in and all of a sudden, the railways were building terminals and the government was building terminals, and that is where the trouble started in the grain trade. We had all kinds of commissions.

There is a book called *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy* that was written about 50 years ago by Dr. Fowke at the University of Saskatchewan. That book covers the development of the homesteads, wheat, and grains in Western Canada, and all the problems that are involved in it and all the political problems. It is tremendous from the standpoint of the historical development of western Canada after the fur trade, after the fur trade.

NP: There is a very interesting photo in a little tug in Thunder Bay that a fellow picked up from the internet. It showed a group of workers standing in front of the Hudson Bay fort in Thunder Bay and the caption was that "CP Rail employees help Hudson Bay employees dismantle the Fort to make way for CPR grain elevator." [Laughs] That just reinforces your point. Let's stick with this book for a bit because I find it fascinating. As things were changing, you were still on the farm. Were the farmers like your dad who were formally educated in farming, were they aware of the world issues that impacted their farm?

CB: My dad certainly was because he was involved in the development of the Pool elevators and the Canadian Wheat Board [CWB] and the Canadian National Railway. In fact, he met my mother in the '20s on a debate on the nationalization of the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Great Northern railways that went into the CNR because they were going belly up. My dad was a great proponent of that. That was the start of farmers being involved in the rail. They had to have a viable railroad for the northwestern part of western Canada. He was involved with that, and there used to be pretty hot issues.

You still got the dichotomy in western Canada. Should government be involved in the grain business? I must say it still is a big debate today. It is all based on the fact that if you believe in private enterprise, you don't want government involvement, except when you run into bad times. The cattlemen in western Canada are famous for wanting no government involvement, et cetera, et cetera, but when the prices take the dive, their hands come out too. Farmers got to get around the idea now and some of them are saying right today, "Well when they are going to start and help the auto industry? Why don't they first start here because we are more important than those auto guys are?" That still exists today. It has been a major problem in solving problems.

In my career I have been involved in marketing, growing, and selling grains. What sticks in my mind is the simple marketing principle: How can 50,000 farmers in western Canada sell their grains effectively to half a dozen people, markets? They can't do it because the number of elevators in western Canada has fallen from about 3,000 when I started in the business 50 years ago. It is down to about 400 or 500 now. They are not all at competitive points, and they are not on the same railway! There is a whole host of factors that enter into the marketing of it. They are still there, and they are worse than they ever were. When we had 3,000 elevators here 50, 60 or 75 years ago, you had more implicit competition at the point. Today is it basically gone.

NP: You grew up on the farm. Did you willingly go into agriculture, or you were expected to go into agriculture for a career?

CB: I don't think I was expected. My dad was always interested in it and of course I did. My younger brother took geology. I did it because I wanted to. I wanted to. I wouldn't have done anything else. You always review your life, and I thought I would have liked to have been a doctor. I could have been a doctor. That is the only thing. It was a biological thing.

No, there is no better area of endeavour than in agriculture and the agriculture sector because you are connecting to the entire world. When I was with the Wheat Board, I travelled and have been all over the world except to our competitors, to Australia. I was in China, Russia, Europe, South America, you name it. We had 45 to 50 countries of the world that buy our grain, and we are absolutely dependent on outside world markets.

NP: What took you to those countries?

CB: It was selling and marketing grain.

NP: Marketing grain?

CB: Yes.

NP: Your university years were spent on--?

CB: I graduated in 1952 and then I went back and took my master's and graduated with my masters in 1955. I then worked in an extension in Alberta and Manitoba. I came back and started right into the grain business with Manitoba Pool Elevators and was with them for 10 or 12 years.

NP: Going back to your extension work. It was short lived a couple of years. What was involved there?

CB: Hanna was the big area when I was there. I worked up at St. Paul, too, for a while, Alberta, as an assistant DA in Alberta. I went down there to Hanna. That is a huge area. You have the huge wheat growing area to the east and west of that. Right on the Saskatchewan border you have Oyen, Albert, and Acadia Valley. Then you go over to Eatonia, Saskatchewan, and that is a big wheat country. The same thing west of Hanna we had Drumheller area. Some of the best wheat in the world is grown there, from the standpoint of weathering. There was nothing better.

I always like to look back at wheat. Just to give you an example, my father came out to visit me in Hanna in the fall of 1956. We had a huge wheat surplus in western Canada. Couldn't sell the stuff. We had too much of it. There was wheat piled up all over the countryside. Joe Ferguson was the manager of the Oyen elevator. He came later to Winnipeg and was terminal manager for Alberta Wheat Pool. Joe Ferguson says, "A monkey can buy grain here at Oyen, Alberta, because it is all No. 1 Northern." It is such beautiful weather. He says, "This guy comes in and No. 1, and they won't take any less than No. 1 and he says it is all No. 1." In Manitoba that wasn't the fact. We always got weather damage done because it was in a swath or the stook too long. Out there it

is tremendous wheat. In Eatonia, Acadia Valley, Oyen and then you go on to Drumheller, in that area. Boy it is a tremendous wheat growing area.

NP: What makes it so good?

CB: Very good soil. They have some really good soils there. Around Swift Current it is very dry, but Eatonia is northwest and right on the 4th meridian on that border. I have driven down with Maxine two years ago. You got to look at that countryside and say, "My goodness what a huge country we have got here." The same thing when you run from Estevan over to the Cypress Hills. There is some tremendous wheat-growing areas down there. Water is the problem.

There is a story I want to tell. A guy by the name of Donald Cameron at Youngstown, Alberta. That was really east of Hanna. He was the irrigation guy for the special areas. At that time, I was out there in the '50s, there was huge piles of grain all over the place.

NP: Sitting in silos?

CB: No. They are 100,000 to 200,000 bushels of grain stacked up outside, no cover on them. I remember talking to him and I says, "Gee, what are we going to do with all this grain?" I said to this fellow Cameron, who has the same name as my mother and mine. He says, "My friend I want to tell you something. The big problem in western Canada is not marketing grain. The big problem in western Canada is growing it" he said, "because of moisture." He was the irrigation guy. And this grain did disappear. It went. In the '90s we had another smack of it low yields. A string of them like in the '30s that could come again.

NP: I am thinking that the fact that the grain is out in the open. There must have been a lot of losses to vermin?

CB: No, not too much. There are no rats in Alberta! [Laughing] That's a rat free province!

NP: Is that for real? It is a rat free province?

CB: Yes, it is.

NP: How does that happen?

CB: Well, they maintain it. They have a "rat patrol" on the 4th meridian. They go up and down that little line, the Saskatchewan border, and they make sure those rats don't cross that border. That is a fact.

NP: That's a fact?

CB: Yes. [Laughing] I didn't believe there were chinooks either until I got to Alberta. They do that. I am sure that is still the policy. There prided themselves on no rats.

NP: Who does the rat patrol? I find this fascinating!

CB: They hire people. At Hanna, I was the nearest to the 4th meridian there and the rat patrol guy lived at Oyen and at Coronation. They had a lot of guys doing that.

NP: Sort of like gofer patrol? I have heard about that.

CB: They go to granaries along that meridian and destroy the rats if there are any.

NP: That is the government of Alberta that hires them?

CB: Oh yes. Yes, yes. I should call my pal Dave Jancey. He has just retired from Alberta Agriculture, a great friend of mine. We used to laugh and say, "They will put you on rat patrol if you don't smarten up." [Laughs] I am almost positive they are still doing it, and they still pride themselves on that.

NP: The focus of our project is on the international grain trade. Your work as an extension worker for the Department of Agriculture, what do you think the connection of your work was to the success of the international grain trade as an extension worker?

CB: Your job was to recommend the latest agronomic practices in terms of varieties of grain for quality and fertilizing to get higher yields, chemical control of weeds and agronomic practices for cultivating. That was a major undertaking. Now it is a little bit different today because all those things have been pretty well accepted. If you go back, they used a moldboard plough, and that's what decimated western Canada in the '30s because the plough was the only idea of how you tilled the soil. It just left the soil exposed and then turned the stubble underneath. It just blew away. I can still see the fence posts down here where the soil is piled up.



You don't see summer fallow acreages are down. They mix the mulch up at the top and it stops it from blowing. That was a major thing. There were farmers that it took a long time to get them off that. Now they have seeding. They leave the trash. They don't worry about the trash because they have these air seeders that drive the seed down in and it is unbelievable. Sixty feet at a crack. They can seed a half section of land in a day. Unbelievable!

NP: What would it take to seed a half section?

CB: If you had a 28-run drill, and let's say you are going five miles an hour, you might do 50 acres a day. The extrapolation of equipment—now that's done something else. Let's take a combine. With seeding they go 60 feet, and if you go five miles an hour with a 60-foot drill, you will do 300 acres a day in a 10-hour day.

You just multiply the speed by the width. The huge combines today will do 1,000 bushels an hour. They are so huge and so much capacity—1,000 bushels an hour. We had a combine. Our first combine was an 8-foot Cockshutt Number 5 combine. I remember that. If you were to work all day with the thing, you might get 1,000 bushels out of it, 12 to 13-hour day. This combine will do that every hour. One person on that combine could do what it would take me 12 days to do the same amount of stuff they do in a day. It's just tremendous. They have these sprayers with huge widths. Those days there were farmers all over western Canada. That is the other thing that has happened. The size of farms have gone up tremendously. Maybe 60 years ago, a half-section size and now I think the average size in Manitoba is 1,500 acres going up 2,000 acres. A good farmer today has 1,500 to 3,000 acres.

NP: How many sections is that?

CB: There are 640 in a section. That would be a couple of sections. What has happened is that there is nobody left out there. In western Manitoba when I worked for the Manitoba Pool over 50 years ago, there were elevators at Ebor, Ewart, Broomhill, Tilston, Linklater, and Willan. All those lines when I was there. I closed them down at that time when I was there. Well, they are all gone. Pipestone where my mother was born, there are no elevators there anymore. There use to be two elevators that are now gone. Belleview, gone. Why? Because these small elevators, now they have now built these big concrete babies. So what has that done? It has ruined the roads. You have now got these big semi-trailers. It has been enormous. I am going to western Canada on Saturday to Maxine's mother's at Hamiota. You used to be able to travel across western Canada and see the name of the town on the elevator. You can't see that anymore.

NP: They are hard to find now.

CB: Yes, you can't do it.

NP: You moved back to Manitoba?

CB: Yes, to Virden. I stayed there for 10 or 12 years with Manitoba Pool. I was a livestock nutritionist for about six years. Then I went with the Canadian Wheat Board.

NP: When you worked with Manitoba Pool, what was your job in Virden?

CB: I was a field supervisor. I had 36 elevator associations that I was looking after, the boards of directors, and answering the problems. You really got to know how farmers thought and how they think. I would say that in the 10 years of my life that I learned more about farmers and about grain policy than any other 10 years of my life. You were right into it with Manitoba Pool. It is a big disappointment to me that they are gone now.

NP: Was there a typical day in your work?

CB: First of all, you were meeting people all the time. They had 38 board meetings. They would have a board meeting every one to two months. You were expected to be there. I was out a lot of nights because that is the time that the farmers wanted to meet. I put on 40,000 miles a year going to those darn meetings, you know. Oh, yeah, there was a farmers' march on Ottawa in 1958. Grain prices were so low that the three Pools and the farmers got together and sent 1,000 delegates down to Ottawa when John Diefenbaker was Prime Minister. There were two trains: CP 1 and CP 2. CN I, part of the two railways—500 on each railway. I was assigned to one and Art [inaudible], my old buddy, was on another one. It was quite something to go to Ottawa.

John Diefenbaker had his whole cabinet out there. These 1,000 guys, delegates, and there were some women that were farmer delegates that went there and landed in Ottawa in February 1958. I think that was the time. We were there and it was really something. John Diefenbaker had his whole cabinet out in those railway committee chambers in Ottawa and the 1,000 farmers sitting down below us. Art and I went up and sat in the balcony and watched the proceedings. Jack Wesson made the presentation, the president of the Saskatchewan Pool. I will never forget it. He took off his jacket, rolled up his sleeve and went to work on why they wanted subsidy for grain, wheat, and barley. Diefenbaker replied and got up. He has his whole cabinet out there including Donald Fleming, who was Minister of Finance, who was a glowering Toronto boy who thought these western mossbacks had come in there. It was just too much for him.

Diefenbaker got up. Well, he had them eating out of this hand. I will never forget that. He ended up with this peroration I guess you would call it that, talking about his times as a Prairie lawyer up there in Saskatoon or north of Saskatoon and he had them eating out of his hand. He ended up his speech by saying, "Gentlemen, I can assure you that I shall give your request, or your submission, continuing and sympathetic consideration." He brought the house down. He didn't say he was going to give them anything! Sympathy was the big thing these boys wanted out here. Trudeau and all the rest of these guys couldn't understand the western farmer. Just give them some sympathy. It doesn't cost much.

He did give them. About five months later, as I recall, he gave them an acreage payment. Every farmer in western Canada got a dollar and acre, up to a maximum of \$200. Two hundred acres, a dollar an acre. Two hundred, every farmer. Well, that caught up all the small guys. They have since voted Conservative. That is the history of that vote. They were in serious trouble, and he gave them more than just sympathy. I will never forget that. That was really something! He knew how to speak to the boys, and they trusted him. They still trust the Conservatives, and they still vote for them.

NP: What I am thinking as I am hearing this is, given that an awful lot of the product that the Canadian farmer produces is exported, just how much control is there even nationally and over a market that is international?

CB: Not very much, except that you have got to keep the trade channels open at all times. The government has to be very vigilant. Our relationship with the United States is particularly vulnerable with exports of agricultural products to the United States—wheat, barley, cattle, hogs—those things are always under attack by the protectionist and the Congress in the United States. The President can say one thing there, but the Congress passes the laws. Lumber is another one.

Historically the Americans have always been critical of Canada because we have a Wheat Board, government involvement, and the Crow's Nest Pass rates. That is government involvement, a subsidy, and they insisted. So we got rid of the Crow's Nest Pass rate. The effect of that was that it made it cheaper to ship grain to Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Kansas City than it did to Thunder Bay. That put our markets into the United States, and of course, we have a higher quality of product—barley and the wheat, and durum, particularly durum, and our hard red springs. Our quality standards are much higher, and they like them, and they bought them. Of course, there would be trade disputes. They just had to return a whole bunch of money. They slapped a tariff on our wheat, and they had to return it all. The same thing with pigs, the same with cattle. They have this COOL [Country of Origin Labeling] program.

Your first question was about much control. No. You have to keep the trade channels open. That is a major problem especially with the United States our nearest and dearest friend! [Laughs]

NP: You were saying that the reason that the products head south is one of quality. Is that quality as a result of the growing conditions?

CB: It is all of that. But it is a product of our conscious effort to grow the grain, grade it, weigh it, and handle it in such a way that you are assured of your quality that you are buying. For example, if you are loading grain out to, let's say, out of Vancouver or out of Thunder Bay. It goes out onto a laker and goes down to Baie-Comeau. Even ocean vessels come into Thunder Bay now and pick up grain directly. Let's say we will go to Vancouver. You put 50,000 bushels of wheat into that ship. You are not going to get paid for that load. It doesn't leave the harbour. There is a letter of credit and as soon as the Canadian Grain Commission issues the weight and the certificate final, you get paid.

Farmers have to understand that there is no money for their grain. They are paid at the elevator, but there is no money in their pockets. Somebody else is holding that debt. When it gets to Vancouver, it is paid, or it gets to Thunder Bay, it is paid. That certificate final guaranteeing the grade. We are the only country in the world that people will buy wheat or barley on the basis of the Canadian Grain Commission's certificate final.

Some pooh-pooh that thing but the United States is always having problems with exports of their corn because their quality specs are not up to what they say on their certificate. The guarantee of the Canadian Grains Commission is--.

You take 50,000 bushels of wheat get load into a ship. That is a small load these days. Those ocean liners now carry up to 100,000 tonnes of grain. That is enormous, and that has changed the way wheat moves, too. You have to have terminals at the lake and ocean side that can handle those big ships. You think 100,000-tonne vessel that couldn't come into Thunder Bay, but goes to Baie-Comeau in Quebec up the St. Lawrence. They load it on one side and take it out and run it around and bring it around the other side, the other way, and load it from the other side because it is so huge. The risks are higher as well. That changed the grain market more than anybody would ever even conceive here 50 years ago. Those ships are enormous.

We have developed this institution called the Canadian Grain Commission, which administers the Canada Grain Act, which is a result of 100 years of agitation by farmers.

NP: What do you mean by that? Was the result of 100 years of agitation by farmers?

CB: Earlier on, there were no controls and no regulations in regard to the weighing and measuring and grading grain. You were at the mercy of the guy who was buying it. Nothing is going to change on that. You are still at their mercy if you didn't have

protection to say that there is a grade, dockage and weights that must be measured and assured. The farmer had the Canada Grain Act that assures them of that. That took a long time. I think 1912 they got that in.

There were 100 different grain buyers out here at the Winnipeg Grain Exchange and farmers got upset that prices in the fall, the prices would always drop down low when everybody had to have their money. They would go in and deliver this grain to the elevator and the grain prices would drop. The farmer needed the money, so he had to take it. They wanted a better way of doing that. So they tried to stabilize it with the Canadian Wheat Board, which was quite an enterprise. No government that I have seen in western Canada ever fully supported the full involvement of the Canadian Wheat Board. They always believed in the private enterprise. But farmers did not at that time. It was a big struggle, a big effort and a lot of people burnt themselves out trying to get these changes historically.

NP: Trying to get the changes to The Grain Act and the Wheat Board and so on?

CB: Yes.

NP: I am going to go back to your work in Virden. What would say were the challenges there for you?

CB: The challenge was to explain the operations of the organization effectively to the farmer members. There are so many factors that enter into it. "How come we are doing this? How come we are doing that?" For example, at Pearson Cooperative Elevator Association, that is down at the southwest part of the province west of Melita. It was a big association. There was one time in the '50s that it was better for the Americans to bring up flax. They delivered flax into Pearson elevator from West Hope, North Dakota, about 40,000 to 50,000 bushels of it. When it came to the annual meeting, the way we used to operate it was that there would be a pool for the wheat, a pool for barley, a pool for oats, and a pool for flax. This huge bunch of flax came in, and of course you could include it in the pool, but you couldn't pay the dividend out to the North Dakota elevator because they were not a producer. That all stayed in the pool, and it accrued 10 or 15,000 bushels of flax delivered there, and it was a huge payment, about four or five dollars a bushel. Well at the annual meeting this came up and of course these guys wanted to get all this money, but the members said, "No, you can't have that. It is a fortuitous thing. That has to be split up amongst all the members not just you." That went into 3:00 in the morning. Finally, the saw-off was made where half the money would go to the Pearson library and the other half would be paid out to the flax growers. That was always a problem—equity. Equity was always a problem. How the farmers viewed equity. Unfortunately, most of them thought equity meant it was all for me! That was a big part of our job in explaining what these policies were.

NP: Equity being an issue, for example, if you had a good farmer and a poor farmer and each of them wanting equity for different amount of effort perhaps?

CB: Well, the problem with the economic system is sometimes you may not have the best wheat, but you have a vast volume of it. You would be paid a bonus if you delivered all—this is a marketplace thing—deliver all your grain to us and we will give you another five cents or whatever it is. And the little guy is sitting out with better wheat would get the regular price. That always bothered--. That always ended up in our lap to explain that, and it wasn't easy.

I have 50 years in this thing, and I would say that my greatest disappointment with farmers has been the disappearance of the three Pools. That really happened, I have to say, because of the short sightedness of the farmer members of these Pools across Western Canada. I say that—and I know this is being recorded—but I am saying that the farmers believed the competition was a good thing so they didn't want the three Pools to merge. In 1984 they got together and said, yes, they should merge because these lines are coming up. The farmer membership in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta always didn't want to become a big conglomerate. But they had to be, but they wouldn't face reality. Now what have they got? Three major companies in Western Canada. None of them Pools and none of their representatives. I put that down to their inability to realize that this was happening whether they liked it or not.

NP: Why do you say that they had to be big? Why did they have to amalgamate?

CB: In order to build these new cement elevators, they had to have the resources to do it. It wasn't like starting an elevator company 75 years ago. All you had to do was to have money and you'd get into it. But today you have to have more than money. You have to have huge amounts of money, and you have to have farmer membership to do that. That is a big disappointment. I think that is being seen now because they are going to change the Canada Grain Act regulations. They are going to take the protection out from farmers, and they are going to notice it when they start delivering to the elevator. I can't believe it. I just got this on the wire. They are going to introduce that. That is because there is no effective organization that is effective. The Pools used to be very effective in defending the farmer's rights.

NP: When you say they are going to take the farmer protection out of the act, can you explain that a little bit?

CB: The Canadian Grain Act says the farmer comes to an elevator, and if he is not happy with the grade and dockage, he can draw a sample with the agent there and send it into the Canadian Grain Commission to get it official. That protects them. Now they are going to take that away and not going to give that service to the Canadian Grain Commission. The other one is at Thunder Bay, if you ship or produce car down there, they are going to take away the Canadian Grain Commission weights, dockage, and grade

when you unload the car. It is going to be up the elevator company. Well, how does a grain company make money out of the thing? They make it out of grade, dockage, and weights. They have got the weights thing pretty well, but the rate and dockage is all human judgment. If you buy grain that is No. 2 and you ship it out as No. 1, you pick up the spread, eh? That has always been a problem and now they are going to exacerbate it with this thing. I am concerned about that.

NP: After your time in Virden, where did your career lead?

CB: I went to the Canadian Wheat Board. I was with them for 12 or 13 years.

NP: What was your position with them?

CB: I was a director of market development at that time.

NP: What did that entail?

CB: We undertook to start and develop markets for our malting barley and wheat. We had Glenlea wheat. We contracted and developed. We brought malting barley, feed barley, and durum wheat. We did a lot of work on durum, getting these durums introduced. We would grow these new varieties, get a hold of it, put it into bulk. We would go to Italy and say, "I want you to try out some of this durum." Go to Germany and say, "I want you to try out a few containers of this durum." Not a huge shipload, you know. If they liked it, we would say, "Okay boys, we were going to grow this wheat." The same thing with wheat. They are doing it to this day now. It was really a challenge at that time because wheat was not very well priced, and it was low. We were trying to get other crops that yielded more. We would get more money into the farmer's pocket. Well, they are doing it today. That's what I did.

I was involved in negotiations with China. We are selling it too, you know. The Chinese would buy 3 million tonnes at a crack, and that is a lot of wheat. We would be there a month with these guys in Beijing. They would have four guys and we had four guys. Every morning we would meet with them. I found out one thing about negotiations. The Chinese, I would say they are the best negotiators in the world! Somebody said, "What would you put that down to?" "It wasn't me. I'd say patience, patience, patience." They would say, "How long have your people been civilized?" So you would say, "I guess a couple of thousands of years." "Well we have been civilized 6,000 years." They would let you know that. They are very proud of that. You get to know them really well when you are sitting across from them. They are very good negotiators!

NP: What would be the "deal makers" or "the deal breakers" would you say?

CB: It was always price. [Laughs] You would have an idea. They started; you started. The key thing and Charlie Gibbings of Sask Pool taught me that—who was commissioner of the Wheat Board, and I was the secretary—he said, “Now we want to start this price above what they are going to pay.” They were going to come in at a point below that price that you had in the back of your mind you were going to get. If they got too far below that then you had a problem getting them to move up to that point. And that is how we would do it.

That is true of Peru or wherever you are. Somebody said to me down here in St. Jean, Phil Roi [inaudible] said to me, and I think he is alive. He said, “Who do you think is the best negotiator in the world?” And I said, “That is a good question. I thought the Italians were pretty good.” But he said, “Well I think the Chinese are number one.” “Okay, who is number two?” He said, “The East Indians.” “Who is number three?” And he put down the Algerians or the Moroccans. They are all non-white world, you know. They are, too. You have to respect these people. Canadians are good too. I will put that out for the record. [Laughs]

Canadians are not as proud of themselves as they should be. We have a great country and a tremendous western Canada. We built it. I think Canadians are not as good as the Americans, and we are not as good as the British. They have that attitude. I think we are every bit as good! Right now, this financial crisis we are in with our banks are better than the United States, better than they are in Britain, better than they are in France, better than they are in Germany, and better than Japan. Spain is the only one that has banks that are not flopping up. We have done a lot of good things.

And incidentally, that Bank of Canada Act that was passed in 1935 when the Wheat Board Act was passed by R.B. Bennett, a Conservative Government in Canada, because we were in the depths of Depression, and these were bold steps to set this thing right. They are still with us.

NP: Was there a connection between the Bank Act and the Wheat Board Act?

CB: Oh yes. They were both to offset this recession. Banks were going into bankruptcy down in the States, right down to the border here. North Dakotans and Minnesotans were coming up into Canada and opening bank accounts here because the banks down there were going up. There was a big crisis. That is when Roosevelt declared a bank holiday. All these things maybe Canadians take for granted that we don't do things right. We do things right! We did them right, and we are seeing that happen today with our financial system. It has faded away. We are in serious times. I have never experienced a situation that we have today where we have since last July this market has been going down all day and every day almost. Very serious. Very serious. But the grain market is okay. It's not too bad.



NP: Going back to something you said earlier about that we developed the wheat and then we would go out and market it. What leads to the development of this grain product? Who are the actors in getting the product developed and then saying, “Okay now we have to go out and market it”? What are the pieces in that?

CB: The main actors are the buyers. The buyers say, “This is a quality grain we would like to have.” You get the chemist to work, feed it back to the plant breeders and develop it. That is where it starts. Then you have to tie that in with the agronomic characteristics that are required to grow it. And that’s the key thing. There has to be a compromise between what the guys want, the market that are buying it, and what the producers can produce. Sometimes you have a conflict. For example, in western Canada, the quality characteristics of protein are not related to yield factors. The higher the protein and the better quality you get, the lower the yield. So you have to make a compromise. That is how it works.

NP: How would the buyers recognize what would be needed?

CB: They have their chemists, their processes and flour making, making beer, malting barley, oats, milling wheat, oats, all those factors. The buyer knows what he wants, and he gets it. For example, oats are a big product out of western Canada because we have lower temperatures. Draw a line up to Edmonton. Lots of oats and barley are grown on that line, canola.

NP: Do oats like colder weather?

CB: They like cooler weather. You get heavier oats. You get plumper oats. When you take the shell off, you have the kernel. You press and mash it and you get rolled oats, and that sort of thing. They love them 42-, 43-pound oats. The other people who like our oats, our heavy oats, are the racehorse people. We export a lot of oats to the racehorse industry in the United States, because they can't grow them as heavy as we can because it is too hot down there.

NP: What is the resource industry in the States?

CB: I don't get your question?

NP: You said the resource industry in the United States.

CB: The horse race.

NP: Oh, the horse race. Oh, sorry. [Laughs]

CB: The racehorse people down at Kentucky. We ship lots of oats down there.

NP: I am glad I asked. [Laughs]

CB: There are two big racehorse areas in the United States—one is Kentucky and the other one is Florida.

NP: They are big enough to create a market?

CB: Oh yes! Texas has a lot of horses, too. We ship heavy oats down there. I think the elevator price is bushel weight, 34 pounds, but these oats up here are 42, 43 44 pounds, heavier than that. They have oats now that are just like peas. [Laughs]

NP: When you think back to your time in marketing with the Canadian Wheat Board, are there some stories that come to mind, challenges that you faced, successes that you are proud of?

CB: Yes. The durum wheat was the big one. Italy is a big buyer of durum wheat and Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Germany and France. They buy all our durum wheats because we have very good durum wheats. They like this hard—*dur* in French, they say—durum in France. We develop some very, very top quality, very high-quality durum wheats. And of course, that got them in trouble with the United States because they started buying our wheat over down there because they are further south. They can grow the same varieties that we do. The further south you go, the longer the days are that seems to be some factor that makes our wheat superior. That would be the one big one. And of course, the hard red springs I got a new class of wheat introduced. That is a big time in Manitoba.

NP: What class of wheat was that?

CB: Hard red springs. They are very high-quality wheats that are different than our regular hard red spring wheat's. There is a limited market for that.

I would say durum particularly with going to Italy. We went to Italy and Germany and very interesting---. The Chinese we have now got them finally into our malting barleys big time. They drink a lot of beer, and of course, they have a billion and a quarter people there. When they started drinking beer, they needed our high-quality malting barley, so we got some two-row barleys. All grains are distinguishable. You have two-row barleys and six-row barleys, white aileron barleys, and you have blue-aileron barleys. Early on, we had found that the blue-aileron barley for export was not a desirable trait. We started focusing on a white-

aileron six-row. Of course, two-rows are all white. There are some chemicals in that blue colouration that causes the bitterness in beers, and this is all old history now, but it is all white-aileron that problem is--.

When you start changing things in the grain business, you start changing relationships, like the Canadian Grains Commission gets involved, the Wheat Board gets involved, and the elevator companies get involved. You are dealing with whole hosts of factors, and you have the terminals at Thunder Bay get involved. As you know the terminals are made to handle huge quantities of grain fast. You ship in a trainload of some obscure grain, they don't like that because it takes up space, so we decided to go other container route to test these grains because then it wouldn't have to tie up space at the terminals. Those terminals--. Have you been in a terminal? Can they ever handle grain, eh? Woo-hoo!

NP: Were there challenges other than out-waiting or matching the patience of the Chinese in the marketing?

CB: We never worried about getting paid with the Chinese. That was not a worry. Some other countries in the world that is a problem with getting paid. You had to make sure that was done.

That was the other thing. Talking about China, I was the first Wheat Board representative into Taiwan, and at that time there was a lot of friction between Taiwan and Formosa, it used to be called. It is a lost province to China as far as the Chinese are concerned. If you have a stamp—a visa in your passport that said that you were in Taiwan—they wouldn't let you into China. So, some of us carried two passports. I did get into Formosa and was finally accepted. I went there and they came to Winnipeg, and we sold them four cargos of wheat. Of course, we still sell them a little bit every year. That wasn't a big sale, but it got into that market without disturbing the huge market for China. Now China is down. They are producing more grain. Russia is out of it, but they are producing a lot of grain. The markets have changed. Iran is a big market today for us. You are talking about factors that affect us. If the US gets into a conflict with Iran, that is going to affect our ability to sell them grain. India is buying grain from us. I see this in the paper. I'm not right up on it, but I see Iran that is one of the largest consumers of our wheat. Big time!

NP: I was reading a short history of the Wheat Board. It was actually just a little pamphlet, and they were talking about the Great Grain Robbery. What does that refer to?

CB: Yes. Back in the early '70s, early '70s, the Russians needed a huge pile of grain. I'm looking back on it now. They went to the United States, went into the marketplace, and secretly bought huge quantities of grain.

NP: Why did they have to be secret?

CB: You can't let people know what you are buying. That is one thing the grain traders will not tell you.

NP: Why is that and what is the impact?

CB: They won't publicly. Because when you are negotiating, they say, "Whoa, jeez, this guy wants a whole bunch of stuff." You see? So, you never make your intentions clear. The same thing when we went to China, we had it in the back of our minds, but nobody talked quantity. Now we got to talk quantities we want, they'd get into that, but they don't want to talk publicly about it when they are negotiating a price.

NP: There is a bit of poker skills involved in it?

CB: Yes. You don't ever let them know what you are thinking, if you can help it. But they have some pretty cute ways of finding out. They went down there and went to one grain company, and they said, "We want so much grain." And they said, "Okay, we will sell it." And they did it. And they went to another one and agreed on a price and they bought a whole lot. But then it got out into the marketplace. Grain prices went like this. But they had already bought their grain.

They came up here, too. The reason I know this is because I was on the board of directors with Dick Dawson who was with Cargill. I forget the exact year. Cargill had a huge terminal at Baie-Comeau. They built it for both US and Canadian grain to tranship to ocean vessels up the St. Lawrence. The chief commissioner of the Canadian Wheat Board was now aware of the volumes that the Russians wanted, and the more we could ship out of Baie Comeau to Russia the better. They got a hold of the president of Cargill in a secret meeting. The Wheat Board says, "Look boys, we want to know what the capacity of that Cargill plant is of yours at Baie-Comeau." And then said, "Well we handle US grain and our grain, probably 5 million tonnes a year." "How much of that can we have?" That's the next question. You got to get this commitment from the grain companies to handle this thing. Well, that was something else. And they say, "You can't tell anybody." Then they didn't realize that [inaudible]. They did talk about it and said, "We will get back to you because there is this one person we are going to have to go to and is in the US because they own this elevator through us, and we have to let him know that we would like to have that capacity of that plant all to ourselves for all of Canadian grain, 5 million tonnes."

A day later, Cargill came back and said to the chief commissioner, "We are going to dedicate the plant capacity all of it to you." That is good. So then go on the phone "Okay, you have got your grain." That is the way it works. Then of course, you have to know the commitment that the elevator people have, and they would have other grains moving out, and you have to have that all clear in your mind. When Cargill said yes, we will load it out of there and you get it up there.

In the United States system, they have three or four major grain-marketing people, and you don't tell the other guy what you are doing. In Canada, there is one guy handling it, which was the Canadian Wheat Board. That makes a big difference on those kinds of deals. Now Russia is coming back a bit, but China was going to come back. There is drought in Argentina today, and it is a bad drought, and the southern part of Australia is having a bad time. China has drought. The grain prices are moving up a little bit, now. I don't think the grain boys in western Canada are going to suffer as much. The livestock people are suffering out here, the hog people and cattle people because of the restrictions in the US and higher costs of grain. I go to the meetings and run into these people all the time, and I say, "I am happy I am not in that game anymore."

NP: Just stepping back a bit. Going back to the Russian situation, why was that called "The Grain Robbery"?

CB: Because they bought their grain out of the US cheaper than they would have if they had a centralized selling agency. They were able to go to three, four, or five exporters secretly and say, "We want to buy something," and they didn't tell the next guy. They went to that guy and came into Chicago or New York, these two commissioners, commissars from Russia, they came in and worked out of the New York office for a week or 10 days and bought all this grain, unbeknownst to anybody else.

NP: If the market had been aware, they wouldn't have got it at such a reasonable price.

CB: That is why they called it the Great Grain Robbery.

NP: What is the connection in the Wheat Board between marketing and sales? Were they the same department or were they different departments?

CB: We were the same department. That is an integrated department. Sales is a function of marketing. It is the final result of marketing.

NP: All of those working out the arrangements to get the product after you have sold it to get it to its place?

CB: Yes. I can tell you stories about getting stuff moved into a position where you can't market it. Some of these guys will back out of the market after you got it down to the position. Then you got it down there, what you do with it? If people found that out they are going to get some cheap grain because you have to get it out of the system. Oh, yes, these things happen. Poland, we sold them a lot of grain. The credit was underwritten by the Export Development Bank. So they are holding the bill. They still owe us a couple of a million bucks. That is over years and years. They are paying it off, slowly. Oh, a lot of government action that supports prices through finance and that still exists to this day.

NP: I am interested in the finance part of it, and from my early reading I got a sense that there are a lot of elements to the grain trade that lead to a relative small country being pretty successful. That the financial underpinnings were a major piece, but it is very difficult for me to find out who should I be interviewing that would have that part of the puzzle, the financial underpinnings.

CB: I would think a bank executive say with the Royal Bank of Canada. All these banks that we have, the financial people, have portion of the business. They are the guys that put up the money. It was all guaranteed of course by the Government of Canada. The initial payment for the Wheat Board is guaranteed with the Government of Canada so that when the Wheat Board went out and got this grain and came in and gave the initial payment, there was no doubt anywhere because the banks had to loan the money to do this. You know you are not going to get your money for the grain until you deliver it to export position or to a customer in Canada or the United States. That is the point that is lost on a lot of people.

The farmer gets his money before it is sold. But that costs money to carry that stuff, and the government guarantees it through the Wheat Board. With the open market on canola, it's guaranteed by the banks. That means you have to be big enough to offset any risks involved in the price fluctuations between the time you get it here and get it to Vancouver.

NP: Are also financial groups that underwrite the risks?

CB: Oh yes, absolutely.

NP: Does the farmer eventually pay for that? It comes off of the eventual price?

CB: It reduces the price of the grain.

NP: So even though the government stands in behind it, the farmer pays?

CB: Yes, he gets less. He pays for the guarantee. There have been half a dozen years when the Wheat Board's initial price was higher than the actual marketing price and which case the Government of Canada made up the difference. So the farmer got his money and he was okay. That is what a guarantee is. That was there as a protection. I would say it is really not understood by a lot of producers or people outside the industry, big time! The farmer gets his money when he got to the elevator if he wants it. If he doesn't, he can lay it up and take it later. There is a case where they are going to change that Canada Grain Act. If you are going to buy grain, you have to bond yourself. Well, they are going to throw that requirement out. Right now, there is an action taking

place against a small outfit who was buying grain and the farmers have sold it there and there is no money. That is another protection that the farmers had under the Canada Grain Act through the Canadian Grain Commission.

NP: Through the licensing?

CB: Through the licensing and the bonding of people who are buying grain.

NP: And that is disappearing or proposed to be disappearing?

CB: Proposed to be disappearing, yes. I think they will have a hell of a time with that part of it.

NP: What years were you with the Wheat Board?

CB: 1970 to 1982, so 12 years. Then I joined Feed-Rite. I was in the feed business, which is using grain. A friend of mine was the head of the thing, and he lost their marketing guy and asked me if I was interested. One of the things with the Wheat Board was the travel, and you are away all the time. So, I thought I would make a change. I felt that I had done as much as I could at the time, so I took this change and went into the feed business. I just retired as the director last year.

NP: What did your job entail there?

CB: I was vice-president of marketing. [Laughs] It was a different game all together.

NP: I am interested in how was it different because the title sounds the same?

CB: You are selling to farmers. The other way around, we were buying from farmers.

NP: What kinds of products were you selling?

CB: All the products livestock consume. All the feeds. We were wide-range producers of feed products. About 35 percent of our business was pigs, 30 percent were cattle, and another 30 percent were poultry. We had pet foods, horse feeds, and cat food, and dog foods. Feed-Rite was one of the big boys in western Canada. Today they are all being hurt by this COOL program in the US.

NP: What is the COOL Program?

CB: A country of words and labelling that the Americans want you to label so you have to put “Product of Canada” on. The complications with that are that you ship live cattle or live hogs down there, and they all look the same on the line. Then you have to put a label on them, and the packers say, “We can't do that you know.” I think they are going to change it. It is all based on a security issue that the United States wants to make sure that the food that gets down there is safe. Behind that are the farmers themselves that keep these Canadian hogs and cattle out of that market. That is the idea, eh, but they are using the security thing.

NP: I am not that familiar with the feed business. Have I got this right if I think that Feed-Rite would be buying product and there would be big inputs send it back to the farmers, but a different set of farmers?

CB: Yes, that is right. A different set of farmers.

NP: What about the purchasing part of it? How does that work with Feed-Rite?

CB: We bought grain from the Wheat Board. We had to. We brought grain from the private farmers themselves, and we bought from the grain companies, and we bought grain from The United States. We bought corn up from there, and we bought barley up from North Dakota from time to time. I was involved very deeply in buying the grains.

NP: Do they buy through the Exchange?

CB: No, we bought physical cash grain. We didn't get into that part of it, no. We bought directly and paid cash to the elevator company or to the farmer, whoever it was. Usually, the guys who were in hogs were grain farmers as well. They would sell their grain to us, and we would use it for making feeds.

NP: You had buyers?

CB: Yes.

NP: They would have a region?

CB: The buyer was at the plant. We had buyers at all our plants, that's right, by region. A farmer would come in with a load of grain. We had [inaudible]. If you look in the *Manitoba Co-operator* you would see whether Feed-Rite are advertising for grains.



NP: The farmers could contact you personally?

CB: Yes. That is a constant thing. We are using grain all the time. You are using maybe 500 tonnes a day or whatever, and you have to have another 500 tonnes coming in.

NP: What were the challenges or changes that occurred over the time that you worked with Feed-Rite?

CB: There were a number of them. Number one challenge was the livestock industry itself how it was either profitable or not profitable. When you ran into a situation where they are losing money on pigs because of something you could help, where are you going to get paid for it? That was a big thing. For example, I always remember the egg marketing deal. They used to have an open market on layer chickens. A few years ago, when the market, the open market, dropped down to 15 cents or 12 cents a dozen and everybody lost money, then they would come along with the marketing boards concept and ever since there has been no problem with the payment for birds.

One time I was accosted by a free-marketing guy. He said, "How come you guys at Feed-Rite support marketing boards when you are a private enterprise yourself?" I said, "It is a question of money. It is a question that we don't have to worry about any accounts anymore with them not making money and not paying their bills. It is as simple as that."

NP: The costs involved in following up to collect, if there was a cost?

CB: Yes. You don't want to seize a guy's farm. That was one of the challenges. The same with beef cattle. They can produce! I remember a feedlot down south in Brandon. I went there for a sales meeting and one of the guys says to me, "Got problems with so and so down south." I said, "Well that looked okay." "But you know what, Cam? That cheque bounced." He bought some more feed and was then deeper in the hole. So you are looking at \$100,000 down the tube there. Not good.

NP: No.

CB: That is one of the big challenges in the feed business that I remember because you are responsible when you are selling that stuff. The management held the salesperson responsible for the collection. You didn't sell it then have somebody else do it. That was not easy.

NP: Shifting gears here a little bit because we have a bit of a focus on the Thunder Bay element of the grain industry. I'll just ask an open question about what were your experience with Thunder Bay and any stories about your experience with it?

CB: We used to go down there with Manitoba Pool every year. We had crop improvement winners and would take seven farmers down to Thunder Bay every year. I was down there every year with a group of farmers. We would drive down with two or three cars and go down to Thunder Bay, visit the terminals, and go through the whole and visit the Managers. At that time of course, Thunder Bay was big because the Atlantic was the outlet for a huge amount of our grain in western Canada. We used to get grain from Alberta. Alberta Pool had a terminal here, but today I would say the break-over point is about Moosomin, Saskatchewan. Everything west of that goes to Vancouver and anything east of that goes to Thunder Bay. There has been a huge amount, and I would say if there is any Alberta grain at all that comes into Thunder Bay except maybe in the wintertime when they use to have feed grain rebate.

The terminals started coming down over the years. I was in Thunder Bay not too long ago because we had a Feed-Rite dealer there. It was a big dealer. I went and looked at some of the terminals and did some business with some of those guys at the terminals. They are either rented out or they are not handling grain anymore or they are handling special crops or something like that or they are being demolished. The big Sask Pool terminal is still going. Was that Pool 9?

NP: Pool 7.

CB: Pool 7 the big one and Pool 3 is the new one that Manitoba Pool built. And building those things, a contractor would come in with a price X million dollars. When the smoke cleared it was always a million and a half to two million dollars more. Unbelievable.

NP: When was Pool 3 built?

CB: I would say it was built in the early '60s or late '50s.

NP: Was there anything on that site before it was built?

CB: I don't recall that. It was built in a position where it was close to water, which it had to be close to water. Is there a terminal right next to it?

NP: Canada Malting.

CB: Yes, Canada Malting. We shipped a lot of malting barley down there. They used to switch malting barley and go down to Milwaukee, and they would go in there and head straight south. They get the Crow Rate to Thunder Bay and head south with a new rate going south. That was quite a game!

NP: On the railway? So they would just switch tracks and head off?

CB: Yes, and without unloading it or anything else. Just leave it in the cars.

NP: Would this both CN and CP?

CB: Yes. But CN particularly. [Laughs] The games were played there. Thunder Bay used to be Fort William and Port Arthur when I first started working down there, then it became Thunder Bay later on. We always called it "T-Bay". The grain trade always going down to T-Bay. They always shortened things up in the grain business.

They had a big paper mill there. We would go to the paper mill plants, and I always liked Thunder Bay. Our dealer down there was a good guy who is still down there with Feed-Rite. He was a big dealer, but I don't think it is as big today. They used to have a big dairy business down there.

NP: It is still there. How did the farmers react when you took them down?

CB: They couldn't believe the speed at which the grain was handled. In those days you had the boxcars, you know. They would have equipment come in and push the car in with a ram and tip the car up and all the grain would go out and tip around the other way and tip it. It was huge. The most inefficient method of handling grain God ever made. You had all these boxcars, so they would use them for that. Then people started to say they are starting to use those hopper cars down in the United States. You could load a hopper car safely in, I would say, seven or eight minutes or ten minutes, fire it in there. Whereas when you started loading cars, it was nothing but work because you had to fire the grain into the middle of the car, and then you would get somebody in there pushing the grain or you would have a rack to push it back. It was a big job.

They used to load those cars at the sidings in western Canada by hand. The farmers would throw it in through the--. In the early days, you had to deliver your grain to the elevator, and there was no place else to deliver it to. Of course, they had the farmer by the short hair and then of course the grades and dockages suffer. Then they got the Canada Grain Act, and they said the railways have to supply sidings and docks where the farmer could pull his horse and wagon up there and shovel the grain himself directly into the car and ship it to Thunder Bay. The Canadian Grain Commission gave the grade and dockage down there.

But before that, it was open. They hated the CPR. The railways were open enemies. They are today! They overcharged the farmers 60 million bucks, and they are still doing it. They can't help themselves. Now they are saying, "What are we going to do about this?" They were supposed to go into this plant science research—Prairie research unit at Saskatoon—which would do a hell of a lot of research for a long time, which is a good thing. But the railways can't help themselves. They act like a monopoly, and they think they can do anything they want. They don't want regulation. No, they don't want regulation. It is like the banks we don't want regulations. Down in the States, look at what happened. That is the history of Western Canada. We are still learning, and we haven't overcome. In fact, this act going to be the amendment to the Canada Grain Act as I see that it is going to cause a big uproar when it hits the floor in the House of Commons. If I don't miss my guess.

NP: When you think back to Thunder Bay and the changes that you recognized, because you would have seen it early on and now, any comments on that and ongoing challenges?

CB: The market continues to grow in the Pacific, but the Iran market that is out of Thunder Bay, I think maybe there has been some balance come back in here. I felt badly for Thunder Bay because they had a lot of people employed there and now the pulp and paper industry has been hit there bad. It is going through some real and excruciating changes, but it was a depot for natural products of Canada. It is close to water. The rule is of course you can travel 10 times as far on water as far as costs go or you can go 10 miles on water for 1 mile of land and that probably is higher today because of the cost of fuel. That is one thing that I think that maybe in the long run Thunder Bay will benefit. Its market going to grow.

NP: I mentioned to you earlier that we were thinking that in the long term we would like to commemorate the grain industry and Thunder Bay's part in it. We were trying to save one of the rapidly disappearing terminal elevators, which is not an easy thing. Just asking you if we work in that direction, what aspects of the Thunder Bay trade do you think would be the most important to commemorate?

CB: Are those terminals still there that were built earlier on in the first part of the century?

NP: There are two.

CB: Were they railway terminals?

NP: One was Ogilvie, and the other was King elevator, which I think might have had a connection with one of the railway elevators.

CB: Ogilvie would certainly be a company that should be remembered in the history of western Canada because they had their elevators out here and their mills down there in Eastern Canada. They used the Canadian wheat for that purpose. I don't know what happened or why they didn't grow as much as some of the other guys, but historically they were right in the vanguard. They were the vanguard. If you go to Altona or Gretna, there is an Ogilvie elevator down there with flat-bottom bins. There is one in the first town in Saskatchewan across the border west of Elkhorn and is the first town and there is a flat-bottom Ogilvie elevator there. When I say flat bottom, they usually have slants, but the old elevators they just built them with a hole in the middle and you shovelled it in. Help was cheap. But I think the Ogilvie elevator that should be maintained as a historic. That is my own view about Ogilvie and Lake of the Woods.

NP: The other elevator I mentioned the King or King Horn elevator actually is Manitoba Pool 2, and it is on the other side of 3, the other side of the Marina. That is the little one, and that is actually the oldest of those elevators. That would be the early 1900s that those were built.

CB: Then they would be candidates to. What kind of condition are they in? [Laughs]

NP: I think of them as the Roman ruins. They are going to stand. The wooden parts will be gone, but the concrete ones will be there for a while. I think of a set of silos near the Ogilvie elevator which was on the Kaministiquia River that I think there was a fire and the workhouse burned back in the 1920s, and the silos are standing there straight and proud. But I would not go in the elevators.

CB: Do you remember they used to have the elevators the little short stubby guys and they had a kind of a concave roof on the top of the tank?

NP: The Paterson's elevator.

CB: They tore that down didn't they?

NP: Yes, they did.

CB: I haven't been there for a long time. This is on the Kam River?

NP: Yes.

CB: We used to stop at that place up the Kam River, and there was a falls there?

NP: Kakabeka Falls.

CB: Yes, we would always stop there. That was pretty illustrative of the kind of terrain, and you would cross the Atlantic watershed just west of Thunder Bay and marked that. Then we would go down to Duluth and head over to Bemidji and back in here. It was week-long. There are some stories about that. Some of those boys that we took hadn't been any further than their farm or Winnipeg. Going down there was quite a thing. In fact, when we opened Pool 3, I think we took a busload of farmers down there to see the opening. I didn't get on that one. They used to rotate guys. It was always a challenge to look after farmers on a trip like that. [Laughs]

NP: Keep your customers happy!

CB: Oh boy, yes.

NP: And corralled!

CB: And corralled, yeah. I went down to Thunder Bay with a busload of guys one time and the big thing was they paid for everything.

NP: Manitoba Pool?

CB: No, the farmers paid for—I just forget—for their own meals, and I think we got the bus and that sort of thing. We piled off and go to a restaurant all 30 or 40 of us, and you get into a restaurant, and they would say, “Well, you pay for it.” “Okay, I will pay, and we will pay you.” So I would do that. Then I would go around and just average the cost for the 40 of them and say, “Okay, you own me \$2.50,” or whatever it was, and some would say, “Well I didn’t eat that much and I didn't have pie and oh--.”

NP: This goes back to your earlier point about equity?

CB: Oh yes. [Laughs] I found out in a hurry that I am the guy who is going to get stuck. If you don’t give me that money, I am going to be stuck with it. Yeah, it was educational. The reason we did that because they wanted our members to understand what happened to the grain when it got to Thunder Bay, how it was loaded, and they would be loading ships and the huge size of those

ships, the market of the world. Really Thunder Bay was an illustration of the complexity of growing grain in western Canada. It really is. Unfortunately, a lot of people think that farming is a simple operation. It is not simple. It is not simple. It is very complex, more complex than ever.

NP: Farming is complex, the international grain trade is complex, and that is certainly something that I have learned, and you have added pieces.

CB: It is very complex. Getting a steady market for grains is always something that is a challenge. China was steady, Russia was steady, Iran is steady. United States is steady if they will let us sell down there. Australia, I think we sold Australians a little bit of grain here not too long ago—because normally they are our competitor—because they had a drought. They get droughts there. I was there. I couldn't believe them. They just were really decimated.

NP: When I am talking to you and talking to Mr. Rowan, it seems to me that expecting to have steady customers is sometimes difficult because the weather and the politics play so much a part so that Canada's success would be in being able to maintain as many customers as they can so that they get the balance when the up years for some and down years for others.

CB: Exactly. Frank Rowan would understand that. He was a guy that handled the Russian deals and the Algerian durum deals, Tunisia. He could speak Russian, and of course, he is French speaking. The Algerians speak French, and the Tunisians speak French and Arabic. I think Frank might have some Arabic to. I see Frank from time to time. I don't think there is any guy alive, here in the Winnipeg area, would know more about that grain movement, grain production than Frank Rowan.

NP: We are heading to the end of our time and just question about it. When you think back upon your career, what would you say you are most proud of?

CB: Oh gosh, that is a good question.

NP: Maybe there is more than one?

CB: I always liked to think that I was working for farmers, and I was proud of doing that. My whole career, I felt that I did the work that I liked. I understood it or at least I thought I understood it, [laughs] and sometimes my understanding leads me to a wrong conclusion sometimes. [Laughs] I worked with producers very closely, and I saw their idiosyncrasies and their weaknesses and their strengths.

One of the things that I remember, because this year is 1940 [sic] and it will be the 60th anniversary of the Faculty of Agriculture 1949 class. The 1949 class were basically the veterans of the Second World War, about 80 to 90 percent of them at least. They were more mature, and some had been wounded and were crippled and their ears were no good and their eyes, but they were good students. And the professor said, “We don't have kids anymore. We have men.” That was the most outstanding class, the 1949 class, I would say, right across Canada with their graduates marked by the number of people that were successful.

I will get to a point. When you are on the farm dealing with farmers, any farmer that had been in the war, as I found, or had been working in the mines and the forests in the wintertime supplementing their income on the farms, they understood better than the farmer who had never left the land. Any of them that had left and gone back to farming, you could explain things to them, no problem. But farmers who never left the land, they always had the idea that they were getting screwed. They had this idea and the other guys who had been out in the real world and came back to farming were better leaders and better participants in discussion and that sort of thing. That is what I found. Maybe I shouldn't say that about a lot of people.

NP: They had the bigger picture. They saw their place more realistically.

CB: Oh yes, more realistically. Some guys would say, “I wish I had your job.” I remember talking to a young fellow who was the same age as I was 50 years ago and I said, “I will tell you what I will do. I will trade you assets right now.” That stopped that discussion.

You always ran into that, where farmers say, “I am paying your wages.” I have a very good friend Dick Filteau who was an Ag rep down at Melita. Dick is still alive. He must be 88. He was a former veteran, and somebody complained to him when he was working at Melita. He said, “You know what? I am paying your salary, Dick, I hope you know that.” Dick says, “Yes I know that, and how much do you think you are paying of my salary?” The farmer didn't know, so he said, “I will tell you what it is.” Dick had it all calculated out, “It comes to \$1.50. Here is your dollar and a half.” [Laughs] You had to be tough with some of them because they would walk over the top of you. These are the things dealing with people.

NP: Through my interviews, and also because my father was a grain inspector, you see the lack of understanding oftentimes between the handling and the farmers and the farmers and the handlers.

CB: Oh yes. Grading and dockage, those are uppermost in farmers mind, and the blending of grain at the terminal position—all those things that through historically we corrected them. I think today the younger people on farms, skip that generation that are up now, I think they are more astute—not more astute—they have a clearer understanding of what is going on here. Before the farm vote now today doesn't amount to a hill of beans, eh? That means you have to use your head more. You can't go to



government and ask for help as easily as you could before because there are not that many votes involved, although in western Canada the total economy, agriculture is very important, even to this day. When grain prices go up, everybody is happy. The machine boys, the machine manufacturers here in Winnipeg just going gangbusters. But the grain prices are starting to come down, so that will settle out a little bit. Right now, Manitoba's economy is holding its own and that is why.

NP: Are there any other people that you think that we should be looking to interview?

CB: I don't know if Charlie Gibbings--. He is the former commissioner of the Canadian Wheat Board. He is in British Columbia. He would give you the Saskatchewan Pool. He was commissioner of the Wheat Board and a very able guy. Another guy is Larry Kristjanson. Have you ever heard his name?

NP: No. Mr. Gibbings I have, but not Larry Kristjanson.

CB: Larry Kristjanson is retired and is up at Gimli.

NP: Okay.

CB: Yes, and Bob Roehle is another one.

NP: Yes, Bob and I have talked frequently.

CB: Bob Roehle and Paul Westdal worked for me at the Canadian Wheat Board. In fact, Bob went to Japan for three years as a representative for the Wheat Board. He was in Ottawa with the grain division, and we let him go there. Then Paul Westdal went with the Food Bank, UN, to Dakar, Senegal—a French-speaking black country. He went there for three years, and when he came back, all the kids spoke French and he spoke French.

NP: Is he here now?

CB: Oh yes.

NP: Okay.

CB: You are going to see Bob?

NP: Yes. We are doing it by age.

CB: I saw Bob the other day. But if you have seen Frank Rowan, you have a number one guy there. Larry Kristjanson, he is a commissioner with the Wheat Board, and he would have vast knowledge of it and the background. There is Jim Leibfried. Do you know Jim Leibfried?

NP: No.

CB: He is a former commissioner of the Wheat Board and he is here. He is the guy you should see too.

NP: Okay.

CB: In fact, I would phone him, and I would bring up Larry's name to see what he thought about it.

NP: Okay. Thank you so much. It has been a wonderful interview. I really appreciate the time that you have given us.

CB: You are welcome. I hope my memory was correct in some of the observations that I made. You know 50 years, some as clear as a bell and other things kind of fade out. But some things are never forgotten.

NP: Thanks again.

CB: Okay.

**End of interview.**