

Narrator: Regina Coulombe (RC)

Narrator: Trudy Frowen (TF)

Company Affiliations: N/A

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Interviewer: Nancy Perozzo (NP)

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Summary: Regina Coulombe and Trudy Frowen, though not directly involved in the grain industry themselves, discuss the work of their relatives in Thunder Bay's grain elevators. Coulombe describes how her family immigrated to Thunder Bay, and how her father first worked for the PD Railway and ultimately Bawlf Terminal. Frowen describes her family's long roots in Thunder Bay, and her husband and father-in-law's work as labourers in Pool 6. The women recall the explosions of Pool 4A and B, and how their relatives were lucky to have been absent both days. They remember the dusty conditions of the elevators, the dangerous railways outside the workplace, and the large community of immigrant workers. The women also discuss their experience of the war years and Coloumbe's photography of elevators.

Keywords: Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; Bawlf Terminal (Canada Malting); SWP Pool 6 Elevator; Grain handlers; Grain elevator disasters; Grain elevator explosions; Pool 4A explosion; Pool 4B explosion; Port Arthur, Duluth, and Western Railway; Immigrant workers

Time, Speaker, Narrative
NP: We are conducting this interview on March 23, 2013. I'm going to have our two speakers introduce themselves and just say your name and a little bit about why we are so keen to have you interviewed. Regina, should we start with you?
RC: My name is Regina Coulombe. I'm living in Heritage Apartments, been here for a while, and I love it very much. It's home to me.

NP: You come from a family that worked in grain elevators?

RC: I come from a family of seven children, and my dad worked in the Bawlf Elevator all the years I remember. Then some of my brothers worked in the elevator, too.

NP: Okay, great. We'll come back to you after our second speaker gets to introduce herself.

TF: I'm Trudy Frowen, and my father, father-in-law, husband, and most of my father-in-law's cousins worked at the elevators.

NP: Okay, so a good, rich history. I'm going to go back to you, Regina, and I'm going to go right back to the beginning of your family. Were you born here in Thunder Bay?

RC: No, I was born in Toronto on Yonge Street. It's the longest street in the world, and it's the capital of Ontario.

TF: [Laughs]

NP: How did your father come to Thunder Bay? What brought him here?

RC: My dad came as an orphan on the ship and was left in Halifax. Off the ship—he was 14 years old—with another friend of his. They were told and shown where the railroad track is where they went ahead to. That was mainly people they knew in Fort William. The fellow that was with them had given them a \$5 each and told them, "There's the railroad track, just follow it."

NP: So they got off the boat where?

RC: In Halifax.

NP: Do you remember what year that was?

RC: That was 1914, somewhere around there.

NP: So your father was born around the turn of that century then? Around 1900?

RC: 1889.

NP: Okay, so that gives us an idea then, if he was 14 when he came here. So there were people here that he knew here?

RC: He had heard when they were still in the old country of different families moving to Fort William, and that's the only thing they knew about Canada

NP: Where was the old country? Where was your father born?

RC: He was born Ukraine.

NP: Okay, yes, and there was quite a good Ukrainian settlement here at the time.

RC: Yeah.

NP: How did you get born in Toronto then?

RC: My dad worked on the railroad, and he was sent to Toronto to work there. My mother missed her friends, so they moved back to Fort William, and they continued on the railroad, off and on, because it was hard times, and they didn't keep them steady. So it was not very easy to be living in the East End of Fort William at the time, but everyone seemed to be in the same situation.

NP: What year were you born? If I can be so rude as to ask. [Laughing]

RC: I was born 1917.

NP: So when you moved back then with your family, you moved back to the East End area?

RC: Mmhmm.

NP: Now your mom's family then, what was her background?

RC: My mother was--. She lost her mother when she was 9 years old, and her dad had left with the older sister for Canada to find new life for them. Then when he got enough money to bring the other two girls and a boy back to Canada.

NP: Was that grandfather, then, also living in the East End? Okay. So they met up in the East End?

RC: Oh, yeah. They came there and he helped them around and my mother got a job with a Jewish family and stayed with them until she got married. And those Jewish family visited us children, even when we were growing up.

NP: I would imagine that when you were growing up in the East End it was quite a busy place.

RC: All the families had a big family and so there was always somebody to play with, to learn things from. I went to St. Peter's School, was there until I was in Grade 2, and then we moved to the country.

NP: Which part of the country did you move out to?

RC: We moved to McIntyre township. It was Onion Lake Road at the time, but now it's Hilldale Road.

NP: You said that your dad worked for the railway initially? Which railway?

RC: He worked at the PD [Port Arthur, Duluth, and Western Railway] there near Hymers area.

NP: Was he on the line track, setting the rails?

RC: Yeah, setting.

NP: Hard work. Did he ever talk about those early days? Working on the railroad?

RC: Oh yeah. He did.

NP: What do you recall from how he felt about it?

RC: Well, it wasn't easy because he couldn't speak English for one thing. Then he had no money to do anything but follow other men like him and find a place, to find a bed, and something to eat, and that's all that mattered to him.

NP: He moved, then, to work for the elevator?

RC: Yeah.

NP: Do you know why that change came about?

RC: Well, he came back, was living in Fort William most of that time, and he came back and met my mother, and they got married. When they got married, the hall had to be locked because there were other fellows that were mad that he was taking my mother. They were going to beat him up, so the janitor of the place made them go through the back door and down the back lane. He guarded them where to go.

NP: My goodness, your mother must have been quite something! [Laughs]

RC: Yeah, that was their honeymoon, down the back lane. [Laughing]

NP: Had your dad moved out to McIntyre, Onion Lake Road, before he started working for the elevators or--?

RC: Oh, no. He already was working for the elevators.

NP: So the move from the railway to work from the elevators--. I know the PD didn't last very long, so is that why--?

RC: No, he only worked in Bawlf Elevator.

NP: But the railway, when he left the railway for the elevators, was there a reason? Just because he didn't have to travel?

RC: Well, there was no more work there. They finished the job there.

NP: Do you remember the elevators when you were young?

RC: Mmhhh. I remember because we often went to, at the time, where the Sears Mall is now, Intercity Mall, it was the a pasture for garden or cows. When we went there, we would go on the streetcar, and when my mother would take us for a ride on the streetcar, that was our treat on Sundays, showed where my dad--.

NP: And there were elevators down in the East End, or near the East End, do you remember those as a child?

RC: No.

NP: Stayed away from those probably.

RC: No, I don't remember them, no.

NP: Well, let's switch over to you, Trudy, for now. I'll give you a rest and we'll come back and continue. What's the history of your family then? Both you and your husband's, I guess, because that overlaps with Regina.

TF: I was born during the war when my dad came back. Then I guess he went to work at the elevators. He worked there until we moved to B.C. in 1960.

NP: Now, I don't think we've had you introduce yourself.

TF: Oh, sorry.

NP: Yeah. [Laughs] No, it's my fault, not yours.

TF: Trudy Frowen.

NP: And where'd you grow up?

TF: I grew up on Wardrobe Avenue. When we moved to B.C., my father sold the 75 acres that's now County Fair. From Wardrobe Avenue, back to where the mall is now, and along Wardrobe Avenue there.

NP: So your father, was he born here?

TF: He was born in Fort William.

NP: Was he an older brother or--?

TF: A younger brother.

NP: A younger brother.

TF: Yeah.

NP: How many were in the family?

RC: Seven. Four boys and one girl.

NP: Yeah, and I don't think we've had the name, like your maiden names, so maybe we should have that recorded.

TF: Our maiden names are Maryshack.

NP: Sorry, refresh my memory again. Was it your husband's family that was also working in the elevator?

TF: Yes, my father-in-law worked in the elevators. That's where he was working when I met my husband. Then my husband went to work there, got laid off the day before we got married. Bad news. [Laughs] But his father never told him until we got back. We went away for a couple of days, and when we came back, we found out he had been laid off. But my father-in-law's cousins, several of them worked in the elevators. At about the same time. There was quite a family of them there.

NP: Were they all Frowens, or were there some other names?

TF: No, they were all Frowens.

NP: Let's stick with the Frowen family at this point.

TF: Okay.

NP: Do you recall where your father-in-law worked? And what he did?

TF: He worked at Pool 6. He worked there, I guess general labour, until they made him retire. I think he was 65. That's probably mandatory. Then he became the watchman at the elevator. He was there, I guess 5 years. They said, "At 70, you can't be the watchman anymore." So then he became the school crossing guard, and then he was still doing that when he passed away. My

husband, when I met him, was working on the department highways so he was out of town a lot. He quit that just before we were married and went to work at the elevators with his dad.

NP: Pool 6 too or he--.

TF: Pool 6 as well.

NP: And how long did he stay there?

TF: Oh, how long was he there? He was there—trying to remember—probably about 10 years.

NP: And did he have a specialized trade at all?

TF: No, no. Basically loading and unloading.

NP: The hard work.

TF: Yeah, the hard work. Yeah, he quite enjoyed it. My father used to bring home kittens. I remember that from when he worked at the elevator because they always had cats at the elevators, supposedly to keep down the mice, but then they were always having extras around. So dad would bring home the kittens because we lived on the farm, and they were supposedly to keep the mice out of the barns. But we always made pets of them. Somehow, they got big, and they disappeared, and dad would bring home more kittens. I remember the kittens from the elevator a lot.

NP: My father worked at the elevator, and he brought home a rabbit.

TF: Uh-huh.

RC: My dad would bring home pigeons and my mother would wring their necks and get to make soup. Times were hard and they couldn't afford to spend too much on groceries because there were seven of us children.

TF: Yeah.

NP: Now, I bet those pigeons were good.

RC: Oh, that was excellent. You never have chicken soup taste like pigeon soup.

TF: Yeah.

NP: Yeah

RC: It was like a delicacy.

NP: Going back to your father, Regina, when he started working for the elevator, how long did he work there? Did he retire at 65 as well?

RC: When he was finished work at the Bawlf, he got different jobs in the fall in Pool 6. And he worked there until he was 74, I think.

NP: Do you know what he did in the elevators?

RC: Well in Pool 6, he had it a little easier, but in the Bawlf elevator, he shoveled grain with a wooden shovel. When he died his hands had big lumps on them, like that.

NP: It was very hard work.

TF: Mmhmm.

NP: And he worked there until he was how old?

RC: In his seventies.

NP: And still shoveling grain?

RC: No, at Pool 6 he wasn't shoveling grain. He was watchman.

NP: Okay, good. So they have the corner on the market of watchmen. [Laughs]

TF: [Laughs] Yeah.

NP: You have some pictures of the elevators. Were those pictures that your father had taken?

RC: No, no. It's pictures I've taken recently because I'm [inaudible] while I was driving, I would think of some place I'd like to take a picture, and I'd get in the car and go and take a picture.

NP: And what did you like about elevators?

RC: Oh well, I don't like anything about them.

TF: [Laughs]

NP: But you took a picture of it?

RC: Really, it was a job.

NP: But you took pictures of them?

RC: Oh, yeah, because my dad worked there and there was forever pigeons flying around.

NP: Brought back memories of good soup. [Laughing] I know there are people in our apartment block who wish that they were still eating pigeon soup.

TF: [Laughs]

NP: Because they're always bothering them on the balconies.

TF: Yeah

RC: Yeah, here too.

TF: I have pictures from my mother-in-law's albums. She was born in England, came over with her family when she was 4, and she took pictures too. Her family home was on Red River Road, but prior to that it was always in that sort of area near Brent Park and over to Red River Road. The house is still there. Anyway, her husband lucked out on several elevator explosions.

NP: Oh, tell us those stories.

TF: Well, when Pool 4 blew up, he was at an eye appointment.

NP: It blew up, like, just after the war? Or in the '50s? Because they, actually, you know the two explosions were--.

TF: Yeah, both times he should've been--.

NP: Were in the same place.

TF: Both times he should've been there, but he was--. I know he was at an eye appointment once—and I can't remember where he was the second time—but he happened to not be there that day.

NP: Did he ever talk about what it was like in the aftermath, or the stories that other people told about it?

TF: Oh, horrific.

NP: Yeah?

TF: Horrific, yes. And I know Mum said they heard the explosion. They lived on Red River Road.

RC: Well, I was living at the time where she lived, she grew up. My dad bought that property first and had a house built for her mother and myself to live while our men were in the army because we each had a baby and nobody would rent us a place because we had a baby. That's right. So the lumberyard told my dad, "You pay me \$25 a month. I'll build you a house." So he built this house, and her mother and I lived in there. She had two rooms and I had two rooms. But the day of the explosion, I was standing on the platform, hanging clothes, and this awful thing happened—noise. The platform I was standing on, it jumped up like that and I thought, "My gosh what happened to me!" Then we find out that Phillip Valley had gone to the war when my husband left, but he was rejected because he had a heart condition. He'd come back to work in the elevator, and he died in that explosion. It was meant for him.

TF: Yup, his time had come.

NP: Yeah, and your relatives' time had definitely not come.

TF: That's right.

NP: He must've had friends, other than Mr. Valley--.

TF: Yeah, I can't remember any names at the moment, but I remember them talking about it and, you know, mom saying, "He just wasn't meant to go that day" because he wasn't there. He heard it.

NP: I guess everyone heard it.

RC: Well, that was down on the waterfront, and we were living on Wardrobe Avenue when the platform jumped.

NP: Did you have any idea of what it was? Did you?

RC: I just heard this horrible noise, and the platform just shook.

NP: How long did it take for news to spread of what actually had happened?

RC: Oh, it was in the newspapers the next day.

TF: Yeah, I don't think it took very long because I can remember, I guess it would've been the second one, when my dad was working down there and he was at [Pool] 6 and of course it was the other one.

NP: Not that far away.

TF: No. You know it was sort of the talk of the neighbourhood with, "Was so-and -so at work that day?" because they all knew everybody at the different elevators. At times they would get transferred from one to the other. They'd go and work at another elevator for a week, just depending on the times. At that time Pool 6 was Manitoba Pool so they would take, say, to another Manitoba Pool if they were busier or whatever. So yeah, didn't take long.

NP: There were a lot of people that didn't die but they were very severely injured.

TF: Yes.

RC: Yeah, it was a very bad explosion. I have to tell you about how my dad went to work. When we moved on Hilldale Road now, it was called Onion Lake Road then, he walked from there to catch a streetcar at where Hair Fever is. You know where Hair Fever is? That hairdresser.

NP: No, do you know what part of the city?

TF: Just, just--.

RC: Just down the hill here.

TF: You know Empress?

NP: Okay yes, yes.

RC: Empress Avenue. It was called Empire Avenue at the time, and that's where we picked up the streetcar and went to work and walked from the street car quite a ways to the elevators. And then would fill his lunch pail with wheat when he worked so it'd feed our chickens and carried a big lunch pail home and walk a mile home from the streetcar everyday.

NP: He must've had to get up very early.

RC: He did.

TF: Oh, yeah.

RC: My dad never learned how to read or write. He could only barely sign his name.

NP: Why do you think that was?

RC: Well, he was thinking all the time of getting a job and being busy and doing garden work so we had food. When we moved to Hilldale Road, different ones kept coming and saying if we didn't have enough food we could go to the city for help, and my dad said, "These are my children and I feed them!" But I think my parents were worried that they would put us in the orphanage because there was an orphanage on Franklin Street.

NP: Franklin Street.

RC: And they were afraid that they would take his children away from him.

NP: And he was an orphan himself, so that would be an impact on him.

RC: Never knew his father, only his mother until he was 14.

NP: I expect that when he was working at the elevator there were a few other Ukrainian speaking people there?

TF: Lots of them.

RC: Oh yeah. They learned to talk English good.

NP: Just not to read or write.

RC: Never read or write because it was too occupied with everything else. But my mother learned to read and write. She could read the newspaper and tell me more about the news and understood it.

NP: Now you have a picture of, now I don't know whose album it's from, of a grain car being pushed off into a lake. How did you get that picture?

TF: Well, I remember a few times that happening. In fact, my husband says it happened fairly often. But this picture was one that my mother-in-law had in her album, and I've brought her albums over.

NP: So where did your mother-in-law get her pictures? Do you know?

TF: Probably took them.

NP: Yeah?

TF: Or I don't know where--.

NP: Or your father-in-law took them, perhaps?

TF: Possibly. It's really hard to say where because they're tiny and they're very, very old. I know she did take pictures and she had one, I think, the oldest camera I've ever seen. And actually, there's a camera that was in a lockbox, I think my brother-in-law has it now, it was a little wee thing and it took good pictures. Just can't get film for them anymore. [Laughs]

NP: [Laughs] That's right.

RC: Well, can I tell you about my camera?

NP: Yes, for sure!

RC: When I was, I think, my 13th birthday, my mother ordered a camera from soap coupons, and it was a box camera. Like a little box you carry. I been taking pictures from that day until now. Not from that box camera. I eventually invested into a good camera. Now they have my pictures hanging in the restaurant downstairs.

NP: Wow, very good. We should take a little look before we leave.

TF: [Laughs]

RC: Oh, no, the restaurant's not open.

NP: Oh, it's closed.

RC: Saturday or Sunday, but come during the week.

TF: Oh, she has some beautiful pictures.

NP: Did your father, father-in-law's, husband's, husband's cousins, did they ever talk about what it was like to work in the elevator? I mean we talked about how it was hard work if you were working on the--.

TF: And very dirty. Very dirty.

RC: And hot.

TF: Yes.

RC: Very hot in the summer.

TF: Yeah.

NP: So how in the world did the women in the family, because back then I'm sure it was the women in the family, do the laundry?

RC: Scrub it on the board. I did--. My mother was ill when she had the seventh baby. I had to stay home from school from Grade 7, and I brought that baby up until she was 6 years old. I scrubbed all the clothes on the scrubbing board, carried the water from the well, put it in a boiler to heat. My brothers helped me take the water out.

NP: So you probably wished he worked in a cleaner industry, instead of having to clean out all that grain dust.

RC: You know, I wanted to be an art teacher.

NP: So you did your artwork by being a photographer.

RC: Yeah, no. That's my art there.

NP: Oh, that's beautiful!

TF: She's also a painter. She's also a carver.

NP: You're very talented.

RC: And I carve chickadees. I carve 28 chickadees. I took courses at 60+ Community Centre, and when I went there I just said, “I want to carve, but I don’t know what I’m going to carve or how I’m going to carve.” But lady handed me a block of wood and said, “You’re carving a chickadee.” And I said, “I don’t even have a knife, or I don’t know how to hold a knife.” But I eventually carved chickadees.

NP: They’re my favourite birds. I do like--.

TF: She’s got a lot of carvings.

RC: See there I took a picture of the chickadee.

NP: And you painted that?

RC: No that’s--.

NP: That’s a picture?

TF: That’s a picture.

RC: That’s on camera.

TF: Yeah, she’s done a lot of art. Various artwork.

NP: Did your relatives ever have any comments about work as the night watchmen?

RC: Well, my dad was night watchman in Pool 6.

NP: And did they have stories about that or was it pretty routine?

TF: Pretty routine. Except when the people would come wandering in looking for a place to sleep.

NP: Did that happen?

TF: Yeah.

NP: Often?

TF: Yeah.

NP: How did they handle that?

TF: Depended on the person.

RC: They would tell--. I remember my dad saying, "There's a little corner in there." And they have blankets. They gave them a blanket.

TF: Yeah, and they'd share their lunch. They'd carry their lunch pail to work and if somebody wandered in who looked like they needed it, they had a place to sleep and half a sandwich or an orange or whatever they happen to have in their lunch pail.

NP: Strange that people would wander to an elevator to find a place to stay.

RC: Oh, but they used to come house to house. At the convent at St. Joseph's Hospital, do you remember the convent there? My daughters went to piano lessons there and the nun showed me the post and the fence, how all the hungry people would have a certain mark to tell another one to go there. That there's something to eat. The nuns always had sandwiches made ready. And that was just right there downtown.

TF: The last ride I went with my father-in-law to the elevators I will never forget. My husband was at work, and I was going down to pick up his vehicle so I could do something. My father-in-law was going to drive me down there to pick up the car. Well, where the crossing was by where Woodside Foundry used to be, there was, I don't know, five or six sets of tracks there. You could see the trains but because he worked at the elevator he knew the timing, right? So we got to cross two sets of tracks and we had stopped. We had trains going both ways, on either side of us. Then the train left, and we went across two more and the same thing happened. That was when there was a lot of train traffic. I'll tell you, by the time I got to the elevator, I swore I was never going to drive down there with him again. [Laughs

NP: So what elevator was this again?

TF: At Pool 6.

NP: At Pool 6. Okay.

TF: Yeah. But you had to go in by, I think it was Woodside, and you went along over these umpteen tracks and then around this way.

RC: A level crossing.

NP: It's more of a surprise more people weren't injured or killed because there was lots of people working at the elevators.

TF: Oh yeah, but they knew the timing of the trains. I mean the trains went regularly, and I guess it was about that time of day where they knew what was going on. But he scared the bejesus out of me, I'll tell you.

RC: My dad said they used to stand on the track, and they could tell that there's a train coming nearby. If there was not nothing under their feet, they knew it was safe.

TF: Yeah.

NP: With your dad, when he was walking to work down Onion Lake Road, were there other people out there at the time? Did he sort of meet up with some other fellows that were heading the same way?

RC: There was a Polish man living not too far from us. He had a brand-new car, and he couldn't have nobody in there to dirty the seat. So he passed my dad back and forth.

NP: Some people never change—I mean the kind people. We still have kind people. We have people who worry about getting their upholstery dirty.

RC: Not only that, they had three boys. They lived at our house. We never went there to play. Ever. They came and played at our house. Every day they were at our house. My mother made big pans of donuts and all the kids in the neighbourhood were always over at our house. See where the seven children--? That's where all the kids gathered. There was always lots of things my mother made for us, all the kids, because we played payball and open fields we had next to us. Soon as we were finished, she'd say, "Okay! Okay!" and that meant we had hot chocolate and donuts.

NP: Hm, I'm getting hungry.

TF: [Laughs]

NP: Did you inherit her talent as a cook?

RC: Oh yes. [Laughs]

NP: Now your husband, Mr. Coulombe, was that your second husband? Did I hear you say that?

RC: My first husband was Lloyd Zywina. His name was Zwenia. I was pregnant with my first child, and they sent him overseas, and I have the baby three days later. He never seen her until she was three years old.

NP: Aw.

RC: Then, nobody can believe I have a picture hanging there. I can show it to you after. I said, "Here's your child." Then he picked her up, and she said, "Hi Daddy!"

TF: [Laughs]

RC: That was the most wonderful day of my life.

NP: Yes, because it's very hard when they come back, and you're not sure if they'll make the connection with the child. What did your husband do when he came back from the war?

RC: Oh, he couldn't find a job for a while, but then we lived in Geraldton, so we went back to Geraldton, and he drove a truck for his brother who had a dry cleaning. Then finally I decided that we wouldn't live in Geraldton. There's too much drinking going on. It was a bad place for kids to grow up, to me anyway. Some may be [inaudible]. When we moved here, he got a job at the Thunder Bay Mill.

NP: Well, you bring up drinking because that's something that all of the people we interviewed related to the elevators and the railway. Drinking was an issue. Any stories related to that, or just personal--?

TF: I think it was just the times. I don't think it mattered whether you worked at the elevator or not, but I can remember a fair amount. I mean if there was a party, there was a lot of booze.

RC: A lot of drinking after the war because of the relief of being back, safe, and everybody gathering together. Naturally, there was always that bottle of booze.

NP: When we think about the horror that they had to endure, that I would suspect a fair bit of it was to forget.

TF: Oh yeah.

RC: You'd think my husband was gone for a little over three years. Every day you heard of a casualty and you always thinking to yourself, "Oh," and at that time the telegram people were delivering messages by bicycle. Every time you seen a telegraph boy coming, you always just held your breath.

NP: Oh, what sad times.

TF: Yeah.

RC: And three years was long.

NP: That was a long time, yes.

TF: I have an album of my mothers from the war years of all the pictures of my dad at various places. I swear every month she took a picture of me to send over to Dad. Well, I was two, when he came back, I guess. They were always pictures back and forth. It would only be a single picture but--.

NP: Things were expensive then. Even taking photographs was expensive. As you said there was not a lot of money.

TF: Yeah.

RC: The only way that I got all my pictures and I have lot to be thankful for because I see things that people never see. And different ones have told me this over and over, “How in the world did you see that?” I had a friend, a very good--. She was sort of a relative. Worked at a place where Atkins Jewelry was, but next to it a photographer.

TF: Lovelady’s.

RC: Lovelady. She worked in there, and she always gave me for half price for developing pictures. Films were cheap but--.

NP: But the developing, and they weren’t much use without the developing. Lovelady’s did wonderful photographs of elevators.

TF: Yes.

RC: It wasn’t that it was that expensive, but I always had six films at a time. So I have loads of pictures from way back.

TF: Yeah, yeah.

NP: So are you going to be donating your collection to the museum when you--?

TF: [Laughs]

NP: If they go way back.

RC: I’m just waiting for them to finish the library and put a table, and two girls are coming to help me sort my thousands of pictures.

NP: Wow.

RC: So then in the restaurant they have my pictures hanging. I’ll have to show you one that’s sitting on the table out there, that I wanted to donate.

TF: [Laughs]

RC: Tell her what happened.

TF: Which one? [Laughs] We were at the art gallery down at the Marina, and she wanted to donate some pictures. There was two that she had left there, and I guess they took it to committee and decided that they weren't quite what they were looking for. We went down the other day, not knowing this, to donate some more and that's when we met up with you guys down there.

NP: To the railway, the women doing the railway project?

TF: Yeah. She's got lots of pictures that are excellent pictures. But she said on the way home, "We can't even give them away!"

NP: [Laughs]

RC: They have one hanging down there, machine shop.

NP: Yes. When did you say you started taking your photographs?

RC: I was about 10.

NP: Do you have any pictures from the time you had your little camera? Did you keep any of those?

RC: Oh yeah, I have lots.

NP: Wow.

RC: Have a picture from when we moved to Hilldale Road. That was a three-room log house, abandoned for years. This one fellow that worked in the railroads told my dad about it because we lived in a cold house, and they were bringing cold in from Atikokan. All the dust was flying, and my mother was calling a doctor all the time. The doctor said to my dad, "If I were you, I'd move in the country with your kids." So he talked to somebody at the elevator, and he told him, "Yeah there's an abandoned log house on Hilldale Road," was called Onion Road then. My dad went one day in January or something, a cold day, to look. He just barely could see it because it was completely covered in snow, but they got it.

Okay. March the 1st hired a team of horses with a big platform, loaded every instant thing we had, and six kids all on the sleigh. We're heading across this abandoned house we don't know nothing about. We get there and the house is completely covered in snow because it's a log house. It wasn't high. We had to take the snow off. The fellow with the horses couldn't stay with our stuff

so unloaded into the snow, wherever they cleared an area, and headed back because the horses would catch a chill. They lit a fire ,and we went into the three-room log house, six kids, not knowing a thing about this area we moved.

NP: And leaving all your friends behind.

RC: Oh yeah, and I cried when I left my girlfriend because we were so close too.

NP: What street did you live on in the East End?

RC: McLeod Steet. We lived at the end. That's why we had all that dust.

NP: Almost in the cool. You lived in the cool piles.

RC: I had rheumatic fever and was sick constantly. One doctor said to my mother, "No, your child is not going to live."

NP: But you fooled them. [Laughs]

RC: No but another doctor--. She kept calling different doctors. One doctor said, "Yes. I know what's wrong, and she's going to live."

NP: Good, good. Now before we take a look at the photographs, I just want to know if there's any other remembrances you have about the elevators. I don't know whatever happened to Bawlf. I know it's still standing, but I don't know what happened to the Bawlf Company.

RC: They changed the name and people worked there after that when they changed the name.

NP: So Bawlf sold to Canada Malting?

RC: Yeah.

NP: Then they stayed on with Canada Malting?

RC: For a while. Not that long. I have to find these pictures. I couldn't find them because everything is stashed away. I have a picture there of the Bawlf. I took a real close-up.

NP: That would be good because there's not a lot of pictures of the Bawlf elevator. There just aren't that many.

RC: I did, yeah.

NP: So those women from the library better get here quick because all of those pictures that you have, you remember what they were, but will anybody else? They'll lose so much value.

RC: Oh yeah, I remember all my pictures, and if I had a big table, I could just keep bringing boxes out and show you all these pictures.

TF: Unfortunately, a lot of the pictures are all mixed with other ones. Where's your black and white picture that you just had done? Of the tugboats with the elevator.

RC: Oh yeah, I'm just going to show you.

NP: Now, we don't want you to trip over our equipment here. Have you jump hurdles. You can put on pause.

[Audio pauses]

MM: Okay so I'm going to turn on record now

NP: Okay So we've spent some time taking a look at your photo albums and your photographs and we've had it on record here that I borrowed some from you and we will be returning them. We're going to scan them. We'd like to thank you both very much for, first of all, coming to the display, and secondly, following through and finding us. We're really pleased to have your memories recorded.

RC: You're welcome.

End of interview.

