Narrator: Herb Daniher (HD)

Company Affiliations: Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Transportation Communications Union (TCU), United Steelworkers (USW)

Interview Date: 11 April 2014

Interviewer: Nancy Perozzo (NP)

Recorder: Monika McNabb (MM)

Transcriber: Sarah Lorenowich

Summary: In his first interview, staff representative for the United Steelworkers union discusses his long career in Thunder Bay's grain industry. He begins by describing his first job in the elevators at Pool 4 as a general labourer. He also describes the layout of Pool 4A and B, shares memorable moments of work and grain mishaps, and explains the insular nature of elevator departments. He discusses how automation and downsizing changed morale on the job, the prevalence of alcohol use, and the demerit system for infractions. Daniher then discusses his move into the union and the major issue of downsizing that they dealt with during his career. He explains the multifaceted reasons for downsizing, the difficulties of seasonal elevator work, the rapid amalgamation of companies on the waterfront, and the decommissioning of elevators. He shares stories about speaking at Senate during a strike, about giving public presentations to force companies to respond, and about working under waterfront union legend Frank Mazur. He discusses other changes on the waterfront like less government oversight for heath and safety issues, the eradication of the Canadian Wheat Board as a crown corporation, and the lessening of the Canadian Grain Commission's oversight role. Other topics discussed include women joining the grain industry, communications with unions in other grain ports, the union's relationship with management, non-union facilities in Thunder Bay, memorable colleagues he worked with, and his proudest moments.

Keywords: United Steelworkers (USW); Transportation Communications Union (TCU); Saskatchewan Wheat Pool (SWP); Labour unions; Labour relations; Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, and Steamship Clerks (BRAC); Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; Grain handlers; Grain dust; Automation; Grain elevator car shed; Workplace accidents; Workplace fatalities; Railcar unloading; Grain elevators—equipment and supplies; Alcohol and drug use; Downsizing; Women in the workplace; Labour strikes; Contract negotiations; Contract arbitration; Amalgamation; International Longshoremen's Association (ILA); Management; Health & safety; Grievances; Canadian Wheat Board (CWB); Canadian Grain Commission (CGC); SWP Pool 4A & B; SWP Pool 6; SWP Pool 8; SWP Pool 15; SWP Pool 7; Manitoba Pool Elevators

Time, Speaker, Narrative
NP: It is April 11, 2014, and this interview is taking place at 199 Academy Drive, overlooking the grain elevators in Intercity and the north end. Sitting in on this interview is Monika McNabb who will ask some questions if I forget. I'll have the person who is going to be interviewed today introduce himself and his current connection to the grain trade. HD: Okay, thanks very much for giving me the opportunity. I agree there's quite a view out this window here looking at the waterfront and what's left of the grain industry on the north side, I guess. Name's Herbert Daniher. Currently I'm a staff representative of the United Steelworkers [USW]. We merged with them in 1998. I've held that position. Prior to that, I was holding positions with the Transportation Communications Union [TCU], which was the precursor to merging with Steel. Prior to that we were BRAC, Brotherhood of Railway Airline, grain handlers, bus station employees, so on and so forth. We changed names to become the TCU which then merged with the Steelworkers in '98. I started in the grain industry in 1975 at Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and I've had a connection either directly working in that industry or servicing, administrating, negotiating, litigating contractual contracts, collective bargaining agreements within the industry and sector. I've still got a connection and still enjoy being a part of the grain industry in Thunder Bay. NP: Now, you went through the long list of, "First we were this," or, "Now we're this," and then all the way back. Just so that we have it on tape, for the long one—I think it was BRAC—can you just repeat the--? HD: I don't know if I've got the acronym off by heart anymore, but it was the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, Freight Handler, Express Employees. And then there was a couple more that were sort of attached to that. But basically, what it did, just a number of precursor positions within the rail sector, so it didn't really have grain handlers in the name because it was from a railway union. NP: I was looking at an old paper and they were talking about—just let me check here—"Grain Elevators Workers Union," and this was 1917. Do you know enough about the history of that? HD: Somewhat. I mean, the way the industry sort of evolved there were some longshoremen. There was some warehousing. The industry in the waterfront was really labour-intensive back in those days. So I know that from our records that we had at the office, that there was numerous larger locals that sort of, when those businesses closed, so did the locals. We had stevedores, for example. At one of the warehouses, we had over 1000 people that would work on sort of a seasonal basis. But the railway industry in town are non-operates, non-ops, that we had at CP—or Canadian Pacific—we probably had a union of about 5 or 600 at one time before--.

NP: When you say non-ops, what do you mean?

HD: This would be like the people that aren't driving trains. This would be the car checkers, the people who look after bills of lading, see it move into freight. The logistical side of it, the office side of the business at one time. And of course, going back a number of years, those numbers are probably even greater than what I stated at 600 because everything was hand-bombed in a sense, as they call it. As technology took over, centralization, I think now we have about 12 members left in the city working for CP, and the duties that we used to do, a lot of that moved to Winnipeg and Montreal and Edmonton. It centralized. Again, it's more or less a lot to do with technology. A lot of this stuff is automated versus the years gone by.

NP: So, with this group, the grain elevator worker's union—Local 934 on the letterhead here—which was probably the first union, when you were--. You said you started in 1978?

HD: '75 actually.

NP: '75? Was there a specific grain handlers union? Or had it already started to amalgamate with--?

HD: No. We became a part of BRAC. I guess back in—if you look at the historical side of it—the group that you're referencing they're actually, the ILA [International Longshoremen's Association]. That unit still exists in the waterfront. The ILA 934, I believe, is one of the longshoremen's units that still exist. We broke away or we raided, I'm not sure which, for a particular group and went into the railway side of things. As the labour history evolved, some of these organizations-- .We didn't have the recognition clauses through the government, so the company didn't necessarily have to recognize us.

It was a lot more abstract the way people would go out and organize. It wasn't until the '40s where everything is really starting to materialize. I think we have, in 1935, we have the Grain Workers Union as the first record that we have in our office pertaining to us sort of being a separate, distinct identity, where this particular group from 1917 is really part of the ILA, which is a longshoreman group within town. We were with them for some period of time, but we broke away from them at some point. Again, in 1935 is the first charter that we have in the office that we know of that we became independent and then assimilated in with the railway culture and that organization.

[0:05:36]

NP: As time went by?

HD: Yeah. Things like the Wagner Act and these types of things in the States, all this stuff started to evolve, although the Canadian side of things was a little bit more delayed than what they had done with the Wagner Act. This is coming out of the Depression Stateside, so the whole of labour relations evolved over a period of time. I guess the governments were a little more friendlier. They recognized the need to organize and whatnot. So, the legislation provided for those opportunities.

NP: In Canada?

HD: In Canada, yeah, sort of assimilated down from the States. So, for BRAC, for example, was an international union as a lot of them were in those days and a lot of those types of cultures in different trades, because you have the industrial side of things and then you have sort of the plant side of things—two different type things. Just trades, organized trades. [Inaudible**]** and industrial organizations was one thing and then you had sort of the trades groups that were another. Railways was viewed as a trade group, very specific skill sets, and whatnot. Where grain elevators would have been more warehousing, labouring, these types of things. A lot of it was identified with different cultures and nationalities.

There were sort of pecking orders—and I'm not sure if you want to call it recognition or discrimination. In certain sectors, certain types--. If those are your countrymen, you got to go inside in the elevator. Some elevators there was Scottish, different types of nationalities depending on who was in charge. Basically, one of the ways to determine what type of work you'd be and how much work you'd basically get at the terminals over time, right? So, you hear lots of different stories about that. I don't have a lot of information about that, but I mean, certainly when the unions came in and you saw structured seniority rosters and these types of things, those worlds changed. So, it didn't matter what type of nationality you were. In the long run, it didn't matter whether you bought some gifts for your supervisor. It didn't carry a long way after, but at one time it did.

Not that it was a bad thing. That was the way the world worked in those days, right? A lot of people came over. There was a lot of immigrants. There was a lot of people that had functionally illiterate or language barriers—I mean, I worked with these people even when I came to the grain elevators. There was lots of people that did--. Really in today's world, just would have no hope because you need to have certain skill sets to be able to read health and safety or written instructions and these types of things. The world has changed much differently today than it ever was previous, even at the grain elevators.

NP: I'd like to come back to this. But just before we move on—because I decided rather than getting right into your career to try to see where the union piece fits in—I'd like to come back to that later as well to talk about what it was like when you first started, and the positions that were there, and who they belonged to, and some of the points that you're talking about—the different ethnic groups. But before we do that, let's take a look at how you first got started. Were you born in Thunder Bay?

HD: No, I was actually born in Red Lake. My parents worked for—my dad worked for—Ontario Hydro. So, I was actually born in Red Lake, which was the nearest hospital. We moved out of there in, I think—they moved there in ’52, something like that—and we ended up moving in ’59 to Nipigon. My dad took a transfer and then moved to the Lakehead in ’63.

NP: And your dad was working for--?

HD: Ontario Hydro.

NP: Right, right. What was your first exposure to grain elevators even before you started in the industry?

HD: Well, ironically, we had some old films, some old 8mms, that my father took coming into town one time into the Lakehead. It was Port Arthur and Fort William back in those days. There was actually pictures we have that we took just off that camera. It was an amazing-type structure. To be quite frank, I don’t really have any recollections other than when I look at the movies now. We must have said something about it. I’m not even sure of what year that movie was shot. So, I mean, from the earliest days they had a presence.

What I remember about the grain elevators is in Grade 6 one of our teachers—and I wasn’t the best student, I wasn’t the worst student—but I remember the teacher used to say to us, “What do you want to be? If you don’t do your homework, or you don’t put your nose to grindstone in a sense, then you’re going to end up being--. What, do you want to be? a sweeper down at the grain elevator?” So, we used to look down from Shuniah Street School. If you walked far enough down, you look over the hill and see out on the waterfront that there’s these big structures down there. It’s like, “Where would you sweep down there?” I had no idea there was an internal side of it. “Would you go on the roof and sweep?” We had no idea what she was really talking about.

[0:10:37]

But ironically, when I spent a lot of days sweeping around the elevators, I do remember her words. Wasn’t such a bad job, wasn’t such a bad threat that we were able to--. Things cycled up and down there, but a lot of people have been able to earn a living out of that business. It’s not a bad way to earn a trade.

NP: [Laughs] So, it didn’t strike fear in the hearts of the students obviously?

HD: Oh, we didn't know. We weren't wary of it. We never got a chance to tour it or really didn't know. Other than that, you'd forever hear these horns coming from the waterfront, which, you know, they're just part of the neighbourhood. You could hear them, but you just never paid much attention to them, nor did we even know what they were.

NP: And what were they?

HD: They were the car shed horns. They were moving cars in around the area, so these horns could be heard all the way out through the Current River and Port Arthur. They just bellow up the hills to where we were. The only other exposure I really had to grain elevators prior to applying was we would go the odd time to go down fishing in around the elevators in the Current River mouth, in Current River, and sometimes go into the slips and whatnot. You'd see the big boats and that, but never really paid that much attention to it other than we were out and about there. So we were, whatever you call it, exploring as young people, maybe climbing the odd fence we weren't supposed to climb or something to get a closer look.

NP: Did you ever get into an elevator when you weren't supposed to?

HD: No, no. There was always people around. So, we sort of shied away. But we did throw some lines in the water off some of the docks coming into the slips, but other than that I didn't really have any actual knowledge of what an elevator was. I didn't know that until I was 17 and actually stepped in one.

NP: Was the fishing good?

HD: Yeah. There was fishing in the mouth of the Current River in those days, and it was pretty good fishing. There was also fishing, you'd catch them off the slips as well, but it was a lot deeper there, so it was a lot more trickier to catch. But you'd catch some pike off there, depending on if they're hanging around the dock or not. But there was always fish around, no doubt about that.

NP: So, you're not like Gene Onchulenko who, actually, at about that age got into the elevator and drank the booze that somebody had left around in the lunchroom?

HD: No, I cannot say that I did that no. [Laughing]

NP: So, you said at age 17 you actually got a job. How did that come about?

HD: I've always been a volunteer my whole life, believe it or not. We were actually volunteering at Brent Park. It's an outside sort of recreational area, and in the wintertime, they had hockey rinks there. In those days, they had a formal structure of executive and whatnot, and they'd run hockey programs and whatnot. People like to say the weather was different back then than it was now, and I believe it was. It was colder and winters came in earlier and lasted longer, so those rink facilities would get a lot more use. In the summertime they were soccer pitches and these types of things. So, anyhow, I was playing up there—and we played soccer and hockey—and we were volunteering. We used to go up to the rink, for example. It would be about a mile from my house. We'd walk up to Brent Park and then we'd stay most of the night there, have supper at home, and then you walk up with our stick and skates and bring something to eat. Or if you were lucky enough to get an allowance, you could go across to the store and buy chocolate milk and a bag of chips or something.

We used to hang out there. We used to shovel the rink, and then we were refereeing, and then we were playing hockey. They were looking for coaches for some of the younger kids, so I started to sort of getting involved in that. I was like 16, so I was coaching a 14-year-old team, whatnot. So, I started to get creative, and we had some fundraisers. I remember taking the sheets to school and getting the teacher, the electrical teacher—I was majoring in the electrical program at the time at Lakeview High School—and he liked that. He liked that I was a little more responsible than some and I volunteered my time already. So, actually, at the end of the day, he took me under his wing and took me around to the grain elevators.

He knew Mr. Young. He'd call him Snub Young. I'm not sure if he'd lost a finger or something, but why they called him that nickname—but a nice gentleman. So, he actually drove me down and introduced me to Mr. Young, and then Mr. Young basically took me around the waterfront. Then we applied at the various elevators. So, I mean, they must have been very good friends. He was heading to the millwright department. I was looking for more of an electrical apprenticeship at the time. So, in actual fact, my volunteer activity, or my character, led me to that connection. I had no idea what a grain elevator was and there I was.

[0:15:29]

So anyhow, we ended up going around and he kept me from the shovel houses. He said, "You know, we'll take you to the houses where you don't have to shovel grain for starters." I never did get a chance to shovel. I saw the shovelling done, but I never actually got a chance to do it myself, which is unfortunate because it's really an experience in life that I would have liked to have had. In any case, I went down to the various elevators and put my name in, and lo and behold he said, "Check back once in a while," which I did. I never got a call for some period of time even though that was a pretty good connection, right? A formal introduction. So, I kept going back, and I'd go back early in the morning. What I didn't realize, when they said to go early to a shop, I thought that meant go at 7:00 in the morning. I'd get on my bicycle, drive from my mom and dad's house down to the various elevators where I had left applications at, and I'd get there, and the foreman hadn't arrived yet. The nightshift foreman

was usually gone and then the dayshift foreman hadn't arrived and I remember there was just the estimator there. So, he'd ask me, "What the heck are you doing here?"

NP: What's an estimator?

HD: He was somebody that would sort of come in earlier in the morning and look at the grain stocks and identify what stocks were in the house, for shipping later on that particular day. But I'll always remember coming in, probably 6:30, it was a kind of cool sort of fog-ish morning. You'd have to sort of see it to really be able to explain it properly. Somebody saw me come in and they called me over from the cleaner deck, it was an older fellow, and he said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I've applied for a job." And he said, "Stay in school. Don't work here." [Laughs] He said, "Get an education." I understood what he sort of meant. I understood better now than I did then, but I was kind of naïve.

But in any case, never got called for some period of time, so I went back at the advice of probably my teacher. I went back and talked to Mr. Young again, and then he drove me around to all of the elevators again. So, lo and behold, we showed up and ironically—again the strange twist is—Mr. Lauren Richards was, I think, a supervisor at the time, we used to call him foreman. I come there and he says, "Hello." Well, guess who this fellow was? This is the fellow who happened to be the coordinator at Brent Park for the program up there. So, he recognized me, of course I knew him very well, and I guess he had some degree of respect, so he dug out my resume and he said, "Your resume says you're 17 years old." He says, "You can't work here until you're 18." So, I said, "Well, what should I do?" He said, "I don't know, but you can't work here until you're 18." So, I took the application back and I changed my birthdate, and the next day I started at the elevator.

NP: Which elevator was this?

HD: Pool 4. Saskatchewan Wheat Pool 4.

NP: Now, this Mr. Young that you referred to, was he at Pool 4 too, or was he at another--?

HD: No, he was actually the maintenance superintendent for the millwrights for Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. So, he was actually at a different office. They had a separate destination point, so he wasn't even at the elevator. He was like a senior supervisor at a different location. It was down in the waterfront. They had a small building in and off Pool 6. I can't remember. It was like a little place where you might have the--. The electrical and maintenance department was there, the supervisory staff, so they had an offsite office location in those days.

NP: What was your impression of the elevators the day you showed up?

HD: Well, ironically, so now you're going to work, right? So, I had actually been working in the summer for Howard's Asphalting and they actually did paving—Howard's Paving they used to be called. There you're pretty steady work. It was about half the pay. So anyhow, I had been working and I guess--. Actually, that was the summer before, I guess. So, I had some experience working already in that particular respect. But in any case, we reported to the elevator, and you had to go see the superintendent who was Mr. Lindeman. Bud Lindeman, I think, is what his name was. There was about, I think, around half a dozen of us ended up going into his office. This fellow was a slight man, well-dressed, well-groomed, had a suit on, very professional.

[0:19:58]

And of course, in those days, I used to have hair, and longer hair at the time. But I remember, "Better go get your hair cut." So, I went down the day before—after I got the call—went down and got a haircut, had my haircut as short as I ever remember having it—tying to that part of the equation, after I sort of discuss this. So anyway, we went in there and he talked about, I guess, core values of work—being punctual, safety. He basically said to us--. His office was right trackside, so you could see--. Where you reported for work in the morning, that's where his office looked out to, and it looked out into the car shed. And he said to us, "For example, if I ever saw you go underneath a hopper car or in between a boxcar, pulling out, you'd be fired on the spot." "Oh, well that's good to know." Anyhow, he gave us the orientation I would call it for about half an hour or so. So, we got up and, of course, I'm still just a 17-year-old kid, right? I'm going to leave, and he says, "By the way, you're going to have to get a haircut before you come to work tomorrow." So, I guess my hair wasn't quite short. I didn't get the haircut, by the way. I thought it was short enough.

So, ironically, I just got back on my bike and pedalled home. I reported for the next day, and they gave us a hardhat, if you want to call it that. It's like a fibreboard kind of hat. I was proud to have it. I never had a hardhat before, so it was quite exciting. I used go home at lunch time. We were 8:00 to 5:00 with an hour off for lunch, so I'd drive my bike all the way home, and I used to wear that hat all the way back. I must have looked like an idiot, but anyhow I was proud to don it. I still have it actually. I have it in the office. I found it in my dad's garage just recently. We were cleaning it out. So, I still have my first helmet, and I've got it in the office now hanging on the wall with some other grain paraphernalia.

NP: Well, we'll have to get a picture of you with it so that when we have this story as a snippet, we'll have a picture of you and your--. Maybe you can get your bicycle out at the same time. [Laughs]

HD: Well, ironically, when we reported to work the next day—we're on day shift, so you report to work for 8:00—and Jack Connell was the supervisor at the time. A big rough character, I mean a big man. He was big and he was heavy, but he was strong, you know what I mean? He was just a mammoth-type individual. He looked like a strongman, like an old picture of a circus strongman, and he's barking there. So, there's about probably 50 people reported for work the next morning, out front. There was just a ton of people, just a big mass. So, of course, nobody knows—we're just newbies, right—so we don't know what we're supposed to be doing or whatever, and he's giving everybody heck there. "I don't want you here at five after, and I don't want you here at five to. I want you here at 8:00. Be on time!" And he's giving us the gears.

So, then he started breaking us out into crews. In those days, because of the way the pollution control systems worked, everything went out onto the roofs, nothing was internalized. It was a lot of pollution and a lot of people had allergies to dust or breathing problems in the city because they used to spew it all. All the cyclones and everything would just go out into the air. And depending which way the wind was blowing, I mean, this stuff would come to town in a sense, carry for miles. So, in any case, we got assigned to go clean out the dryer, and what is a dryer? The only dryer I knew was the clothesline at home, I think. I don't even know if we had an electrical dryer at the time.

And the first thing we did—not that this matters—but it happened to be an Italian foreman, supervisor, or sub-supervisor I usually call them. He [inaudible]**,** it was half a dozen of us went in that crew, maybe a few more. What do you think the first thing we did was? First thing we did was—they just started to bring in tankers and it was kind of new. Most of the time they were doing boxcars there—so, the first thing we did was the guy took us underneath the tank car. So, the day before, remember, Mr. Lindeman had told us, "If I ever saw you go underneath a tanker car, you'd be fired on the spot." The very first thing we did. One minute after 8:00 or four minutes after 8:00, the very first thing we did was went underneath the car and went out to where we had to go to do the cleanup. So, there you go. Ironically.

NP: You said that other people had started--. This was 1975?

HD: Yeah.

NP: Other people had started that same day—and there were 50 people in the yard—so would some of them just be the newbies like you as well?

HD: They kept augmenting the staffs because vacation was going to be starting or vacation had commenced. So, they had people that had started there and been there for a couple of months, or people that had started there last week, and people that started there the day that we started. So, there was always an ongoing sort of feed. And there was a lot of turnover in those days, so

people would come on, and they might come on for a day or two and that would be the last time you'd see them. Or they'd get another job somewhere else, or whatever the case was. You could go anywhere on the waterfront really and seek or obtain employment, right, in those days. It wasn't uncommon to see a high degree of turnover.

[0:25:19]

So, there was just a whole lot of people because there was a whole lot of cleanup to be done because it was springtime, and they needed to get the roofs cleaned off because cyclones would blow that stuff out all year round. You'd have to move that product off the roof because it was putting stress on the roof and whatnot. So, all of those areas had to be totally cleaned off by hand.

NP: And how did you clean them off?

HD: By hand. Basically, just shovel and wheelbarrow.

NP: Dump it over the edge?

HD: Dump it over the edge. They had a sort of a funnel spout or something that you could dump it down. Or we just dumped it over, and they had bobcats or whatever that would load it up into some type of a dump truck to be disposed of in the dump area. I don't think it took any of that offsite. I think they just would dump it at the end of the tracks or whatever.

NP: So, you had said initially that you had hoped to get into an apprenticeship for an electrician, and you took this job, which was essentially a labourer's job. Was there some thought that there was a career when you interviewed?

HD: Yeah. This is what I anticipated. Of course, Mr. Young suggested I could go into millwrights. I really at the time didn't take him up on it. In this case, I had a connection. If I would have said yes, he would have put me on as a millwright helper. He sort of prodded me to look at the other alternative, but I didn't know any better. I wish now that maybe I did. But I don't have regrets about that, but there was an opportunity there. I just didn't realize that it was knocking, and I went into the terminal. So, of course, if you change the course of your life, you change one thing and everything else changes from it. But in any case, he did offer me the opportunity to go in the other trade.

Now, we did end up posting from time to time, but the electrical was very hard to get into and sometimes they hired off the street first- or second-year apprentices versus a trainee from within. I found that out after the fact. But the millwrights, they did start a program. I did end up applying for the millwright apprentice eventually, but I was the last person. I started in '75 and I think in

’76, or it was--. Anyhow, it ended up being that I just missed it by one. I was the next person on the list, so my seniority didn’t allow me to obtain the position. Of course, the grain trade started to downsize after, and they never did post another round after they filled those candidate positions. They never did post another round, so I never did end up going into the trades in retrospect. That was really what my ambition or goal was.

Of course, once you’re young and you start working in the elevators, you’re making pretty good money and pretty good overtime. It looks like a career path, but in actual fact the writing was really on the wall. If you understood the history of the grain trade or the whole thing about automation or whatnot, and there had been some automation at the terminal before I got there. We’d gone from manual scales at that particular facility to computerized scale. It was state-of-the-art for the time. So, that had reduced the manpower requirements up on that floor by probably 10 people. It was still a big department. There was still about 12 people in the department, but it was much less than when it used to be, where you had people manning each of the scales individually and hand-bombing this.

I didn’t really know anything about that particular process until we went to some of the other elevators. When it would get slow, we would get laid off. So, for example, we’d go to Pool 8, and they didn’t have automatic scales there, so we were actually still doing it the old-school way with levers and the balance of the weights. They had much smaller scales there, so it was quite an artform. But again, by the time I had gotten there, that stuff had already been done on both sides of Pool 4A and B, so I sort of missed that aspect of it. But if you looked at that and extrapolated it forward, I mean, the writing was on the wall wherever you went.

The courses I took at school really didn’t address that. I graduated, but there’s some--. Socio-economic programs, economics, there’s certain programs that should have been mandatory that we didn’t take that ought to have been, that would have sort of gave us more insight into operational management or whatever you want to call it. The behavioural sciences, these types of things—these things just weren’t offered there. Business courses were.

You know, you had trades and business courses. There was nothing sort of in between, and it didn’t really give you life skills. You acquired those life skills on the way back, right? But in my case, I saw a whole generation of workers be terminated. They basically took that as their career paths, and then got the rug pulled out from underneath them at some point in that particular regard. Had we known better and stayed in school, like the individual taught me that first day--.

I did go back to school. I took labour relation courses. I actually took electronic technician courses and a program for a year, but I went back to the elevators and continued to work there. But I did go back a few years later a took a whole bunch of industrial relation courses at the college and university and sort of honed my skills. There’s no school like the school of hard knocks. When

you're in there on the ground being a steward and these types of things, that's where you really apply or learn the trade. The academic side of it is important, and maybe gives you more insight, and it gives you a better idea about how laws of the land may work. But at the end of the day, dealing with people and doing the work that we do as business agents, it's on the street where you get your education—in the trenches. Not really from a book.

[0:30:38]

NP: Which leads into my next question about, well, a couple of things, about Pool 4A and B. They have a history of having the two major explosions where people lost their lives. Was there anything of that history still hanging on around Sask Wheat Pool 4 when you went on? Or was that--?

HD: No, it was--. There was some. Not as much as you would think. Like you would think there would be some commemoration of these things. It was a dark part of history that people were aware of, but not really promulgated. They did talk to us about the dangers of dust and explosions. No matter where you went, in which department—somebody had been touched by that particular event. In some departments, there was, of course, people who had lived through that that were still there. So, you worked into a department where there was a lead hand—I forget the fellow's name now—but he lost his leg in the explosion, right? And somebody else had their ears burnt off. They were working with us, but you just didn't--. It doesn't look too pretty. But I mean, you didn't really understand the significance of it. But you understood that there was significant danger.

The union and the safety committees were really coming on stream, and we got a little bit active in those regards pretty quickly. So, we became more aware or more astute of it. There really wasn't a whole lot there other than, like I said, there was sort of a bit of a safety awareness. But not to the degree that you would think where there would be a zero tolerance. The new cyclones hadn't been put into effect. There was still a lot of dust laying around. Dust would accumulate quickly because you were moving a lot of product. It was busy times.

The whole era of grain handling was transitioning. Like I said, we started we were 8:00 to 5:00. When do you work on a 4:00 to 12:00 shift? Well, in the A side, at 4A, it was like two separate terminals, two different worlds. We had our own scale floors. We actually operated as almost two separate entities, except the shipping was combined. So, 4B would move their product over to 4A to be shipped out onto a boat, but other than that the unloading side of it, cleaner deck side of it, scale floor side of it, was separate and distinct. They had coexisting annexes and then the shipping, but the other stuff was separate and distinct. So, there was two separate worlds there.

But on A side, they worked 8:00 to 12:00 and three hours a night overtime unloading cars. We did a lot of boxcars. They had augers there versus the--. They had shovels, they had the cables and that for the shovelling there. At one time I presume they did shovel there, but by the time I got there they had instituted augers. And basically, just an auger on each side of the car, you'd break open the boxcar doors—paper doors or wooden doors depending, a combination of both. You'd have hydraulic breakers to break the wood out if they were wood doors, and then if they were paper doors, they were like steel slats through the paper. They were quite powerful. They were a lot more inexpensive and a lot easier to handle. A little more dangerous because, you know, as you cut the straps—we used to have a fireman's axe—it would be under a load, or under pressure.

So, you'd open the car door with a hydraulic hook, and the grain would be pressing against the hook, that's why you'd need hydraulics. You just couldn't slide the door open. The boxcars were kind of beat up. And then basically it was under pressure, so you'd just sort of take the axe and you'd swing down. But there was a lot of pressure, so you had to watch you didn't cut yourself or cut your hand or lose an eye from that particular process. The grain would spill into the hopper on each side, and then you'd put the auger-mobile in, and we'd just sort of come into the car. It would have some flex-points on it, so you'd sort of stick it into the car and there would just be an auger on it, and it would just auger the grain out into the hopper. You'd have an actuating point that you would just swing in and out, and then we would go to the corners and sweep it into the middle where that couldn't reach, and out you'd go.

We just started to see the tanker cars there. When the tanker cars would come in, it was a whole different world. But for the most part they were doing a lot of boxcars there because that's what the system was set up to handle. More and more you started to see this transitioning point. But at 4B they had dumpers, where the dumpers actually go in, and they would tilt the cars. So, we would bust the door open—same thing—open it, fall out into the hopper, the grain, and then basically you'd have a dump that would lift the whole car up back and forth. There was about four or five tilts. Then you'd go and sweep out whatever residuals was there and basically kick it out.

[0:35:19]

NP: Why was there Pool 4A and B? Why wasn't it just one elevator? Do you know why they built two separate structures?

HD: No, I don't really know the history of that. It was just two unloading points, I guess. It was there so they had the capacity and room, so I take it they just wanted sort of a--. It's almost like two side-by-side separate plants when you get down to it that were connected by an annex after. I'm not sure if one was built before the other. I don't know what the history of that is.

NP: Were they identical?

HD: No. I mean, structurally, technically they were, but there was just some changes. But elevators generally, the way they were structured, they actually probably were, when you get down to it, probably identical. But I couldn't say that for certain. I mean certainly the layout. Some things were different on the inside, but for the most part they had the same floors, same levels, same heights, same bin sizes—all this kind of stuff was the same. When you think about that, likely they were probably two mirrored plants, when you get down to it.

NP: I'll have to go to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool records and find out why they built two instead of one.

HD: Strange, I worked there for that long and it never dawned on me to ask. Or if I did, I don't recall.

NP: And probably nobody would be able to answer you anyways. Those fellows that you said you worked with, did any of them ever tell you what it was like the day of the explosions? Whether the '52 or the '45?

HD: No. You know what, two things that were never spoken about at the grain elevators that I ever recollect, even in confidence, even to people that knew people of it, is one was the explosions, and two was people's experiences during the war. Those things were never, ever shared. It was not something that people spoke about or bragged about. I mean you wore it as a badge of honour then if you were a veteran. But I never, ever heard anybody ever tell me a war story, a true war story, ever. Other than the odd time somebody might slip that they met some Italian girls or something, but that was about the height of it. I never heard any part of it, the real, the horrific things that would have happened over there, or things they had to do.

NP: So, I'm going to ask you now to sort of close your eyes and visualize. You're there in your first month or two. Take me through the floors, or the departments, and sort of who's operating, just in general what they're doing—not anything specific—how they got along with each other, that kind of thing. So, this is in the early days, and then maybe we can do the same thing for many years later.

HD: You know, the way it went there was that forever somebody was always missing from somewhere. The departments were quite heavy-laden. I think at Pool 4 we had over 200 people on the rolls—maybe even as many as 300 at one terminal. There's not even 300 people on the waterfront right now—workers working in the grain industry right now—in total. So, they were very labour intensive. When I started, they did have the three shifts on inside, but it was a few years after that they started putting a 4:00 to 12:00 and day shift into the car shed at 4A. We always did the three nights a week. But in any case, there was a vacancy became inside, so it was a dollar an hour increase in pay if you went inside. So, I think I was making, when I started there, it was like $4.00 an hour. I was working the year before in construction, the paving, it was like $2.50 I was making. I guess through the

contract they ended up getting a 95-cent wage increase. Of course, in those days, inflation was quite different than it is now, so 95 cents seems like a lot in today's world, but back then, well, back then against that wage of course it was. And then we went on the inside, and with the inside job we get another dollar an hour. So, I think I was making like $6.00.

So, you'd want to go inside if you could. The work was a little bit maybe cleaner or easier, although you had to do shift work. Then I went from the car shed. So, the car shed generally you were unloading, or you were a cleanup crew. They used to call it the shit gang. Where that comes from is that rotten grain, fermented grain, if you disturb it, it smells like rotten manure or worse. So, I mean, there was some cavities in there that stuff would blow into all year. We used to have one place, it was called the bear-pit, it would be like 40 or 50 feet high. So, you'd break out the windows in the bottom—not break the windows, but break out the frames—and you'd start at the bottom and you'd basically undermine, and shovel by shovel, wheelbarrow by wheelbarrow that whole thing had to be emptied out. It was like a catchment area between the two terminals. It just filled right up.

Everybody talked about the bear-pit, everybody spent time in the bear-pit, and everybody knew that you were working in the bear-pit because the rest of the lunchroom would have to leave. It literally reeked that bad. Your clothes--. You wouldn't bring those clothes home, let's put it that way.

[0:40:26]

But when it got slow and somebody had to go do the job, so sometimes it was students and sometimes it was newbies. Or if it got slow in August, they'd layoff the students and we'd end up down there. Everybody served some point in time on the cleanup operations there. Then we would do also--.

NP: Now, how did that get so grungy?

HD: Just over the course of the year--.

NP: Were there belts running through?

HD: No, it was just the residuals from the cyclones were blowing out onto the roof, except there was no roof there it was a cavity because it was between the two houses—like between the A and B. So, it just it was a catchment point. It had no place to go. Anything that was blowing around the roof, anything that was either blowing directly in there or anything that got blown off another part of the terminal, would all end up in there. That was just a big catchment point. They should have actually had it roofed or something.

But in any case, every year it was a ritual, right, for years and years prior to. Once they reverted to the other cyclones, of course, that issue didn't exist anymore. I mean the manpower requirements, or the manperson requirements, were reduced substantively because there wasn't the amount of cleanup to do anymore. If you didn't have to do the roofs—and there's a number of roofs and different tiers in the grain elevator—well then of course the requirement for the manpower, so a lot of work went by-the-by because of that.

But in any case, we started outside, and then we were part of the extra gang or cleanup crew. Then we worked in the car shed. Then we'd also do car unloading and loading. I don't think it was the first year, I think it was the second year, but I remember Richard McFarlane—who actually at one point held the general chairman's position for the grain handlers—they used to put flags up at the front of the train. So, if a train was coming in to push in, or pull out, empties, they couldn't get by the flag. So, I guess the flag wasn't placed properly, and so there was this string event. You'd do four cars, kick them out, do the next four, and they were all sort of attached. Once you got to 16, I think, the track was full—either 12 or 16, likely 16 because it was boxcars—track was full, you'd phone the railway up, and they'd pull the empties and put in loads.

So, he knew what was happening. We didn't, me and this other young fellow. So, a car coupled and then we were inside sweeping the augers. The augers were basically straight-in, they weren't articulated into the corner at this stage, and we were just doing the final sweep to get the stuff out of the car. He could feel that the cars had been coupled by the train. The flag either got knocked down or wasn't put up properly. So, then the car—of course, you could feel them now of course, after the fact or years later, I would understand this, but not at the time—when the cars coupled and the engine started to pull out, well those auger-mobiles that were in there that we were in front, of course, got pulled out. We would have broke our legs at the very worst—I mean the very best—or who knows what would have happened. We maybe would have potentially got killed there. We could have got squashed. If the railway's pulling out, you can imagine the type of force that's there. If you got in between a pinch-point, who knows, you could get crushed.

But in any case, Richard was a fairly big man, probably around 6'6". But anyway, he took two of us and he grabbed us by the scruff of the necks and threw us out of the car—like literally, physically just reacted accordingly. I always remind him. I became fairly good friends, I used to think, we were good friends at one time because I used to be in the system in the office with him. He was the supervisor when I first started for a long period of time.

He used to treat the new guys a little bit sternly, but once we got back the next year, you'd earned your stripes, so he was a lot different type of character. But I often thank him or remind him, right, that--. Because I actually took him in an election, actually beat him out for the head position in the union. It's just something that happens, right? It wasn't that he was a person who wasn't

doing his job. It just these things evolve, and I was an activist, and this is how it works. In order to progress, there's elections, there's a democratic process. And I upset him, actually, in the election. But in any case, he at least saved me some harm, which I always appreciated. You get to know the dangers of the car shed.

One other story I'll tell you is—well I mean there's so many, right, I'm trying to keep it organized—we were coming back, and they were pulling the pull-back cable. There was a set of cables. How you would move cars in those days, you'd hook a large wire-rope cable to the car, and then you'd move the cars along, and you'd drop it off. The railway would come in and pull the empties, push loads. They would have brakes on the cars. But when you would move the big cable back—it had to be moved back to the start point so you could pull the cars up again— there was a smaller wire-rope cable. One was probably like a two-inch cable. One was maybe a half-inch cable or less.

[0:45:30]

I remember they're pulling back on the cable, and it wasn't an automated system. It was actually a clutch-driven system. You had big handles, about four. Really, the handles were probably about 12 feet long because they went into the basement, but you would engage the clutches and move the wire ropes back and forth. So anyhow, if you didn't do it properly and you tried to do it a little too quickly, and the wire-rope snapped. The cable would snap up off the ground. The way you're supposed to do it, you just drag it slow, engage your clutch slow, and it would just go with no hazard. But if you got a little bit too ambitious or anxious, you'd basically engage it too quickly. What would happen is that this cable would go up.

Well, it was just before lunch and people were walking down the middle of the track at Pool 4, and the person is doing the pull-back with the cable there, and the then the cable came off the hook. Next thing you know, there's--. The smaller hook was probably about a foot long, and then there was an apparatus that it tied onto. The wire-rope was about a foot long. So, it was quite a projectile. I remember this old fellow, older man, walking up the tracks there, and incoming, he didn't see what hit him. They had just sort of introduced the hardhats not that far before that, and some of those people they didn't wear the hardhats. But this day, he had his hardhat on and that hit him broadside in the head, and he went several somersaults in the air backwards. Anyhow, if he wouldn't have had the hardhat on, I'm sure it would have took his head off. But we never forget that. And I have lots of other wire-rope stories over the years, but, I mean, that was the worst one that I actually saw.

This fellow who was tough as nails, an immigrant. I just can't remember his name. I know his name. I just can't remember it at the moment--. I also always remember he'd always have a mickey with him. When we'd finish sweeping out the car, we'd have a little swig. I didn't drink at work. I didn't really believe in work; he'd kind of force you into it. But anyhow, he'd have a little nip in the course of the day there.

But anyhow, he'd got up and they took him to the hospital. He got checked out, and he was back to work that afternoon. He was probably back to work--. Whatever time he spent in the emergency, he was back to work before the next coffee break, right? His life was probably, he had a lot more hardships than getting hit by a flying projectile, almost decapacitating him. But that was something. But anyhow, we then went from the car shed and then you'd go upstairs.

NP: Can I just ask a couple of questions before you move on from this story? I think Maurice at Western Grain still has that kind of--.

HD: Yeah, cable system?

NP: Cable system. Whether they use it or not, I'm not sure.

HD: A lot of them use engines, small engines, now to do it because it is sort of hazardous. It's kind of an archaic way of doing it, but this is how it was all done before they had the engines.

NP: And you talked about the auger.

HD: Auger-mobiles is what they called it.

NP: Auger-mobiles. So, how would they be compared to, I think, again at Western 10, they have the little bobcats?

HD: Yeah, bobcats are different. Bobcats, they used to use those at M House as well. They're really like a miniature tractor, if you want to put it that way, with a frontend scoop on it. You're really mechanically removing the product from the cars with the bobcats. Where this auger-mobile was a long probably—I'm not sure what the depth of a boxcar is—but these were probably about 25 feet long. They would reach into the boxcar, and they were on a rail. So, then you'd basically sit on the track and then you'd fire them up, and then you'd basically drive them into the car. Then it would be on the rail, except there was an end point on the rail, and then you had these actuating points. So, you'd come in initially, just auger out the front and then just, as the car started to empty, you just swing the auger-mobile around. So again, there was this point that would actuate that.

NP: Are there any still on the waterfront? Any more just sitting there just sort of--?

HD: No, no. In fact, I don't even recall--. I think that was the only place on the waterfront that probably had those. There probably might have been others, but that was the only ones that I knew of.

NP: And they were gone by the time they closed down Pool 4?

HD: Yeah, yeah, because it was all the boxcars went the way of the dinosaur. They were all tankers thereafter. So, they took all the apparatus out of there. If they did have any boxcars in this transition period, they'd just ship them over to 4B. They still had the dumpers over there, so.

NP: So, the personnel dumping the cars and working that area, what--?

[0:50:12]

HD: It was probably crews of about 16. There was probably four per car. They were actually quite quick. You could actually auger-mobile a car faster, I think, than you could dump a car. They were very quick. The operators used to pride themselves in trying to beat each other, right? Because of course, you broke into each side. The faster you were, the more the other person had left in the backside, right? So, they had this little gamesmanship, these races. They were all young men as well, but they were probably in their mid-twenties. We were in our late teens.

But they have a crew of say 16. You'd have a hook man, the winchman, the hook man that would hook the cars. You'd have a couple brake persons that would jump on the back of the cars and when the cars ran out, we tied on the brakes. Then you'd have your hoppers on each door, you'd have to have somebody to open the door on each side. So they had four spots, eight people that were the helpers, then you'd have four auger-mobile men, I guess, because the auger-mobiles could actually reach two—the tracks would go down and they could do two cars on each, I believe. So, you had eight, twelve, fourteen, sixteen, and then a couple of samplers—probably as many as twenty in that department at the time, right.

NP: And would they be kept busy as long as cars were there?

HD: Yeah.

NP: So, it wasn't they were standing around sort of watching the other guy work?

HD: No, it was steady work. It was steady work. They actually had to shut down the unloading to break for lunch. Lunch time was lunch time. In those days when I first started it was 8:00 to 5:00, right? So, it was an hour off for lunch. Basically, by about--. They had to run the cars up, so the cars had to run up by 12:00. You'd probably have your cars unloaded by, say, 20 to, and it would take them 10 or 15 minutes to elevate the cars. So, you couldn't break another car open because it wouldn't be elevated before lunch. So, when they went to continuous operation, especially with the hoppers, when they became apparent, well then of course you didn't have all this downtime, right? It really made no sense. You really had so much inefficiency, and then you're working three hours at night. They probably could have done away with three hours a night by just utilizing, logistically, the capacity that they had within the system itself, if somebody would have took a good look at it.

NP: But it was always done that way, and it continued to be done that way.

HD: Yeah. And then Saturday unloading, not so much Sunday. The odd time you'd do a Sunday, but not usually. Usually, it was unloading six days a week, three nights a week—three or four nights a week—because different people would get their hours in. If there was cars, you'd always be working.

NP: Did people stay at that job, or did they always look to be moving inside?

HD: No, there was some people that were just designated the car shed, the old gentlemen. I can tell you [inaudible] a different fellow's name, but in any case, those people liked where they were. They liked being sort of outside, although it was still dusty in there. So, there were some people that were posted in the car shed and that's where they chose to work and that's where they were at. I would say about half the crew was like that, and the other half was basically just newbies or transitionals—like myself—or people that, when they would take a shift off, we'd have to go work in the car shed because we couldn't hold the job inside.

And of course, because of the difference of pay, there was an incentive to go inside. A dollar an hour was quite a bit then, right? I mean, that's $2,000 a year. Your average wage is $10,000 or less. It is big. Not that we'd work year-round. We didn't get 2,000 hours in. For the time you were working inside—and if you worked a Saturday, it's $1.50 more an hour—it was a good part of your income. So it made sense to go inside. The work was a little bit, arguably, easier. I'm not sure that there was really that much difference. But the car shed we were busier, which had it's benefit as well versus the other place, you're monitoring stuff, watching over machines, maybe not quite as physical work.

NP: I'll ask you this question now, but it might come back to Pool 4, did you move on from Pool 4 within the--?

HD: Yeah, pretty much I worked at most of the big Saskatchewan Wheat Pool terminals. So, we used to go to Pool 8 quite often. That was sort of our stop-off, our layoff, for a period of time. That's just how the shifts went. If they took the shifts off in a certain manner, we would get called back and laid off in that particular site. I worked at Pool 15 for a few years off and on. I worked at Pool 6—it became my new home-house. I worked there for a couple of years. I worked at Pool 7 for a while. So, I had exposure at all of the various facilities. I mean I knew of the smaller houses, but they weren't really operational at the time. They were taking them out of the system basically. We didn't really get a chance to go to those facilities.

[0:55:08]

NP: Some of the elevators we've heard of, they've had different groups of people working on different floors. Was that what it was like at Saskatchewan Pool 4 or at any? Or different ethnic groups, essentially, gravitated to different areas?

HD: Yeah. In our elevator in those days, it had started to get real busy, so they had hired a real melting pot of individuals. So, I didn't see the polarization like you saw. My neighbour was a Scottish gentleman, and he used to be a dues collector for the union at one time. He used to go around person-to-person, so they found him out and they wouldn't recall him. He was laid off. He ended up becoming a jail guard after.

But I know at UGG [United Grain Growers] there was some Scottish heritage there. So you saw this type of polarization with various ethnic groups, right? You saw some Italian foreman and different groups. But we went up into the scale floor, for example, to be quite frank it was mostly—I mean a few people that had sort of worked their way up that had good English skills that had been there for a while—but for the most part I would say that it was sort of a white, Caucasian world. The Italians sort of stuck to the car shed. They stuck to their groups, sort of worked in certain areas.

NP: So, the Anglo-Saxon--?

HD: Yeah. It wasn't always like that because some of the individuals came up. And of course, the younger crew wasn't affected by it. And of course, you're posting or moving, or there were job vacancies in different ethnic groups. But for the old school people that came over as true immigrants, which language barriers and these types of things, they weren't in a position to be able to work in a scale floor where there's a lot of communications going on a whatnot. For those that could communicate, of course, could do the job well. But there was all different ethnic groups up there, and for those people that had the communication skills, there was no problem with those people working, and they did work up there. But the core groups that had—they're functionally illiterate, I call it—those particular challenges, well of course, they wouldn't even have an interest in going up there.

For example, when I first started in ’75, we went up to the scale floor and onto that crew. There was about a dozen people on day shift. There was a shipper, a receiver, receiver helper, there’d be a cleaner man, a cleaner man helper, then there were spout movers, cross-spout man, head-spout movers—a whole bunch of positions there. But that was a lot less than what they had when they used to do it--. And they had a centralized scale there. So, they had an office up there, where it was much different than when they had the old mechanical scales. The department was much more condensed than what it was, but that had already occurred by the time I got there.

But we went on to work on the distributing floors. That’s where the machines were. So, they have, they call them money makers, which is just a recovery machine of what would be by-products. Nothing went to waste in the grain business, really--next to nothing. Then they have Superiors, flax machines, specialty machines that we would deal with. So, in that department, that was clearly, I remember we had it was Polish, German. We actually had a guy that was a German. My understanding of the story, although I didn’t talk to him a whole lot about this, but he was a German guard at a prisoner-of-war camp. Then we had two Polish fellows working. The first I went up there, there was two Polish gentlemen—one had a real language barrier, one had a slight language barrier. But those individuals were interned, I think. One of them was in a concentration camp for some period of time. So, I mean, need I say more? You had to get along. But those individuals, rarely did I ever see them speak. The two Polish fellows would speak to one another, but they didn’t want anything to do with the German fellow for obvious reasons, right?

There were those types of dynamics. After we integrated in, we knew nothing of this. We weren’t aware of these types of things, so I got along with everybody. But some of them did have some pretty serious language difficulties, right, barriers. So, they could do their job if you showed them, but as far as being able to train others and these types of things, they could tell you what they knew, but it depends on what their grasp of English was, right?

But I’d befriended some of those individuals as well, so it was--. At first, I was kind of ignorant to the whole world, but as I became more involved in the union and then representing people--. I mean, I had my prejudices and stupid thoughts and not the amount of mutual respect you should have for people in some cases—I just didn’t know any better. But as I grew older, I did become, and some of these people became, good friends with me.

I remember when I asked them to--. If you befriended one of those individuals, you had friend. You had somebody you could rely on for life. Because I could see why if you were in the trenches with somebody like that, that’s the type of person you’d want to be there with. I remember I used to notify people my age, “You know, there’s an election happening tonight. Could you come out and support me for this?” That individual, nowhere to be seen. But the people that were there were the people that asked me to help them or that I befriended or whatever. Those individuals would show up--couldn’t hardly speak English, but he knew enough

what the date was, and he made sure he came there because he thought it was important. And he did it because he was a friend, for nothing else. He had nothing to gain from it. So, interestingly enough how the thing goes.

[1:00:37]

So, I'm kind of sensitive when people what they say about our changing culture in this community, for example. There's a lot of derogatory remarks. But I think we forget the lessons of life. Like I said, there's a lot more to people. Tom Hamilton has a good saying like that, "Everybody has a story." And everywhere we go, Tom speaks to individuals and talks to them about where they've been and what they've done. Whether that be somebody on a street corner that looks like they're destitute, has had a previous life somewhere, or maybe has had some hardship, or mental health issues, or whatever else the case is—but everybody around you. You know where you find out about a lot of stuff is eulogies, right? You go listen to somebody if you happen to attend a funeral, and then you listen to what the person was all about. I knew nothing about that person. Nothing.

NP: Now, what was your career path then?

HD: Career path in the grain business is there really isn't one. I mean, you're polarized if you were a scale-floor helper then there was bidding processes. I don't remember actually posting for the job, but we were assigned to the job. I think they came out with a posting procedure, and this is how things were evolving at the time. It was becoming more, I guess, more professional in the way we were doing it. So, they created job structures because they had a lot of shifts too—more so than they had previous. They started posting jobs or assigning people to various job categories. We became scale floor helpers, so that's where we had a right to go and work to because that's where our seniority would hold. Somebody on the cleaner deck would go work in the cleaner deck, somebody in the car shed would be in the car shed, somebody in the cleanup or sweeper crew, you were posted in these particular positions.

So, that was sort of how our career path was. We happened to be working in that department, well that's where we stayed. If you wanted to get out of that department, you'd have to wait for a job posting to come up after. So, of course, this is when they started posting for millwright apprentices. We tried to get into that department, but just missed it by a whisker. So, then you just stayed in the scale floor, and as jobs became available within that department you usually bid on them. There was a lot more hierarchy structure in those days, and actually had status. In the department head in a department like the scale floor, that person was the head shipper man. That person was the department head and operated it like a military platoon if you put it that way. It mattered that you were on the scale floor, and there were certain standards that you're supposed to uphold, and they would hold you to it. They'd make sure you're doing your job in a responsible type manner, and if you didn't, somebody's going to tell you about it. A little bit different than you see nowadays.

But they lost that after time because the more technology and the more they downsized, there was less and less of that over the years. There was sort of this hierarchy structure, stratified structure, within the grain departments, and you really did feel like you were on some kind of a career path. But over time, that assimilated, and you bring your lunch pail with you, and you might work three or four different departments in the course of a night. So, if there's no work here, they moved you over there. It just got more and more of that. They were utilizing the workforces in a much more different and efficient manner. The grain industry had started to slow down a bit, so they didn't have enough cars to keep you doing one job for the whole shift. You'd start shipping and be at receiving, or you'd start receiving and perhaps be shipping by the end of the night. So, you lost some of your identity.

NP: And the cohesiveness of a team.

HD: Yeah, exactly. And when you look at those days, the age demographics, although there wasn't--. The spreads seem so dramatic now—or then—but really, they weren't. It's like, "Oh." Once as I defined old now it's like, "Yeah, I was talking to an older person, and I'm only four years older than them now." That's how it sort of goes. But in those days, it was like somebody was a--. You're 17 and somebody's 24, that looks pretty old. If somebody's 35, well, holy smokes, that's older than my dad. So, you grew up in certain pockets, right? And we'd spend six or seven days a week at a facility. You're going to see those people more than you see your own family, so they become sort of your surrogate family, if you want to call it that.

That's what was so hard about the downsizing, especially when I was in the office for part of it. I saw the initial side of it, the people that worked there before. First it was one-year, two-year, four-year, five-year, six-year, seven-year--.

[1:05:05]

NP: I'm just going to stop you there on that, because I really want to spend a lot of time on that downsizing piece. What time is it there Monika?

MM: 1:05.

NP: Why don't we take a bit of a break?

[…]

MM: Go on from there now? All right.

NP: Yep. So, back to your early career. Did you have a favourite job in the elevator?

HD: Strange enough, I always say the best job I ever had was the cross-belt-man job because you work by yourself, and you go and do your thing. But it was also the job with the least amount of responsibility, right?

NP: I've not heard of a cross-belt man.

HD: Well, basically what it was was they moved product down to the annex, either clean or dirty grain, to try and ship it. The way an elevator would work, logistically, you'd have say 100 bins in a row. You have the A bins, star bins, and round bins, so you'd have all these bins. So, if you had grain that was on 1 Belt, you could reach so many of those bins. So, let's say there's five belts, you could reach 20 bins with 1 Belt—this is a pretty simplistic example—20 bins with the next one. What this would do, if you had a product that was on a one-receiver that could reach—the spout could only reach—the 1 Belt, well what you could do is you could then dump it down on the cross-belt the floor below, and then you could divert it over to say Belt 3. It would just allow you to divert the grain over to another location. So, you could move a product that you were storing on 3 Belt that you weren't storing on 1 Belt. You'd move it over.

So, it was just another mechanism in the transport of the system that allowed you to sort of divert the grain. It was just basically an annex belt, really when you get down to it, except it was just a short cross-belt they would call it. Then you just had a tripper on it, but the same principle as the annex. You just had a loader, then a spout would load the grain onto it, and it would just divert the grain down a belt, and then onto a chute into wherever you wanted it to go.

NP: Did you make your own decisions on that? Or did somebody tell you, "Okay, something's coming up you've got to divert it"?

HD: Yeah, they would give you a set they would call it. Then you'd phone back up with the set. So, you'd either have some kind of a squawk-box or whatever. Pretty much you knew each set of cars. You'd look and see what was coming in—if you cared to do so—and you could look at the board to see how much space there was on the board so on and so forth, and you could have an idea about it. So, sometimes you do nothing, do a little cleanup down there, or do what you do. Or in other times it was very busy during the course of the whole day.

NP: So, you were working then on, would that be, the bin floor?

HD: Yeah, that would have been on the bin floor.

NP: They would be open bins at that time?

HD: No, there was no open bins at Pool 4. At least no open bins at the time that I worked there.

NP: At other places there were?

HD: None of the Sask Wheat Pools were open, that I knew of, I mean, except Maurice's unit there. But the only other place that I knew of that had open bins was UGG M, McCabe's elevator. But other than that, I wasn't aware of any place else at the time that had open bins.

NP: Now, one of the things--. You and I and a few other people took a tour of Pool 3 and saw the sign that said something about "No riding on the belts". Tell us about that. [Laughing]

HD: Oh, right. Well, in actual fact, I believe there was a fatality. I don't have too much privy to it, but I think at Cargill there was somebody that stepped on a belt on a night shift and them going into the tail pulley**.** I believe there was either a serious injury, I think it was a fatality there. But belts, you get lulled into a false sense of security. So, I mean if he took a shortcut or if he had tilted back a few in the course of the evening which happened from time to time—not for myself, I didn't believe in drinking on the job. I can honestly say that—I can't say I never had a drink on the job—but it wasn't something that I frowned on. Mostly because you'd end up working with these, basically, people that were impaired and it was dangerous, or you'd end up doing all their work. So, I didn't really believe in it. There was a lot of drugs on the job in those days as well. There was a lot of marijuana and stuff as well. Again, I didn't partake in that type of stuff because it wasn't my lifestyle, and I didn't believe in that.

But in any case, the belts, if they're moving or they're stopped, if you're not of your full faculties or you're not paying absolute attention and you decided to take the shortcut, you could easily end up stepping on a belt that was moving. Everybody's had that experience or a near miss at some point because a lot of times you're just taking a shortcut, more or less. In some cases you might be walking on the belt just because, and the belt wasn't running, and somebody goes to start it. Well of course, now you're on the belt and the belt gets started. Well, these could be life-defining feats, right? Like a circus show.

[1:10:20]

MM: It's called belt surfing.

HD: Yeah. I don't know a lot of--. I've never seen anybody do belt surfing other than in an involuntary manner. [Laughing] I do remember one time, they sent us up and it was the day before Christmas—I think it was Christmas Eve actually, if I recollect correctly. I was going to say the fellow's name, but I'm not going to now. Anyhow, we had to go up, and there was a spill up in the annex, up where they would load the boat—the gallery they called it. So, we had to go get--. It was already weighed. It came off the scales from 4B. So, it had to go on the boat, like he had to get it back on that belt because it was a direct line. There was no other way to weigh it, and then the boat would be short. And, of course, they keep track of all of this.

So, we were on the belt. They had a gang of us up there. So, of course, in those days, the day before Christmas—Christmas Eve—there was a lot--. People were more worried about having a bit of a feast and tilting a few back than really doing what you were doing. If it was two shifts on, they'd double up the shifts. So, the 4:00 to 12:00 would come in on days. It was a little bit of a perk or whatever you want to call it. I always remember we shovelled this up, so we got the spill nearly completed. Somebody that had partaken in a few had a five-gallon pail that he shovelled on the belt with. So, he dropped the pail on the belt, and it got stuck on a crossover, and, of course, it was just like somebody put a block on the belt, and there was twice as much grain as what we started. We shovelled it all back on and he was helping us again, and lo and behold, he drops the pail on the belt again. So, finally we sent him away, right? Nobody's expecting to really have to work hard on that particular day, other than you had to do the basics, right? [Laughing] It was quite comical.

NP: So, the people who did have a drinking problem—and this is not the first time we've heard of the issue of drinking on the job—did people cover for them all the time?

HD: There was a culture that the drinking wasn't non-acceptable. There wasn't a blatant thing where people could walk around drunk, but I mean it wasn't necessarily frowned upon either. But it wasn't like everybody had a mickey in their pocket. Some places where it was more convenient or conducive like on the scale floors potentially, sometimes in the car sheds, cleaner decks—where there was more potential downtime, where you're monitoring versus actually physically engaged in doing something—there's more opportunity. So, if you're going to spend seven days a week and three nights a week in a grain elevator, well part of your social life is going to intertwine with that. So, from time to time on a Friday night if somebody bought a case of beer in it was because we spent all week there, it wasn't such a bad thing. If we had a couple of beers and they ordered pizza or we had some kind of a cook-up, that was the type of drinking in some cases that went on there. And that really wasn't as problematic; everybody was sensible about it and you didn't have to cover for that individual.

But when they have sort of a hardcore culture, what you'd start to see is that people start to develop problems and dependence. So, if someone is working in an annex by themselves all the time then started having a beer with their supper, and then ended up bringing a mickey in, or would go after work and drink or drink before work, they were already probably predisposed or susceptible to having alcoholic or drug problems. Then, of course, if you have a culture that sort of, not condones it, but doesn't frown upon it, then it's acceptable.

So, in moderation of course it's not a problem. If you deal with it sensibly, it's not such a bad thing and it can be controlled and monitored. But where you cross the line, this is where we ended up with a lot of people that develop problems and then became chronic alcoholics. And a lot of those people lost their jobs at the end of the day. Really when you look at it, in some cases they tried to help themselves and failed, in some cases they just wouldn't try to help themselves. But the problems all started from the culture and I don't think the companies really took enough responsibility to really address that particular issue at the sites.

And once they put an end to it--. The reason why it came to an end because there was a fatality, and there was an inquest, and this is where it became highlighted at Pool 7. An individual was at work in an intoxicated state. They called a taxi, sent him home. He forced the taxi driver to come back. Walking down the dock there was an egress in the dock, he didn't recognize it, and fell in and drowned. Then of course there was a bunch of lawsuits and an inquest, and what became known is that there was a drinking culture. That was Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and basically that was the end of it. There was a zero tolerance after that. That's where it was. Then you're left with the aftermath. So it drove the drinking underground more or less. Those that were chronic alcoholics were still chronic alcoholics. Over time, like I said, there was a lot of good men that lost their livelihood or probably destroyed their lives based on a culture of drinking.

[1:15:25]

NP: The situations like that—the accident that occurred because of the fellow's alcohol consumption and other things like deaths due to--. Like Ron's great uncle was hit in the head by flying rope or something and died. Where can somebody access those?

HD: Well, I don't know. I have never looked in the archives for the inquest information, but I know this is when we started an employee assistance program arose from that. Now they have an outsource it. But at that time, we actually did an internal, and it was quite a to-do, and it was one of the recommendations of the inquest inquiry. I'm not sure if we have a copy. But it would be searchable. I'm just not sure where.

NP: Who conducts the inquiry, the inquest? Is it the labour organization?

HD: It would be the coroner. The coroner, chief coroner would do it.

NP: Oh, okay.

HD: We had another inquest too when we had a fatality at Richardson's as well, but that wasn't related to drinking. That was the one when the car brakes were faulty, and it was a runaway car, and the person jumped on the back of it. One of the brake pins was loose—in a number of the cars the brake pins were loose—and he wasn't able to stop it. It hit the engine, bounced back, he fell off, and was ran over and decapacitated.

NP: Decapitated?

HD: Decapitated, yeah.

NP: Oh my god.

HD: He was runover on his chest, so he wasn't--.

NP: And when was this?

HD: Probably mid '80s.

NP: Pool 4—speaking of runaway cars not as serious as the one you're talking about—was that one of the houses where you could actually push the cars off into the water?

HD: Yeah.

NP: Did that ever happen?

HD: It happened at Pool 4 a couple of times to some degree. They put some blocks up at the end and piles of gravel, sort of out of old railway ties. You end up hitting that before you pushed up. But most times that would happen from the railway miscounting as they were pushing cars in. A few times I heard there was boxcars floating in the slips and whatnot over the years. I don't think I was ever at the site exactly at the time when that happened, but I was at the site several times when they went past the blockades and derailed some cars at the back. Or I was working day shift at Richardson's. We were running the engines at that time, and

somebody went by before the blocks were there and put a couple of cars—floated a couple of cars—right off the end. It was just a matter of just lose your focus, and they don't have the safeguards there, then you can end up with a particular type of circumstance, right?

But I mean you try not to let that happen. But I mean you hear numerous, multiple stories you hear about cars being pushed beyond the limits of the tracks. And again, if there's no blockade there, it's easy if you've got a round wheel even if there's ground. An engine clearly has enough horsepower to--. And if you're going at a fairly decent speed when cutting cars and whatnot, you can see how this would happen fairly easily.

NP: How's the cost of that covered? Is the person usually fired?

HD: Well, it depends on what the circumstances are. I never heard of anybody actually getting fired for that, but again a lot of times it was more railway than grain elevator workers. So, railways have demerit systems. I'm not sure whether somebody got fired. Certainly, they got demerited for it, and likely it's their responsibility. They made the mistake, so they were held to account for it. I'm not sure what the severity of the penalty would be. Over time, today, that would probably be a firing offence. Back then it probably wasn't a firing offence, but it was still a serious offence.

Demerit system is a merit/demerit system, they would call it the brown system. Instead of having a progressive set of disciplines where you have a three or four-step disciplinary process, you have a different type of process where they award merits and demerit points. So, if you have some kind of a minor infraction, you would get some type of a number of demerits, say 10 demerits. If you had some more of a serious incident, you might get 25. If you had a very serious incident, you could get 60. If you had 60 demerits, you would get terminated. If you had the same offence numerous times, the degree of penalty would double. And then if you had no incidences for a period of time, you would get some merit points back. So, it was just a different type of disciplinary system. In the grain elevators, we mostly had what I call traditional four-step disciplinary procedure. But again, I don't recall that anybody actually being fired because of that.

[1:20:15]

NP: What was the four-step system?

HD: It would probably like a verbal, sort of a written verbal--. Written, short suspension, long suspension, and then termination-type thing. So, there was a number of steps. Like there's a four-step system with sub-steps within the steps—again, the severity depending on what you did. You could get a sanction at a higher level if the significance of the infraction was more apparent. If it

was an absenteeism or you were late a few times, you'd get rapped on the knuckles. If you did something that was extensively caused a lot of equipment damage or were just careless, then of course they're going to hold you accountable to a higher degree.

NP: Did you always work at Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, or did you move around at all?

HD: No, I always just worked for Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, but at numerous facilities. But always at Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.

NP: And what was your favourite elevator, Saskatchewan elevator, to work at?

HD: I mean the home court was always Pool 4, so Pool 4 was home to me. Although when it got right down to it, after we started to get laid off for significant periods, the whole attitude towards the grain industry--. I was working trying to find other jobs intermittently to fill in my layoff periods. When I went to work at the other facilities, I didn't mind it either. After a while I didn't miss Pool 4 like I did before. But a lot of it, too, was because, like I said, that's where my friends were at—your co-workers or friends. You had a comfort level. It's like going back home.

NP: So, there wasn't anything special about the other elevators that would have made them, "Oh, I don't want to work there. It's horrible"? Not from the people perspective, but from a physical perspective?

HD: No. I mean for the most part, they're all the same but different. Some of them had different degrees of technology, some of them had different areas. Pool 8, for example, down in the basements there was always more water in the tunnels there. Where they had cement floors there, they had sort of a wooden--. There was always water in the annex areas, so they had more wooden planks across it. So, there was more mess, it stunk worse. You had a spill there, you're dealing with a different type of infrastructure. You didn't have those types of problems at the other facilities.

NP: That would've been one of the oldest?

HD: Yeah. And it was right on the water basically, so the water table was different than what it was, a little bit different movement, than at the other facilities, right?

NP: Shipping. What did you learn about shipping grain from working in an elevator?

HD: One thing I learned about it is make sure that your hoppers are closed before you start bringing up special bin barley to load into a special bin barley boat because you're going to get supreme trouble for doing that. [Laughs] But for the most part--.

NP: Tell us how--?

HD: Well, one time I was responsible for--. I guess I was running the cleaners upstairs, and I was responsible for moving the grain out of the shipping receiver's part—locking on the spouts. Anyhow, I think at that time I ended up locking the spouts on prior to--. I guess there was still grain in the hoppers, and I didn't realize it. I hadn't dropped it down and cleared the scales. And of course, special bin barley was just as it's said in its name: special bin barley. It was like a specialty product. There wasn't a lot of it around. If you screw up some wheat, they can always blend it off, but with the barley, I mean, that's specialized. If you made a mistake there it was pretty horrific and cost them a lot of money. In any case, we didn't release, but they found the mix. So, we heard about it. Let's put it that way.

NP: So, what would they do? They would just have to run it through again?

HD: They'd have to run it back and separate it. Of course, when the boat was there, there was only so much product in the plant. So, they wanted to ship all the product that they had. Of course, this delayed things if the boat runs short, these types of things. It's all problematic. I remember another time we had peas—before peas were sort of handled in the Lakehead—and for whatever reason a boxcar was unloaded. I was at 4B at the time. They had this big discussion about having "Not fit for human consumption." We're going to bring this into the terminal, and it needs to be reloaded and put back out to the Prairies. It needs to be disposed of, wherever they were going to do that.

So anyway, you could tie the cleaner spouts onto the receiver spouts. It basically just gave you a bigger garner where you could sort of store the grain. So, you could store almost a whole car and ship it to the annex. Well, we didn't realize we had that tied off. It wasn't me, but it was another fellow.

NP: What do you mean tied--? Tied off with these peas?

HD: Well, what it was was that when you had a flopper--. If you wanted to move your cleaner onto a receiver, they had like a flop valve so you just divert the grain from one spout to the other and it would collect in there. You had a small garner on one, so you'd have to get the sets to the annex say every hour. You could run it to a receiver bin if it wasn't being used otherwise. You could maybe run into that for four hours and then move it all at once. So, just logistically, it was just the convenience. But in any case, we had forgotten that we had tied that cleaner off that spout over. Actually, what you do is you go flop the valve, and there was actually a rope and you put one hooked to the other and actually physically flop the valve. So, we had a precise measure "Do not fit for human consumption." Of course, then somebody started up the cleaner and we forgot that we had it on the flopper. So

then, the 48-tonne car of "Unfit for human consumption" or whatever it was, became more than a car of grain because we were diverting the clean product.

NP: You mixed it with other--?

[1:25:52]

HD: And now what do you do? Anything can happen on a Saturday night, as they say. That's just one of many types of--. As they used to say, you get to write a report. They'd be giving you heck about it, and then you'd write on there, "We blended two grains together." And they'd tell us, "We blended. You mixed it." You know what I mean? So, you'd have a sanction. As long as you didn't do it too many times in a row, you didn't get too much doodoo about it. But those were the senior operators that made those kinds of mistakes, so it was infrequent. But the odd time, like I said, anything can happen on a Saturday night, as they say. Not that it was Saturday night, but it's an expression, anything can happen.

NP: It's an expression. [Laughing]

HD: Some things always happened. If something could happen at the grain elevator, it's happened, by way, shape, or form. Spills in the cross-belt, for example, where I used to work. I mean, there were some flop valves, and you didn't understand how the mechanisms work, and they had an overflow. So, nobody would tell you this, or if they did you didn't really understand the system. I didn't understand it until years later. So, you'd go sound a bin and you've got room for the whole car, so why would you go sound the bin again? Then somebody would flop the--. They have an overflow, they've got two cars coming up. Anyhow, it was a system where they could double up the amount of volume that was going into the car. So, of course, you'd be sitting in the shack looking out the window, next thing you know the grain plugs and you can just hear *Phwwt!* Next thing you have this huge spill.

And of course, if you decided that you had to go downstairs for some reason in between your set and the set was ready, and you thought you had plenty of room, and then you came back up. I mean, you could put the whole car on the floor, right? The annex was the same way. The annex especially, right, because you might run to a bin all night in the annex. If that bin plugged and the belt--. The belt would normally plug them back up and then kick out. They had interlocks, but at one time they didn't have interlocks, so you'd just keep feeding grain in. If there was enough room around where the bin would keep running, then it would sort of fill in the whole area around it.

So, big spills, like numerous boxcars. I've heard as big as nine or ten. We were upstairs where the cross-belt was. The annex belts kind of all ran this way, there was some cross-belts. But on the cross-belts downstairs, they had a door at the end, so if you had a spill there and started catching the tail pull, it would be spitting out. So, a lot of the time if you didn't know you were having a spill, the cleaner deck could hear the grain pounding off the--. They could see it coming out of the back door. "You better check the cross-belt because you've got grain coming out the door from upstairs here." And of course, you'd get newbies on there, and that would be the junior job in that department. So, sometimes I just stayed on there and trained someone that's new because for somebody just coming off the street who had no clue, we learned it over time. If there was something that could go wrong, it did go wrong, and then you'd end up with a big spill or a big mess after the fact. But anyhow.

NP: So, do it yourself?

HD: Nature of the beast.

NP: What did you learn about Canada's grain trade from--?

HD: Well, to be quite frank, some people used to say like you'd see all these different names and different shunts upstairs. Some people--.

NP: What are shunts?

HD: Shunts would be like--. If you've ever been into an old store like at Eaton's or Chapple's where they had an air system, where you'd move and--. Anyhow, so what a shunt was was it was a paper where they'd write down the cars that were on track. You'd have a number of shunts, and then you'd basically identify the cars because they all had to be documented because that's how the farmers got paid. And the government staff was sort of working in hand with you. They would oversight everything that was being done. So, shunts would come up and that would be the next 12 cars. There's a push and someone would go physically get the numbers. Now they have car readers and stuff, but in those days, you go out and write down the numbers, see what's on track, and reconcile them with what the railway has given you as what's supposed to be pushed in there. Then you basically write out the shunt, send them upstairs, and then they know what's coming and then you sort of do the grain distribution. So, it was just sort of part of a mass of information, logistical information, that you'd use to do the distribution and sort of accounting of the product that was coming into the site.

So, the shunts would identity the type of car from some location, for some reason, they'd write it down. Some people had a map upstairs, so you sort of look at where these things were coming from. But to be quite frank, sometimes they were interested in that

stuff and other times it just became inoculated too, right? It's like, "Oh, yeah, okay." We just kept [inaudible]. But if somebody lived out west or knew somebody out west, or had some connection out there, they'd show you exactly what elevator it was, or they had some connection there. Of course, there was always people like that as well.

[1:30:26]

But to be quite frank, that was a problem with the grain elevators. Especially, you lived in your own worlds if you were on the cleaner decks or scale floors or car sheds, whatever. That's where you lived. A lot of the times you didn't even understand how the rest of the elevator worked. It was all foreign to you. I had no clue until I went down to work those particular areas what they did. In fact, you were kind of in competition. If we had competitions at work or we had boot hockey tournaments they used to run, they'd be floor by floor. They'd have the scale floor against the cleaner decks against the millwrights against the car sheds. Baseball was the same thing. We used to do some intermural stuff at the site. I used to sort of coordinate some of that stuff myself, or I was participating in it at least. So, each elevator was its own world. All these departments, it was like all competitive teams, and all the stuff that went with that—bowling sometimes, whatever.

NP: What about the ships going out? Did anybody even notice where they came from?

HD: Some people--. To be quite frank, I never had as much interest as what I should have with the boats. I don't know why I didn't try to learn more about it, but some were real keeners, and they knew everything about it—when it was built, how it was built. Some people worked at the shipyards and come to work at the elevators, so they worked on that boat, either repairing it or building it. So, some people had a real connection up there. People that worked up on the scale floor, those people knew because the boats would come back on a steady basis, so they had a steady feed of it. But I never really got in sync with the whole shipping industry. It was a pretty big--.

NP: Did you think of where stuff went after you loaded it on? Or, once again, once it was out of your hands--?

HD: Yeah, over time I think we were a little bit aware, but the knowledge that you'll have today versus the knowledge you had then? Not really. I mean I didn't really have an idea. I more had an idea that I give myself credit for, but it's not like somebody came and explained this all to us from start to finish. That's how it was in those days. You just didn't really understand that whole dynamic, and what products was made from it and these types of things. I mean, it's a food product, right? But over time, as we matured of course. Then you became more knowledgeable, did more reading, became more interested, became more involved with the industry. You started to get laid off more. Then you learn more and more about the system.

Part of that's because we were active in the union. I became more aware. You'd get reports of say an elevator explosion somewhere else, and you start to get an idea of where these things were at. You know there was an industry in the West Coast. You sort of knew some parts of it. Of course, eventually, because of my involvement in the union and sitting on the Senior Grain Transportation Committee and these types of things, I had intricate knowledge. I used to be, I wouldn't say an expert, but I was one of those knowledgeable people in the port because I had access to all the companies. It's kind of interesting because when there are all these grain companies in the site, well the only one that's going to transcend all of them was either the railways who were shipping grain into these things or the union because we had members at all these particular facilities.

My job as an assistant to Frank Mazur, predecessor—he served as sort of leader of the Grain Handlers for a long period of time—but I was the assistant, so my job was to go out to the sites and meet with the employees, our members, and bring information to them, or seek information, or do investigations, and all these types of things. So, I was around those elevators from head to toe, every inch of them. My job sometimes for weeks on end was just to go out to the terminals and talk to people.

NP: I'd like to get into your union activities, but before we do that—and it follows on the comment you just made about the other companies—did you have a sense of the other companies that were operating along the waterfront? Was there a sense of pride from one elevator to the other? Was there one considered sort of the premium company versus--?

HD: There was definitely, I guess, competition, but there was so many people working in the grain trade. Anybody our age knew somebody else that was working in the industry at other plants. Everybody I hung around with worked at different facilities, so we knew somebody that worked at every terminal, basically—not just every company, but probably every terminal. It's just the way it was. You worked in the grain industry, and you were part of something. You just transcended.

Now, sometimes you'd talk about these types of things because some places were, you know, P&H [Parrish & Heimbecker] was a lot more different. They were a smaller facility. Those places were a lot further away, too, like Cargill, some of them had different unloading. So, you'd to take an interest and have an idea about what they were doing at those facilities, so on and so forth, and have some idea of how the waterfront was structured. And again, through the union involvement, we'd have meetings where there would be people--. If you go to a meeting and everybody's reporting, the stewards are there from each of those particular facilities—again not just the companies, but physically each facility—and they're doing a report status of what's happening at their site, or dealing with grievances from their site, of course, you have a lot more access or input. But even just generally, people just--. The grain industry was something that everybody wore with a badge of honour, I think.

[1:35:45]

NP: So, it wasn't Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was the best company to work for or the worst company to work for?

HD: I didn't sense that, but certainly people had their preferences. But I didn't see it as that type of a real competitive environment, although for some it was. For me it wasn't, and I don't recall people--. There was positives and negatives at each facility, right? So, it just depended what you were doing or how you were doing it or who you associated with.

NP: One last thing—before we leave sort of working in the elevators and move on to where your career eventually took you—the people that you worked for, are there some people that you would like to recognize now as being people that you were really glad that you had a chance to work for and you thought did their work in a very special way?

HD: Well, there was a lot of characters. I can put it that way. There was some people I had more respect for than others. And certainly, you know, as a young person, H.P. Russell was a guy that sort of was a mentor. When we started looking for an electrical apprenticeship, I remember we were doing resumes at 4:00 to 12:00. We had time, so we'd done up a bunch of resumes. I didn't get any job offers, but we applied at the mines. But he helped me write resumes, stuff I knew nothing about. It would have taken me away from the elevators actually, so I mean he was--.

NP: And he was--?

HD: Just a co-worker. He was a military guy that had transcended and finished his career in 20 years in the military and retired, and then got a job at the grain elevator because he was still a relatively young man at the time. So, I got to know him quite well over the years. I had sort of a working lifetime relationship with that individual. Though once I became involved in the union and sort of stepped away and wasn't at the facility anymore, that's one thing I missed was the camaraderie because now when I went there, it was like going to the dentist. Everybody has a problem. If I went there, I was there in an official capacity. We just couldn't talk about the hockey game anymore or just life in general. I didn't have that--. I lost that particular component of that relationship, and it became more a professional, information—it was a different role that I was playing. So, I really lost that fabric of that.

But there was Norm Gibbons was another guy that I sort of looked up to. He was sort of the sergeant major out of the scale floors. There was a ton of people that I worked with, good people. Very few people that I don't respect or wasn't friends with.

NP: Who were the managers at that time? Like who ran the Pool 4?

HD: Well, Lindeman was when I went to Pool 4 initially, and then it was Jimmy Gibbons—Norm's brother—was running it. There was a Ron Gorst. These guys were starting to introduce a new breed of--. They came back with new ideas. They were a lot more into efficiencies and these types of things. This was a transition from old school to new school. They were a bit more harsh. They were a little bit more mean-spirited.

NP: What do you think accounted for that?

HD: Just modernize--. Just people just started to get into sync. It was old school, you did things the old way, and that's the way it was done. These people came on and they were a little more educated, and they had new ideas, and they were trained up in a different way—operations management. They looked at time-and-motion studies, all these types of things, and became relevant to how to make things more efficient. Then they just continued to whittle away. Departments got smaller, and the shifts came off, and technology changed. All these things went hand in hand. It's just an evolution which we should have saw, but for whatever reason we buried out heads in the sand and tried to stick it out 'til the end.

Like I said, there was a lot of people who thought they had a good life, and that all ended, and they had to transition. Some people transitioned and made out way better and really were able to use their skill sets, or learn different things, or take different jobs, and were much better off for it. And more worthwhile, their lives, they had more responsibility, they were able to progress. They did things that they never would have had a chance to do at the grain elevator. They were really wasting away, in a sense, because there was only so far you could go. Nothing wrong with a labourer's work, but there's not a lot of--. When you're a grain elevator worker, there's only so much you can do there.

[1:40:34]

But other people, they never did come out of it. I know people, even today, that lost their jobs and are still in a rut because of it, and that's probably 15 years ago now. Some of them might be in their graves even that never sort of shook themselves out of it.

NP: Would you be able to identify the characteristics of those people who managed to make the best of a bad bargain?

HD: Yeah. Some people transcended quickly. Some people transcended more painfully. Like in my seniority roster group, it was more slowly because we kept hanging around. So, we'd get a few weeks of work a year or maybe a spring or in the fall, and there would be nothing after. So, it was a slow death, where some people just didn't get called back for a year. I mean, those people had to react differently. And then we started industrial adjustments. But it just depended on where you were in that sort of structure, right? About whether it was a slow kill or a long kill. Somebody that stepped away—because you had 15-years service, you got 5

weeks vacation, you've got 12 years of vacation entitlement—you always think their world's going to get--. The glass is half full. And I mean, in those circumstances, it's tough to pull away, especially if you didn't have some other alternative to go to right away.

But it became evident, and it became more harsh, and your jobs were gone. Once people recognized that--. So, it was that and the dependence of people's sophistication, if I can call it that way. Somebody that was better educated, somebody that had continued on—like myself—that had done other courses that are at school. It's still scary. I didn't want to leave the industry—and really, I didn't, when you come right down to it. You looked for other opportunities and you moved on. But some individuals didn't have that transferrable skillset, and it had always sort of just been a labour at the elevator. There's not a big call for--. If you worked as a labourer, you had good work ethics and these types of things—those are transferrable skills—but as far as ABC-type skills you could take somewhere else, well.

A lot of people transitioned. The wood industry picked up around the same time that the grain industry went down, so I know a lot of people around my seniority date—which is the '75, '76, '77, '78—they ended up getting hired on at the Buchanan mills. As much as a lot of criticism about Buchanan, he still was a big catalyst, a big employer for the region. I mean, maybe his ethics of his company and what he does when he shuts his companies down is looked at, frowned upon, but in the interim, he created a lot of work for a lot of people. A lot of people transitioned. And, of course, when that industry went down--. So, they had 15 good years at the elevators, and they basically got 15 good years at the wood industry, so they had two parallel careers in some cases. But some people became nurses, some people became salespersons. There's a lot of people that did a lot of different things in their lives that they never would have had an opportunity to do otherwise.

NP: Now that you mention nurses—of course I think women, which is not the case—were women starting to work in the industry when you were in '75, when you started?

HD: No, no. They had started to work in the government staffs shortly after that. So, you saw like a huge sort of--. There were employment equity issues with that, I think, that they really had a lot of women hired in the government staffs, but not the grain elevators because the downsizing started not too long after. But I would say mid '80s there was a few that were hired, but few and far between once the downsizing started, of course. There was no room for anybody new to come on board. There was a few that came on board. We had a hiring spurt for one year for a short period. There was a few hired, but it really wasn't an industry that welcomed or really was acknowledged as for women, other than some people had been introduced through the government staff. There was a lot of women in that.

When the women came from either--. When they did hire the women for a short period of time, there was sort of three sort of phases you would go through. One of them where people were indifferent to it, and you're here and you've got a job to do. "Hi. How are you?" kind of thing. And there was another one where people didn't think there was a place for them, and they shouldn't be here. And there was another place where they would just fall all over themselves, you know? It was interesting. You changed the dynamic, right? Put a female in a room of men and next thing you know it changes the whole tone of the discussion. I know this from experience even now, different committees and whatnot. But except now, they can be more rougher than the males, right? [Laughing]

[1:45:19]

But in those days, it was just unheard of. And the government staffs, I always remember a story about [inaudible] but working midnight shifts, so there'd be female staff in the elevators. Of course, we're young guys and these people were about the same age as us, so we knew them. We'd cycled in the same social circles or whatever. So, of course, they'd go home—and most of these guys are married. I wasn't at the time, but anyhow—they'd tell their wives, "Oh, yeah, I worked." "Well, who's this lady you're working with?" "Oh, these are older ladies," or whatever, right? I remember we had a boot-hockey tournament and, anyhow, the government staff had a team in there or whatever, so we had the function that night. I always remember that the ladies from the government staff that we knew and worked with all the time, well, they all appeared. And of course, they're all dressed to the nines and half cut. Next thing you know, you hear all these women, "These are the old ladies that work at the grain elevators?!"

Actually, there were some few embarrassing moments even where somebody would leave the room and people would make offhanded comments. I always remember this one where somebody made a comment that was inappropriate basically, but okay, "Boys will be boys" in a sense. Except, one of the boys in the room, that was his wife, but he didn't know it. [Laughs] So, he says, "That's my wife." Of course, he thought he was just kidding, right? And he said, "No. That's my wife." So, as they say, the walls have ears, and half of what you see. Nothing what you hear and half of what you see as far as--.

NP: What you believe?

HD: Yeah, watch your Ps and Qs because you never know, right?

NP: Speaking of the government grain people, what kind of--. What would you like to say about what they did around the elevators, how they did it, and so on?

HD: Well, I mean, they were sort of like a parallel workforce. There was sort of the oversight. Most of the departments that I worked in, because I was on the scale floor quite a bit, but they were out in the car sheds, everywhere. There was always staff. Wherever we were in the departments, they always had a government staff there that had some role to play. They were just there, and they were just part of the fabric. They just weren't part of our group. They had a lot of responsibilities, and they were friends and cohorts.

NP: Were they resented?

HD: No. I mean, they were teased from time to time, but no they played an important--.

NP: About?

HD: Oh, just that they were government employees, right? Of course, we'd make--. I think we made a little bit more money than they did or something, and anyhow, those types of discussions. But for the most part there was mutual respect and, like I said, it was one big family actually when you get down to it. Which is sad because now, like I said, they've done away with all these positions and that sort of has been legislated out of existence. So, you don't really have that**--.** [Phone chimes] I'm not going to answer, I'm just going to--.

You're not going to have--. You've lost that. But over time, like I said, it was just part and parcel, These people were just more or less your co-workers is what it boiled down to.

NP: Was there ever a movement between the grain company employees into government? Like did they look to move there, or they were usually just happy where they were?

HD: No. I mean, basically they were two separate worlds. The odd time a person would switch over. I remember when I was working at the corner store, before I even started at the elevators—talking about introductions with the grain business—I used to have a fellow that was in inspection. He'd always come down. I was 16 years old or 15 years old working at the corner store, Macintyre Variety, and he'd come down to get mix. As the day would wear on, on a Sunday if he wasn't working, he would get more and more under the weather, so to speak. He'd come by and tell me, "Oh, you could be working down there doing this or that." I didn't really know what he was talking about at the time, but of course I met him at the elevator when I started working. He was in the same department. He was more or less a neighbour. He was from our neighbourhood.

So, there was some prompting that maybe you could do a little bit better over here, but like I said, once you had a job, you're just making good money. I wasn't really looking to shift around. Although you did know that they had different skillsets. Again, their seniority standing, you'd be at the bottom of the heap wherever you went. Sometimes you felt you were a little bit better off where you were. But, you know, we just didn't know that we weren't. I should have listened to the--. I don't regret it, but listening to what that individual had said at the beginning. I listened to part of his tale, "Go get an education," but I didn't listen was, "Do something else than come to work here. It's not a career industry."

[1:50:08]

NP: I have a question to ask, but I'm wondering whether it's a better question to ask from the standpoint of your work with the union. And that is the whole downsizing, who was responsible for it, and so on? Is that better to--? Because I'd like to move now onto how you got involved in the union.

HD: No, I'd say the downsizing is separate a bit. I'm not sure that anybody's to blame for it. It was a combination of technology, a combination of efficiency, a combination of shifting markets. It's just the reality of the grain trade. In fact, if you look at the historical standards about what was moving where, and how the world evolved, and Russia, and importers becoming exporters—becoming self-sufficient—is that the whole world sort of transitioned itself. It was evolving. We had a good run of it, and it was a bit of an aberration—we just didn't know it. Then it stabilized. Anybody that takes a look in the long-term about this and looks at the studies and the types of--. We've got dozens of studies in the office in Mississippi, East Coast, West Coast, Churchill—all these types of things. The writing was on the wall.

Grain cleaning became a lot more efficient. They started to clean some grain on the Prairies. But when you had grain cleaners that it would take you all night to do X amount of cars, and then the technology improved to a point where the grain cleaner could clean faster than you could pour the grain into it. So, you'd almost have to stage it up to drop it in and it would clean a car in 20 minutes versus 2 hours. So, the whole elevator wasn't filled with dirty grain anymore. There was less grain being handled, so they didn't need the midnight shifts, didn't need the 4-to-12 shifts. Again, they just became a lot more efficient with how they did it. The tanker cars. So, crews of 24 became crews of 6; crews of 12 became crews of 3; centralized control rooms, crews of 16 became crews of 2. When you start multiplying that by 12 elevators or 16 elevators—it doesn't all extrapolate that way—but the numbers are horrific.

What you see is what you see today. You see instead of 200 at Pool 4 when I started—or even more than that, probably closer to even 3 at times, you took the summer-student component into it—we have about 175 left working technically at four plants right

now. I would say about a tenth of what the former workplace was. So, it's just a matter of circumstance. It became a residual port, and with all those other factors, ingredients in the mix, there you sit. There's nobody really to blame, it was just--.

NP: Now, you know that because you've taken an interest in it and because of the union work you were actually involved in all of the cut and thrust of having to cut. The other people, though, those people who, as you said, they just came in and did their job, they hardly knew where the grain came from and didn't necessarily worry about where it went, were they blaming anyone?

HD: Oh, yeah. I mean, at times I still--. People that don't even know me, or people we did our best for, still hold me personally accountable for their job loss, right? That we didn't do enough for this, that, or the other thing, I've heard these criticisms. We go into an organizing campaign and then my name gets associated with our organization and people are still critical of things that they thought could have happened. We had a saying, basically, "Prepare for the worst and hope for the best." The bottom line was if there's no grain, there's no work. And that's really what it was. That was a simple recipe. The problem is that not only didn't the workers recognize it to some degree—some did but most didn't—but neither did the companies.

So, I remember being at a meeting. "We're going to have everybody called back this year. Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was at 500 workers, and we'll never see another lay-off from that particular company." That facility right now has bought one of the other bigger grain companies in town, and it has about 70 employees right now. But here's a manager that's making a public statement to the employees that this is the end of the downsizing. We're at 500. And then it went to 400 and 300. Think about that. We had 1,200 members in 1991—over 1,200 members. We had 1,800 at our peak in the mid '80s. But the companies didn't even know how drastic it was going to get. But we did.

[1:55:00]

We used to forecast. We'd do like a one- and three- and five-year forecast to figure out where we thought we'd be and what type of consolidations we'd have because you had the old Prairie Pools. They're always talking about these things merging. Well, it took time, but over time it finally evolved. But the problem was it wasn't just the employees that had this false sense of security or false hope, it was the companies as well that didn't recognize the severity of it. And it was drastic. When we had the strike in '91, we got a significant wage increase, and it ended up that about 25 percent of the workforce was cut because of it because there was a huge retroactivity bill. The last cheque they got in the grain business was that retroactivity cheque. The arbitrator did us no favours.

In one sense, I guess you could say he created a situation where he cut you loose, and you got to go where you needed to go versus off the roller coaster. But for the people that were affected by it, like I said, we thought it was better than what it was, and it

wasn't. At the end of the day, that created a lot of hardship, and people lost their earnings, had to spend their earnings, took out their pension plan money. So, if you worked 10 or 12 years in an industry or 15 years in an industry, how do you recoup that? So, those people now, today, are having to work much later than they would have otherwise, because they lost that part of their career. They need to have money to pay their debts. We get to a point where you wouldn't even qualify for EI.

If you went and tried to go out and look for other work—if you knew somebody that was one thing—but who wants to hire a laid-off grain handler who thinks he's going to go back to work in a month or two? I used to like to work, so I used to go apply for all kinds of jobs all over the place, and I had all kinds of jobs all over the place. But nobody wanted to seriously employ you because they couldn't compete with the wages that were paid at the grain elevators and chose not to. They would get somebody else that was going to stick around, and that's just the way it was.

So, I remember one year I had nine T-4 slips. I was trying to make ends meet, right? I did everything from--. I had a garbage route, an old garbage route that I had. I had 60 customers and I used to go drive around once a week and try to make ends meet. Cleaning work, I did the cleaning industry, delivered flowers, took part-time, casual work where I could, did whatever we could do to try to hang on. But at the end of it, it just wasn't feasible.

NP: And you were hoping that it would come back?

HD: You always had false hope. Again, what would happen, it ended up being about every six years, you'd get this sort of spike. So, you'd be starved out, and then there was a good year, and then basically the cycle would start all over again. We should have cut our selves loose right when the announcement came out. It was in the headlines: "Thunder Bay is a residual port." I better look at a new career path. And the government should get involved to look at how you transition the industry.

NP: And did they?

HD: No. I mean, it wasn't until the strike in '91 where we got called to go do a presentation to the Senate because they were making hay because there was a back to work legislation. We weren't on a strike for economics. We were on strike because the industry was in a state of transition and the government would only participate in industrial relation adjustment committees through tripartite-type situations, and the companies refused to participate. But we went up to address the Senate, which is really the Liberals and the Conservatives are in the Senate. The Conservatives were in power at the time. They had dropped the back to work legislation.

As it worked out, I think Lewis was the Labour Minister at the time, but he was at a mass meeting in Manitoba, in Winnipeg, and there was a farmer's rally there. But what was happening, of course, in the grain industry itself, and then when the strike had started in Thunder Bay, so they were up in arms. He made a public announcement prematurely that they were ordering us back to work, and we got wind of this. We were still at the bargaining table trying to break the impasse, and all hell broke loose, to say the least. Anyhow, we ended up—long story short—that they legislated us back to work. And between the legislation passing, they called us to Ottawa, invited us to go to Ottawa. The Liberals did, actually. So, we ended up going to Ottawa and then we made a presentation I'll never forget.

We had a political liaison in our office in Ottawa with the TCU. We met with him, and he says, "Well, what do you got to say? Where's your notes?" So, I said, "Here they are right here." I had ten points laid out on a piece of paper because that was me. I lived it. I knew it. I experienced it. I didn't need any notes. I would just tell the story for the way it was. And that's what we proceeded to do. Ironically, I remember going into the chambers with the Liberals prior to going into the senate chambers, and they were saying, "Now, just forewarning, there's some older gentleman that are in here and they sit in the wings, and they may be napping. Don't worry about those guys. Focus on the people in front of you." [Laughs] Which is kind of weird, right? And he said, "Do you have any questions you want us to ask you?" I said, "No. You'll know the questions to ask when I finish the presentation."

Not that I was cooperating with the politicians. We had a philosophy that—I have my own personal preferences—but as far as whoever wanted to talk to us, any political stripe, we would go and tell our story about the grain industry because we thought it was important and everybody needed to hear it. That's the approach we took. This is how we ended up getting invited to make a presentation at the Senate. Nault was doing some kind of a hearing—he was a labour critic at the time—and so he created a liaison with us because we made a presentation about the grain sector there. So, we went in there into the chamber and made our presentation, except our presentation was not about economics. The presentation was about an industry in transition, and the shortfalls, and what the companies weren't doing. After that, then the companies, they call it a sectorial council formed. We embarrassed them, there's no doubt about it.

[2:00:50]

I never forget, too, after the meeting was all done, I was in our local representative Iain Angus' office. He was a party whip for the NDP at the time, but he was our local representative. That's why we were there. He got a call and he said, "The Minister wants to see you." So, the Minister followed my presentation in the Senate, the Minister ended up going to the Senate. And of course, then there was all these issues about what was happening with the adjustment programs—so, the EI department, or Human Resource Development Canada at the time, and all this stuff. So, I guess he took it on to chin, big time. Now he calls me to a meeting.

[Laughs] Anyhow, Angus says, “Lewis wants to see you.” “Well, where is he?” “He’s in the building here.” So, myself and Mike Peron attended the session with me, went up and met with--. But he was with a whole entourage of people, right? But he just wanted to meet us, right? Put a name to a face. It wasn’t about what I’d said there. He just wanted to put a face to a name.

He said a few things, but most of his entourage basically covered stuff off. So, we had a couple logistical questions that we asked him, but it was kind of--. It’s like making your best case and having to face your accuser, in a sense. Not that I had a problem with it, but again it’s somewhat intimidating, right? But it was a good experience. But again, the companies really had their head buried in the sand. Then we got active, and they started to do what was right, and we had some formal action from the companies. People started to transition out. Then we were sort of helping people adjust to the new world. The woods/forest sector started to kick up a bit, so we were able to transition. They knew we had the industrial adjustment committee going—a formal entity—so they would phone up sometimes, the wood industry, when they were putting a second shift on at Northern Wood. “We need 25 guys. Do you have 25 guys for us?” “Yeah, we have 25 people.” We’d get names there. We had hundreds of people that were displaced. So, those people were able to transition through that type of formal plan. We took them there dragging and kicking, and they should have just went there voluntarily, but that isn’t what happened.

NP: What--.

MM: I did have a quick question if I may. The downsizing, when did that start to happen, Herb? What period are we talking about?

HD: 1984, is when the downsizing--.

MM: 1984?

HD: Yeah. We sort of peaked in ’86, but 1984 we started to see--. There was lack of work in ’85, there was a drought in ’86, and from there it was a downward spiral. We went down from about say 1,800 was our peak in ’86, and really by 1991 we were probably, legitimately—we might have had more numbers on our rolls—but we were probably around 1,200 that had active employment in the industry. And that number really quickly went down to about 500 say by the end of the ‘90s. Basically, after 2000 or the end of the ‘90s, the consolidation occurred because companies bought companies. So, there was still a core 500 or 600 right up ‘til 2000, and then when Manitoba Pool got bought out by UGG, it created a loss of 100 jobs. Then the next buyout was another 100 jobs, and it just went on like that. That’s why we’re at our current levels.

NP: Thinking back to the presentation to the Senate, can you recall the major points that you were making? Those jotted down points?

HD: Yeah. Basically what it was was the whole point that we were approaching at bargaining was we were trying to enhance the pensions because we wanted to transition people out of the industry to make room for the people that were left. So, it's no different than we normally see with these types of industries is if you'd see different strategies in enhanced retirement programs, voluntary severance programs—the stuff you would normally see professional companies offer. For the life of me, I don't know why they couldn't have done it in a much more humane manner. And they chose not to. So, we just basically stuck with the basics as we knew it, and again this wasn't about economics.

Before we went to the Senate and started, we had the dispute. The way the press works in the grain business, it was always highly sensitized, and Thunder Bay always had a high profile. So, you could talk to somebody—a press reporter—or you could talk to them for about 10 minutes, give them the full spiel about what the issues are, and all they'd want to know is, "Yeah, but if all that failed, when would you be able to go on strike?" That would be the headline. So they didn't care what you had to say about it. Then we had a couple of times when they wrote and they were calling us fat cats and this type of stuff in the news. So, what I said, "You know what? This is not happening, so we're going to change the message."

[2:05:18]

So, what we did is anybody that took issue with this, we wrote letters to them. We invited them to Thunder Bay, and a lot of them took us up on the invitations. Then we said, "We're not fat cats. Here's an average wage for a grain elevator worker that has 15-years service. He's only working six months a year now. His wage is now $18,000 a year. He doesn't even get on EI." So, we changed the whole story, including the local press. We went and we made a conscious effort, right, to make sure that our members were sending the right message out here. We're not the grain industry of old. We're in a transitioning state. We really changed the messaging going into that particular era, but it took a lot of effort on our part, and it took a conscious decision on behalf of the union executive.

We had good people. Wayne MacGregor was one of our union presidents. Mike Peron was a catalyst in that particular regard. These were people we worked very closely with within my tenure. There have been other presidents since with grain, but in those days, those were the critical parts of it. Again, we did a lot of work behind the scenes to be able to try to preserve it. And the other thing we did in the grain sector was—from a labour relations perspective—is that we always had a saying. It said, "We don't want to be the problem. We want to be part of the solution." And I'm a firm believer that we would raise issues that wasn't about

raising shit and questions about things. It's that we have issues to raise. We would have solutions. We would problem-solve, and we would come to the table prepared, willing, and a lot of time have strategies that we could partake in.

For example, one of the things that was happening in the industry sectors was the taxation because you'd have dormant terminals sitting there, and they weren't going to be utilized. So, there was capacity. We took the position that--. Of course, the companies would never let us participate, but we offered to. But our position was that it should be based on throughput, and that if you had a facility that was not going to be fully utilized, then there should be some kind of a tax break there. At some point, you're going to have to declare it surplus, but in the interim if we thought the business was going to kick off, why wouldn't we have some kind of a strategy with the city to be able to maintain the infrastructure and those tax dollars for the city going forward?

So, it went a lot further than just dollars and cents, or wages and benefits for members. It was about trying to secure and sustain the industry and keep the infrastructure intact because it was good for us, meant work for us. It meant that the companies still had the capacity.

NP: Was that one of the points that you had in that presentation?

HD: No, that was probably after the fact.

NP: It's interesting that you bring that up because one thing that I have thought was—and this is my thoughts from not a position of having too much knowledge—that from a societal perspective, to allow agreements that you could shut down an elevator and put in a clause that it could never again be used as an elevator was almost anti-social. Did that ever come up as an issue?

HD: Well, we didn't have control over that ourselves, right? That would be a business proposition when companies were selling terminals, right? If you look at a lot of the terminals that were closed in the waterfront, they were torn down. If you look at the numbers that there was over 30 at one time, and you look at what's left. If there's an over-capacity situation, why would you be selling infrastructure to somebody that was going to be a competitor? It just doesn't make any sense.

NP: But in the longer term?

HD: Well, but from a business perspective it just doesn't make any sense.

NP: Not long enough term, I guess.

HD: No. And to be quite frank, I mean when you look at the capacity situation, the capacity may just be on cue now. We're probably at a balance, a tipping point. We're to a point where I don't know if you could actually close another terminal here and not really hurt the business. I just can't see how they can do it. It's not that they have the capacity to handle more grain, it's the capacity to logistically have the boats and everything in line, and when the grain comes, and how it comes, and what types come—these types of things. It's to basically have enough capacity to be able to do the turnover that's necessary in a timely, logistical way with the type of products they're handling these days.

NP: So, there would, with the amalgamation of the various elevators, leading to the excess capacity, is there any ability for another competing company—let's say like Archer-Daniels-Midland [ADM] that doesn't have an operation here—that kind of possibility just isn't available nor smart?

[2:10:02]

HD: Well, they're going to have to acquire a market share. So, I mean, ADM, they have their own history, right? It's a huge transnational company. We represent the people at the starch and gluten plant, so I've dealt with ADM here. I've dealt with them in actually Midland. We had an elevator there was attached to an oats plant there. So, I've dealt with them. Of course, they were involved in price-fixing and these types of things as well, but these are one of the big players worldwide. They're, like I said, a nefarious-type company, but if they bought infrastructure, no different than the Wheat Board bought the MTI terminal, right? So, anything can happen. They must see there's a future, which is a whole question in itself, how the Wheat Board—a government-run entity—somehow is buying ships and grain elevators and infrastructure. They were turned into a competitor where that was never the intent. They were an oversight, and now they're a direct competition for the rest of the companies. It absolutely makes no sense in what's happening there.

If you look at Ontario government, for example, just two years ago, there was a $6 million project done at MTI [Mission Terminal] which the Ontario government gave them $1 million towards the infrastructure cost to increase the capacity in the waterfront that's already got an overcapacity. Now the Wheat Board's bought that, and that has a $1 million subsidization. Well, that's my Ontario tax dollars that have partly funded that infrastructure development there, and now the Wheat Board has come in and bought that terminal, which has some subsidized capacity in there. Like, that's my tax dollars on both a federal and a provincial basis, and I'm working in the grain industry. I can't be too pleased about what's happening here. I'm co-funding myself out of a job or out of existence. There's an oxymoron, or it's counterintuitive what's happening here. There's a lot of contradictions in the business now. But anything can happen. They could consolidate and run--. These sector railways are talking about one-stop shopping, that was one of the sort of--.

NP: One-stop shopping being--?

HD: Well, one entity running the whole waterfront. All the grain companies get together. And we've been addressing this sort of in our blue-skying visions, where we'd look at the one-, three-, five-year visions. We'd bring the committees in during bargaining preparation and anticipating when it's going to happen. Not if it's going to happen, when it's going to happen. And to be quite frank, we've bought a lot of extra time because those blips when there was busy years, the companies made enough money they could stand alone, go it alone. But over time, that just didn't carry the flag. But for the longest time, we were inoculated against what should have been infrastructure—these companies, there was way too much capacity and everybody chasing the same type of grain volumes.

So, we were lucky. We bought some time where people got to retire. There was more work involved, but at the end of the day, of course, it all crystalized. And really, when you look at the whole waterfront and the way it had materialized, you saw financially the weakest company taking over the biggest company at Grain Growers. We were in my office waiting for Cargill to call to say that they'd taken over UGG--. Or I mean, had taken over Manitoba Pool. We had good inside information that this was happening. I came back from my vacation early, sitting in the office waiting for the call. I don't get a call from the Cargill folks—I get a call from the UGG folks that they'd bought the facility. All these things sort of unravelled.

Now you see P&H and Cargill becoming a major player in the waterfront by blending the company, creating a new company, and they've got infrastructure in the Prairies. It's evolved in a way that people never really would have guessed or perceived. And you got the tail wagging the dog a lot of times. How does the company in the least financial situation be able to buy the biggest company? And then how is it that the waterfront infrastructure now gets sold to a company like Glencore, a foreign entity that has no interest in Canadian society or cities or whatever? It's a bottom-line type thing. So, you're selling off the whole resource sector. You do a $6 billion deal, again with a notorious company. Glencore has a history. There's people in South America that this company deals with where, arguably, if you read the articles on it, people disappear. Where did they go? There's things happening here.

But these all get approved by the government, and now the Canadian grain industry is what? Like I said, if Glencore can come in and do this, then certainly ADM is powerful enough to do it, and Bunge is powerful enough to do it, and Cargill's powerful enough to do it. One thing that you see now is that the three companies that are left in the waterfront, they all have infrastructure down on the lower St. Lawrence, which wasn't the case previously. So, that's an interesting twist.

And that's actually created some employment opportunities here. I know with Viterra last year, because they were able to complement one with the other, this vertical or horizontal integration—however you want to look at it. From start to finish,

Prairie, port, and port again. We had some work created from that sort of new style of ownership. Like I said, owning a spot at each of the particular spots in the distribution chain. The world's changing.

[2:15:15]

NP: Now, you brought up the different companies. Let me ask this question, but it will mean I will go back to your union, how you moved into that aspect of your career. The membership that you deal with, how does that coordinate with similar positions out in the West Coast, and on the St. Lawrence, and obviously Churchill as well? Is there a national body?

HD: Not really. I mean, the ones we used to parallel with would be the Grain Services Union [GSU], which had some but not all of the companies organized in the west. We had a good relationship with them over the years. We had some farmer groups—National Farmers Union [NFU], for example—they were a little bit left leaning, but they were more labour friendly. Then we had some more right-wing farmer groups that were not labour friendly at all.

NP: If we're talking about port--.

HD: Yeah, but that was like the Prairie side of it, GSU. Then you had the Grain Workers out of the West Coast. They represented Prince Rupert and whatever five companies were on the port of Vancouver.

NP: And they were a separate entity?

HD: Yeah. They're now affiliating with the ILA. Both those groups are affiliated with the ILA now, but they were sort of separate, standalone entities. We had some liaison with them. Of course, they were our competition to some degree as well, right, because the West Coast was getting some of our grain. But we were able to create relationships through we used to attend Western Transportation Advisory Council meetings in the west. What it was, it was really an independent body, but the government is really tied into it. So, all the transportation ministers from all of the four Prairie provinces would take turns being a co-chair on an annual basis, and then all of the senior groups. So, it was a place senior executives would attend to get information on a concentrated basis. So, it's like for busy people to go attend the session. They bring in all sorts of specialty people, or people that were in these sectors, and they have trends or themes. So, we got to know each other. There was a labour component that used to attend that.

The East Coast—in Montreal and whatnot—some of those elevators are organized as sort of they're part of the collective bargaining agreement with the port itself. And then there are some longshoremen too, I think, that are in some of those facilities.

There's two different unions. There's sort of a, I wouldn't call it a separatist union, but there's a Quebec-based union that represents some of the terminals, I think at Richardson's, for example.

NP: Bunge? Same group?

HD: Yeah. There may be different bargaining units, but there's two or three different groups. They're sort of spread. We don't have a lot of liaisons.

NP: So, if you were working with Viterra here, as an example, and they're—or even Richardson's—and they have their--.

HD: Totally separate. Independent.

NP: Totally separate and independent.

HD: Now, of course, some issues transcend lines, right? Where it became necessary to have that information, or sometimes we'd piggy-back off our collective agreements, if there was issues of the day. First, we were downsizing, we were taking it on the chin, but then all the same efficiencies and organization of work started to affect these other locations where they weren't affected by that at first. They were inoculated against it. But then in the end, they were affected by it, so they became quite interested in what we were doing, and we became way more interested in what they were doing because we were in the same boat. Same with the consolidation or elimination of the small country elevator system in the Prairies. Of course, the Grain Services was losing a lot of members as well, so we were all in the same boat. You're in a state of transition.

We did the sectoral council after the '91 minister ordered the parties to basically--. It was the chief executive officers of three of the big grain companies and the three representatives—Kancs from the West Coast, the Grain Services rep, Wagner, and myself. We sat a six- person steering committee in that committee. It was like a half-a-million-dollar study, right? Unfortunately, it became a duster because the industry was in transition, everybody knew it, you didn't have to study it. What were you going to do about it? And really, what could you do about it? If there's no grain, there's no work. And that's really where it ended up. Unfortunately, a lot of people in this sector didn't recognize that and hold grudges or think more could be done because of it. But at the end of the day, there has to be grain for there to be work. That's the mathematical equation of it.

NP: Perfect storm.

HD: Yeah.

NP: Because, as you said, the technology and the changing markets.

HD: And workplace organization.

NP: And then consolidation, yeah.

[2:20:08]

HD: That technological change, yeah. Again, it's just a matter of looking at the time and motion study about how many people you need to do what.

NP: I can recall one person we interviewed saying that as a result—I don't know if it was that strike or another—he said that one thing he learned was he could operate with half the number of people that he was operating with. So, that was a downside.

HD: Where that comes to light is during the strike, they wouldn't be operating during the strike. So, that isn't really where it came from. But, I mean, when we were allegedly doing a work to rule, for example, they might do a boat on a Saturday and bring in the students or whatever because we weren't working on a Saturday. It was supervisors. So, they could get away with it for a short period of time. But I think where it became obvious, in the older days at least, is that we had those crews of 50 out front and then you're bringing 50 in on Monday through Friday, and then Saturday you have on the board everybody works, and 25 people show up for work. That's where it became obvious. Then when you put the 4:00 to 12:00 shifts on, this is where we really shot ourselves in the foot, right? It became pretty evident that if you work these days with half the workforce, you must be overstaffed in the other days. To some degree that was true, but that's really where it went.

Instead of staying busy, a lot of times people would continue to act in the same, never change their mannerisms or their work ethics. It wouldn't be one time. I can think of more than one occasion where a supervisor or manger came up to my office--. It's weird. We always had a pretty decent relationship. I didn't always like the people--. Or not the people, but the decisions that people made. I thought people could have made a lot more humane decisions, had the power to do that, and didn't for some reason. In a lot of cases, they did the right things. But in a lot of cases, they did the wrong things, and they could have done it much differently than what they did.

But in any case, come into my office and say, “I was just in a certain department and had a discussion with five people or six people. We’ve already downsized that department, and I was there for 45 minutes. We had a good discussion and talked about what’s happening in the world around us, and the grain industry, and everything else.” He says, “Well, what does that tell you if I can go into an office and sit there and talk to six people for 45 minutes?” And he’s telling me this. He fore-warning me like, “I don’t want to be going around the elevator on a tour and end up speaking to six people, because that tells me there’s too many people in that department.” So, I relate those stories.

The other story was we’d do 100 cars at M house, and then the guys would be done at 3:00, and they’d get to go home an hour early. So, then they said--. Or no, what it was was you’d have to do 80 cars, you’re done at 3:00. “Well, then we’re going to do 90 cars.” Still done at 3:00. And then you can do 100 cars, still done at 3:00 or a little bit earlier. So, it’s like, “You guys are shooting yourself in the foot. Don’t you realize that? You just give ‘er. You’re beating yourselves up or whatever.” Some of these were tank cars, some of these were bobcatting days.

But at the end of the day when the industry shrunk and now we had 20 cars for that plant, how many people do you think they had? So, that plant could be run with three people, or four people—the whole site—because it was an automated facility, right? Centrally automated, spent a lot of money. What you did yesterday had some impact on the amount of work that you might see tomorrow. Sometimes we were our own worst enemy in that particular respect. How can you ask them to bring—for 20 cars—how many people do you need to know? And they know if you can do 100 in seven hours you can certainly do 20 in seven hours, and how many people do you need to do that? It’s the bare minimum. That’s just life.

NP: So, when you dealt with some of these issues, or even the more usual issues of the early days—which were grievances which seem to be sort of minor compared to what you eventually had to deal with—did you deal with the individual managers here? Or for the most part it was dealing with--?

HD: For the most part there was six companies when I was involved. Each elevator sometimes had their own dynamic as well. So, they had sort of a tiered--. Before I would go and see the HR department or the manager for Saskatchewan Wheat Pool—that’s six plants. I had a relationship at each site with each manager, and you’d go in and talk to them. I knew a lot of the personalities. So, I had a good working relationship with these. At least my perception was that I had a good working relationship. I’ve heard people describe the relationship they think they have with me. They don’t think it’s quite as positive because, I guess, in one sense, the job that you do, the role that you have, is that I’m sort of the equalizer or the sheriff in town, if you want to put it that way.

Not too many people can tell a manager that you're doing it wrong and tell them that in a harsh way. In other words, there's nobody around. They're in the ultimate power position. There's nobody that can really push them or do things or move things along. And they don't like it. We don't like to get told to eat our peas, and they don't like to get told to eat your peas, but this is what I have to do sometimes. They didn't like it sometimes, but for the most part we had our battles, but we had good working relationships and a respectful relationship. They had their job to do, and we had our job to do. It just became harsh at times because of the downsizing and whatnot, right? And the companies maybe not doing the right things.

[2:25:28]

NP: Did you find that some companies were easier to deal with than others? Or was it more the personalities of the people who were in the positions?

HD: I would say that it was mostly with the personalities, the people in the positions. I think the reality was it was a harsh reality, and they had to make the decision they had to make. We called them out several times when they make the totally wrong decision, or we'd go public. If they're working too many overtime shifts and people are laid off, we would make a report to the press and then they'd have to talk to their neighbour about, "How come you're screwing your workers?" kind of thing. All sorts of political dynamics. Some of these managers didn't like to get criticized in the public eye because then they've got to answer to their wives and their sons and daughters, and everything else. So, we would ply whatever source of public domain we could get.

Each of them had their own dynamic, and I wouldn't say--. It's one of these sayings, right? "They're all the same, but different." There was a range, but still the reality was, this goes back to the saying, "There's no grain. There's no work." So, the realities of dealing with a certain issue, an interpretation issue, or a staffing issue, that was a different approach than the regular run of the mill if somebody broke the rule and you're held to account. Well, if for some reason it should have been a lesser penalty or the person just got held to account, that was never really the issues. Where it was bigger issues was when you start combining positions, or combining departments, or combining shifts.

We'd call them either-or shifts—what I was talking about earlier—where before we were from the control room, now I'm down in the car shed, or I'm working in the scale floor or the cleaner deck. I'm bouncing back between the two. Well, there used to be two departments fully staffed in those shifts, so these types of things. Transcending and those types of issues, where you're looking at the organization of work, those are more critical decisions. So, how are you going to staff it? There's higher rates of pay if you staff on the cleaner deck versus the car shed. So, do you staff in the car shed or the cleaner deck? Lots of tough questions like that.

But overall, there was no softie. There wasn't somebody that you could just say they got off easy with. Some of them were old school. Manitoba Pool, for example, was the last of the hold outs, and that was more like an old-style management. We had a different way of doing business there. But at the end of the day--.

NP: What do you mean, "An old-style management"?

HD: Well, just that they held onto sort of their elevator routes. There was a structure where they had people, they had standing, and people that were supervisors there were people that came off the floor. They were long-term people who earned their stripes, more or less. Where some of the other companies, sometimes we were appointing people that were just in the industry for short periods of time. Or, you know, Gorst was an academic and moved to the top of the food chain very quickly. They didn't put the same time and effort in as these other ones. Like at Manitoba Pool, you started at the bottom and worked your way to the top, versus some of these other companies. A majority of companies were like that, but some weren't. So, different sort of structures, different kind of respect there.

And old habits die hard. They used to do things in some cases a little bit of an archaic way. But again, because of the infrastructure and organization and technological change and computers and all these types of things and the way that the government was bringing the cars in, all these things factored into having to modernize to some shape or form, right?

NP: Would you say that sticking with the old-style management was as efficient an operation as the new style?

HD: In my view, it was. The work still got done. At Richardson's, there used to be a manager there, you go in to talk to him and he'd like to keep a couple extra bodies around because if somebody was missing, or whatever else. He would never cut it to the bone, and some of these other companies would. They'd start running short or they couldn't get their work done or there'd be more overtime because of it. So, those types of things were a bit different, yeah. But again, a lot of that was more—not more but some of it was—the personality trait or what the person believed in.

NP: Did you find that any companies at the head-office level were easier to deal with than others?

HD: Manitoba Pool, again, you were able to talk to them. They cared more about it. They came down with their board of directors and they'd meet with us, take the time to meet with us. Like every year they'd bring a farmer group down, and they'd make sure they always met with us. We'd have our discussions because farmers weren't always a big fan of grain handlers. But again, we were changing the persona about who we are, and what we said, and what we did, and what our reasons were. I remember following Comuzzi into a meeting that he attended--.

[2:30:14]

NP: Comuzzi being--?

HD: Joe Comuzzi, the--.

NP: MLA?

HD: Or federal politician.

NP: Yeah, MP.

HD: MP. But Joe tried hard. He was Italian, so he was at the Italian Hall, so he'd get it all the time. Because in an industry that's downsizing, they wanted him to do something about it. So, I tried to educate him, and he got more knowledgeable over time, but initially he wasn't that knowledgeable about the structure. He had an academic background, and he was a lawyer. I forget what he did before that. But he attended a session, and he didn't know the issues, and he had come to me for a debrief. Well, I can't debrief about--. I spent hundreds of hours following this, well there's no way in two hours you're going to get the Reader's Digest version of it and talk intelligently. So, we went to meet with the farmers. We took some hardcore positions—like elimination of the Western Grain Transportation Act, the subsidy, for example. We had specific points that were contrary to the industry norm in these types of things.

We were portraying them to the farmer group that was there, and at the end of it they disagreed. They had a different position, but we had our position. I knew enough about the grain industry to be able to intelligently speak about these things. But I always remember them saying, "Your presentation here was a hell of a lot different than the other guy that was just in here." They just smoked him out. He didn't know the stuff like he should have, but we did. So, I kind of enjoyed those type of sessions with them.

NP: So, what was your philosophy on the Western Grain Transportation Agency?

HD: Well, the elimination wasn't going to help Thunder Bay. There was some inefficiencies where you had double shipping—like moving grain from one point and then backtracking to get the subsidy. You could have eliminated that without eliminating the whole system. And we started to say the Port of Thunder Bay Committee, and Dodds was a political opportunist, but still a community activist—Evelyn Dodds. She chaired that committee for obvious reasons because it was a high-profile type thing. It

was interesting because to think of her dynamic for people that know of her, and then my philosophy and dynamic. It was an interesting twist, and we were in the same boat trying to row in the same direction when we went to Ottawa, when we went to Winnipeg, and you advocated on behalf of the grain trade. It was an interesting dynamic that comes out of that strange bedfellow, if you want to put it that way.

But at the end of the day, Iain Angus was the only fellow—who was again a federal rep—that was taking a position that this was going to be harmful. So, it was between myself and Iain, we were the only two. And sure enough, when they eliminated it, it crucified us. That subsidy wasn't there anymore for farmers to move product, so it really seems that people were going to do it at home or closer to home and diversify or value-added. We took it on the chin because of it. So yeah, there was some inefficiencies with it, but overall, like I said, it detrimentally harmed the port of Thunder Bay for sure.

NP: How did you get involved in the union?

HD: Well, I just inherited it really. I remember going there and everybody was talking. It was a big meeting. I remember I said--. I was a probationary employee at the grain elevators. I don't know '75, I guess, it might have been '76, actually. But anyhow, I asked him, I said, "I'm intending to work here as my job. I'd like to attend the meeting." And I remember somebody on the scale floor went down to phone somebody, and somebody phoned headquarters. And ironically, they wouldn't let me attend the meeting because I was a probationary. I didn't have formal standing. So, that was my first introduction. They wouldn't even let me attend the meeting. [Laughs]

But then the way it really happened was that some of the guys who were a little bit senior to us—started in '74 or '72, I forget which—but they ended up--. In the wintertime they used to elect a shop chairman, and they were still there when they elected the shop chairman. Of course, how unions positions go, there's not a lot of call sometimes to fill the committees in full. So, some of our coworkers who we worked with on a regular basis, they were a little bit ahead of us in the seniority roster, got elected into these positions onto the safety committee and shop committee. So, then we became aware. Then they were attending meetings, and then we started attending meetings, and it just sort of assimilated from there. Of course, then we got active on the committees.

The turning point in my career is—if you can call it a career, or career path, I guess, or direction—was, I guess, I'm not sure if I just had a big mouth or whatever at work, but somebody flagged me as somebody that had an interest and was an advocate and sent me to a stewards training course. I did a week-long training course for steward and changed my whole life, changed my whole direction.

Then I started going to the college taking courses, went to the Labour College of Canada for an eight-week residential program, and just learned more about labour relations, and then got active, got elected into an executive position as recording secretary. Then a position came up for an assistant to the Mazur position, had to beat an incumbent for that—actually had to beat out the union president. Not an easy thing to do, and he was a good guy. But that wasn't why I ran against him. It wasn't because he wasn't a good guy, but.

[2:35:35]

NP: So, how many years into your union steward position that you became the assistant?

HD: '86. 1986 was when I became the assistant, 1984 I became the recording secretary, 1981 I was involved as the shop chairman—the representative of my site—and then prior to that we were on the committees. So, '81 was really when I became fully engaged. Then through from there to '84 when I was shop chairman—like a representative of the site representative—then became part of the executive, then became a full time officer assistant.

NP: Huh. So many questions. There are some non-union operations. Have there always been non-union operations on the waterfront, as far as you know?

HD: Well Maurice's is sort of the Pool 10 scenario. I mean, I don't know why there wasn't successorship rights to claim there, but it just never happened. It was a small facility and inconsequential. They had a lot of turnover there. It was never known how long it was going to last for.

NP: And Mission?

HD: Mission too sort of came from an aberration. Actually, there was supposed to be a prohibition from them operating as a grain terminal. There was some type of a caveat that was missed, and Saskatchewan Wheat Pool dropped the ball there without a doubt, and a competitor. So, they actually came to us, and we actually did a model agreement, but the members, because they thought it was going to lower the standard in the other elevators, wouldn't allow me to go ahead and do the agreement out there.

NP: What was the argument for lowering standards about?

HD: Basically, the Upper Great Lakes had a terminal, a combination terminal, down in the lower St. Lawrence, and they already had a contract in place there. They were all new hires—they'd been hiring all new employees here, right? So then, they had

different standards. So, we had legacy costs, or a lot of these guys have been around for a long time and are on the mature side. so then they'd want to do things different. We had our vacation entitlements, double time, and these types of things, banked overtime paid out in the winter. They had a different philosophy, and they had a structured agreement similar to what they had in the lower St. Lawrence. So, we weren't opposed to that. It was new, but we weren't opposed to that because it was all new employees. We weren't so concerned about it, right?

But the guys were, and they just put a stop to it. We had a model agreement written out. Basically, it was almost like a voluntary recognition where we would have had representation. They came and asked me one last time, told them I couldn't do it. So, then of course they did it. They fully staffed up, and we had a lot of displaced grain handlers out there. We took a position of successorship, and then of course we had a lot of people who were blaming us for what was happening in the grain business. It became too late then the company reacted. They didn't want us there either. They wanted to do things alone, so it became non-union, although we could have had the relationship there. Our executive at the time, much against my recommendation or opinion to go forward, wouldn't.

So, I had to follow their direction. It wasn't for me to say otherwise, but it's unfortunate. Hopefully some time they do come under our wing. We've had some inquiries over there from time to time, but they haven't as of yet. They basically pay either the same or more like we get, so it's not--. I mean, that's why they keep unions out, right? They're not dumb enough to have a lower standard, right?

NP: Benefits the same?

HD: Yeah. Well, they have their own. The company has a sort of different framework of benefits, but it's pretty much the same renumeration package, and even maybe a little bit more. If you look, they have a little bit of a bonus they pay at year-end. But of course, you know, the health and safety is questionable out there at times. There are some issues at that particular facility, because we hear about it from time to time. How management treats its employees—there's some favouritism and nepotism—all the things you usually see, right? And some more serious consequences with the health and safety issues out at that particular site too; there's some questionable practices that are going out there.

NP: Seniority issues?

HD: Well, seniority issues to some degree, but more the health and safety is where I'd be most concerned about. But it's up to the--. There's oversight, the kind of labour code; there's labour officers they get called out there from time to time. But they're not really doing their job with the vigilance. It's just like any other government department. They cut back and they have people

working out of a vehicle covering all the federal sectors. One person from the Manitoba border all the way to Ottawa, I think, you know what I mean? It just doesn't make any sense. How can you oversight a federal industry? And they have all the reserves to oversight as well, so it's just crazy. It's just impossible.

[2:40:30]

They used to have a fleet of officers here, and about five full time health and safety officers oversighting the industries. Now they have one person working out of his truck with a computer. Well, is that person stretched?

NP: How can they even do that? How can they make it from one place to the other in the--? [Laughs]

HD: You don't. You don't. It just doesn't happen. So, it got to a point where in some cases we just let go of the health and safety committee because our people were starting to get laid off, and the company was taking punitive action against these individuals because they were raising hell with safety concerns, or you put yourself out of a job. But I mean, this goes back to the whole explosion question, right? How clean are these places? What's the different housekeeping? I think the insurance companies that insure these companies, or sometimes the product that they're handling, there's more standards. They're held to a higher account from a customer in some cases than they are from the federal government regulations. Which goes back to question of the '45 and '52 explosions, and I think there was an explosion in the'80s at Cargill, where they blew the roof off the place with a heated bin—I mean, this is still a danger. And I would suggest that there's still a real concern that there could be some kind of catastrophe. Maybe it's certainly not the same degree of risk, but there's still a significant risk factor out there in this sector regarding what's happening or not. And housekeeping is a big part of that. Sometimes housekeeping gets put to the backburner.

NP: At one point the Canadian—no not the Canadian Grain Commission [CGC]—but the Department of Agriculture, the guys who do the bug inspections also did the elevator cleanliness inspections. Is that not the case anymore?

HD: Well, they're doing tests for bugs, yeah. So, that still occurs.

NP: But they don't do housekeeping? Well, I guess from the standpoint of housekeeping, if you had an accumulation of grain, bugs could grow there, but also, it's a hazard from just not having a good--.

HD: So, there is some oversight there, but not the degree necessary to hold them accountable, right? They do it by when you get sanctioned, you do something about it. But again, some of the customer standards, it's on balance. It's better than what it was, but still these hazards exist. I know from that one terminal, I would suggest that what's been reported to me is that we get calls that

people are concerned about the cleanliness of the plant. So, then we view that to be true. I mean, I haven't seen it myself because I don't enter the facility, but if people are reporting this to us, I can only tell you what's reported to me. Don't want to get sued here, but. [Laughs]

NP: You have no first-hand knowledge.

HD: No, no first-hand knowledge.

NP: Now, as a steward—and I'm only going to ask you a question or two about it—as a steward, what kind of grievances did you like to take forward and which ones didn't you like to take forward?

HD: Well, I mean--.

NP: Not so much like as comfortable.

HD: Well, the way labour relations is is that the easier ones to handle, that are easily correctable, are like an absenteeism because a person was missing work and either had a reason that was reasonable, or you didn't. If you didn't, you better smarten up. Or if somebody got a discipline, and for whatever reason, making a mistake, and it was an accident that didn't have to repeat itself, then you could address it. But I remember I had one of my own grievances was my grandfather died during my vacation, and they wouldn't pay the bereavement, and the collective agreement clearly called for it. So, I remember filing a grievance about that.

So, in some cases there's a complicated--. We filed a grievance, for example, I was getting sent home, and they had contracted out the removal of some of the cleaning machines—and again this is part of the sort of transition. We're going home in November. We used to work until Christmastime was a good--. Get paid for Christmas and New Year's Day was kind of what your objective was. So, we're going home in the middle of November, and the contractor's in there with a bunch of kids ripping out the machines that we work on during the course of the year. So, we filed a contract--. We got the contracting-out language in the collective agreement. They were starting to encroach, and it's still an issue to this day, those types of issues.

So, there were some more complex ones, they were more policy based, but when I was a steward, I was kind of intimidated. I was just a young guy myself, and I was learning applying the trade. But when it's full-employment and it's busy, the issues that arise are usually much different than in a complex situation where you're reorganizing or you're blending jobs, and all these types of things. There's much more complex issues these days. And again, you're applying archaic language, like languages written 10, 20, 30 years ago. A lot of it 25 years ago or more, and you're applying that to today's reality. Well, it doesn't always fit the mold.

2:45:06]

NP: One thing I should mention is that we've done a lot of interviews with people in management positions both here and in Winnipeg—and actually across the Prairies—and I would say, without exception, they spoke very highly of the union operation in Thunder Bay.

HD: I mean, we were never--. We had our battles at times, but I mean overall we knew which way to row the boat, and we were always very progressive. And we had to be creative because of what was happening. For example, when we had challenges that weren't affecting the senior employees but they thought it was eroding their standards, instead of trying to pass amendments to the collective agreements or working on side letters and whatnot that would allow certain flexibilities—that was failing—and the people that were not allowing us to proceed in dealing with the day's reality were some of the senior members that really weren't impacted by this, but thought they would be and "That's not the way we do business." It was a matter of principle versus reality.

So then, we started doing things and we made agreements and provide flexibility where we thought we needed it, and then we took default position is that, "If we're going to do this, and if people have an issue with it they need to come to the meeting and bring it up." It's trying to force out, and look at, the what-if scenarios and the worst-case scenarios and these types of things, which wasn't going to happen. This was an employment creator. This was making us competitive in the waterfront.

For example, somebody goes out to the terminal, the bulk handling facilities on the Island, and they got Saskatchewan Wheat Pool cars, and they're doing a direct hit and loading a boat out of the direct-handling facility. And we have people laid off. How does that make any sense? So, we'd go to the company and say, "What are we doing? Why are your marketing people are marketing your grain," our grain I called it, "out that facility?" I said, "You're contracting out the work. It's counterintuitive. Why would you do that?" "Well, we can't do direct hits." "Why can't we do direct hits?"

NP: What are direct hits?

HD: Well, direct hits would be you have a rail train pushing in cars, and basically you unload the cars, it goes up a leg, and directly into the boat.

NP: Straight into the ship?

HD: Yep. Just has to weighed. So, they had the capacity to do it there, “Why can’t we do it?” “It’s never been done before.” “Can we do it, do you think? What has to be done?” He says, “Well, you might have to go 10 hours straight.” “Okay, well we’ll have some flexibility in the hours, so we can go straight and be able to accomplish it. How about staging the grain and weighing the grain? Well, let’s look at the logistics of that.” Next thing you know, Sask Pool’s moving that grain through our old facility. They’ve got an oats situation at Pool 4 and created two years’ worth of work for us because we were, “Hey! What’s happening here? Can we handle this stuff here? You’ve got capacity over here,” because it’s a plant sitting mostly dormant. “How big a crew do you need to go over there?”

So, we had a smaller crew unload the cars slower, and then we were shipping. We were bringing a crew over. So, we were doing all kinds of novel things to work with the companies to try to minimize and be creative and innovative.

NP: And why do you think they were--. Do you think there was a favouritism towards shipping west? Or was it, again, the markets?

HD: It was the markets.

NP: So, why would you ship out of here? Or are you talking about--.

HD: It’s like direct hits, for example. We were shipping out of this way anyhow, but except it wasn’t then to a grain terminal. It was sent to a bulk-handling facility. Or the oats was being done through a bulk-handling facility, we said, “Well, why? We can handle it over here.” “Well, he has long term storage.” I says, “You’re paying fixed costs on a structure here. Why can’t we handle it there? There’s 10 boatloads in the course of a year.”

NP: And you’re already paying for your staff.

HD: Yeah. Well, the staff was secondary. It was more you have your fixed cost for the elevator. You’re paying your taxes. If you’re not running the facility, of course the electrical costs are a bit less. So, you just have to, when you stage it in there, you need to factor all of that into the equation.

NP: So, why would they do that?

HD: Well, they did. They ended up running the oats through Pool 4 and took it away from the bulk handling.

NP: But why would they do that in first place?

HD: Well, I think what had happened, it was their marketing arm was detached from their terminal arm. Cargill had a much more broader picture. Their business philosophy in my view—from what I understood about it—was if you run product through this system, and this system, and this system, at the end of the day Cargill gets a bigger dividend. Where some of these units were going, "Hey, our marketing will do this, and we can get our bar charts to look better if we do it this way." And the overall bottom line is going to look better overall, but not better for that division. There's a disconnect.

But anyways, we took all kinds of decision about--. It took strong leadership and coherent leadership, and we had that at the terminal. Again, it was a battle. The battles weren't about industrial relations a lot of times. The battles were about the whole industry itself, this industry in transition, or if the companies weren't working or people working overtime. We used to go to the St. Lawrence Seaway, continually be doing studies and presentations. When I'd go there, I'd always raise the issue about how the companies are keeping people laid off and not working people, because it was a public domain. They didn't like getting criticized. Some of these people, what I would consider my associates, weren't too happy with me and told me so, but I had a job to do. But it was good because--.

[2:50:20]

NP: How did that work? What was the connection?

HD: Well, for example, we'd make a presentation about what's happening with the St. Lawrence Seaway. So, you'd make your presentation about the Port of Thunder Bay infrastructure. You'd do all the regular things.

NP: The cost of the Seaway, and--.

HD: Yeah, all that stuff. You'd speak to those issues, but in addition to that, I'd would speak to the issue about how the industry's being run here. And they didn't like it because it would go into *Hansard* and it would go into public domain. The party from Quebec there, separatist group, they were--.

NP: PQ?

HD: Yeah, the PQ, Parti Quebec. So, they were left leaning. We had the Conservatives, the Liberals, and then we have the PQ on the committee. The PQ was more labour friendly. They would know the questions to ask. So, we'd go there and present, we had

some allies on there, right? Of course, then they would raise these issues and then we'd get off on these sidebar topics about what's happening with--. And these things would get reported. I can remember walking out of a meeting and all those managers behind me saying some pretty nasty stuff to me, right? And I'm there by myself so it's like walking down a back alley with a bunch of mature gentlemen.

But the bottom line is I need to do what I need to do, and it's not fun and games. This is not an easy job I do, representing working people. It's got its degree of challenges, especially in the grain sector. And even to this day, as late as last year, I mean, we had Glencore finalize the takeover, we had terminals switch around, and we had Superior Grain created through a merger through P & H and Cargill. That's a pretty busy year for everything that's happening, trying to integrate seniority rosters, all the things that go with that. A lot of complexities like enforcements. We still have some litigation ongoing with this. So the world hasn't got any simpler. Let's put it that way.

NP: Litigation related to?

HD: Takeovers, the seniority rights, severance payments, these types of things. It's always a big debate about these things in some cases. Sometimes it just sorts themselves out and other cases you've got a non-player. This time it's Glencore buying the facilities. They're not an operating entity on the waterfront, so it changed the dynamic. It changes the sort of interpretations of the collective agreement.

NP: What do you mean they're not an operating--?

HD: Well, they bought a company, but they don't have any infrastructure. They don't own the property. Where all the other buyouts and takeovers, they had infrastructure. The companies that bought the other companies had infrastructure in Thunder Bay, operating infrastructure.

NP: While Glencore has--?

HD: Glencore has Viterra. But they didn't buy--. It's not like when Sask Pool or UGG bought Manitoba Pool, where you have facilities at the terminal on the waterfront, right? Or Sask Pool buys UGG, you had facilities operating on the waterfront. Where Glencore doesn't.

NP: No, I don't understand that.

HD: Well, Glencore was an outside company that has no current terminal--.

NP: Oh, they weren't merging. They were just taking over.

HD: Yeah, just buying. Just buying. Just purchasing, not blending.

NP: Did they keep their management team pretty much?

HD: Pretty much, except at the senior level they integrated people with--. They put Glencore people into Viterra positions.

NP: Okay. In Saskatchewan?

HD: Yeah. Like the chief--.

NP: Rather than locally? Locally it stayed pretty much the same?

HD: Pretty much the same, yeah.

NP: And do you have any dealings with them? The Glencore people at--.

HD: Well, I mean, they call themselves Viterra, right? They're a wolf in sheep's clothing if you want to put it that way.

NP: Frank Mazur, what can you tell me about him?

HD: Well, Frank Mazur was hardcore. His father was an immigrant in the School of Hard Knocks. Tough as nails. Self-made man. Self-educated. Was for the workers 100 percent. I mean, he was a guy that says that a working man's brain doesn't start until his stomach is empty sometimes. He was a good mentor and a good friend to me. I think we did a paper. They interviewed me, and I think it was respected by many and misunderstood by a few. But, I mean, like I said, he was a burly-type, in your face, back-alley—that type of old-style unionism. But he really wasn't that way, but that's the way they perceived him, that he was tough as nails. And he was, but he was also a high degree of intelligence too.

NP: I'm just going to pause it. **[…]** So, we had Monika having to leave. She has a life, unlike me. [Laughs] We were talking about Frank Mazur, and you'd said something about his comment was, "A working man's mind doesn't start working until his stomach is--."

HD: "Empty". Sometimes.

NP: Empty. What did he mean by that?

[2:55:03]

HD: Well, I think, it was sort of what we call the silver-spoon syndrome. As you start to improve working conditions and wages and benefits, people forget where it all came from. Imagine today, our standards of work and benefits. Those battles were fought by others, and we're trying to maintain those. The companies are trying to erode them at times, but certainly I'm not sure there's an appreciation, or we try to instill in new members that this wasn't just given to you, that we had to fight every step of the way. And to some degree, they understand it now because what's happened in the grain sector, in part because lack of grain and in part because the MTI was getting favoured by the Canadian Wheat Board. They'd sort of sweetheart agreements in the amount of grain that they were handling there. It started to affect the amount of work that was available at the other facilities. So, we had an age-demographic issue at Viterra, or Sask Wheat Pool at the time, and everybody--.

NP: What does that mean?

HD: Well, everybody was older. Everybody was over the age of 50. So, all of a sudden, you had a mass exodus, and you had about 80 people exit within a five-year period, and you had all new people. Some people came back into the grain industry. They'd been in it and left. But for the most part it was new people. So, you had a lot of young people employed in the industry, and for five years they had a run of it. It was a heck of a run. It was more work, more overtime, and more money than you ever could have hoped to have made in this type of an industrial sector. You're making $25 or $28 an hour and working Saturdays and Sundays and nights, if they choose to. There was a lot of--. And it was steady work.

NP: That was the '70s?

HD: No, no, we're talking just recently.

NP: Oh really?

HD: Oh, yeah. This is like in the last eight years. And in the last three years, as things started to cycle down, and a little bit of shortage of products coming to the port—more clean grain, all the dynamic, you see. The world keeps changing. So, guess what? They were on a pretty stable, flat terrain and life was good. And all of a sudden, they had to go back on where we've been for over the years, back onto the grain elevator rollercoaster. The next thing you know, you don't know when you're going to get called back, and you don't know for how long you're going to get called back. Of course, this year's a bit different because they had this huge bumper crop. But I mean up to this point, all of a sudden, the same issues that were affecting us in the '70s—but mostly in the '80s—have resurrected. Now we see them, in our bargaining demands for example, tabling things that had been removed or lessened in the collective bargaining agreement, resurrecting themselves because they are being affected by it.

NP: Like seniority?

HD: Not so much seniority, but you know guarantees for like--. Well, what do you do with your benefits? When they first started to be employed, they were working almost year-round, so they had year-round benefit coverage. But now they're getting laid off for periods of time or laid off at the beginning of the month and recalled partway through the month. So now what do you do about your coverage for that month? Or in the winter you're laid off for two months, where before you'd maybe be laid off for a couple of weeks here and there. So, those types of things are starting to affect them. There is a deficiency and they're fulltime workers with parttime benefits, in a sense. The pension, they're not getting a full year of pension credit now.

So, all the same things we were fighting for and some things we corrected, but we weren't able to correct everything. Those things have resurrected themselves. So, history is repeating itself and the same type of challenges we were facing are facing them. It's an interesting dynamic as we see these things evolve.

One thing we did is we recruited heavily out of--. As we were transitioning to get people involved and do training, so we have a good core executive. I call it a new generational transitional plan, a successorship plan if you want to call it that. We've actually been very fortunate to have some real excellent candidates step forward. I was just at stewards training this morning, as a matter of fact, and I think we had five people there. I call them new generation, but some of them were in their forties, some of them were younger than that. But there's people that are going to be able to pick up the flag and run with it and know what the issues are. So, that's pretty positive to keep the continuity and fill the positions and make sure we're still basically a force to be reckoned with, so we can make sure the playing field stays even and that we can retain what we have. And hopefully swing the pendulum forward and fix some of the problems that are arising from the ever-dynamic and ever-changing, deregulated grain markets.

NP: Well, let's come back to that because the question started out by my saying, "What did Frank Mazur mean by such-and-such?" So, because he was a sort of iconic person, what did you learn from him? What do you think he did well and not so well?

[2:59:56]

HD: I didn't know him in his prime, so the things he did well was he had very strong leadership and very strong moral values, I think, and social values. He made sure what the labour movement was and that we continued to participate in the labour movement, and always reminded us of that. So, again, core principles. He's a strong believer in good leadership qualities. And even if he was a bit of a bull in the China shop, that's how he portrayed himself, but again there was much more intelligence behind that. He was a real strategist. We had to fight some real battles to get to where we needed to go.

He basically did that through the strikes in '68. He changed the whole face of the labour movement in Thunder Bay pertaining to what was happening in the renumeration of grain handlers were getting. We were behind the other industries, and we became the leader, and the rest of us followed. He was a real strong advocate moving people's, I guess, strata or social economic--.

NP: Standing?

HD: Standing. Was definitely raised by the battles that he had raised. He sacrificed a lot as well. I mean, there was health issues after he fought that fight. But he restructured our organization too. I think he had the foresight to do that, where we were more controlled as an international, like in the railway structure. So, he created our own system board for the grain elevator workers.

NP: A what system?

HD: A system board. A railway union, they would have like general chairmen, and it would basically be heading a system board. And the system board, because the railway system was all spread out all over the place, you have a bunch of smaller sites that would come together to form a bigger group, and that would be the system board. So, it might be 10 or 20 different locations. So, we were part of a Winnipeg system board, and it made no sense because we were bigger than the system board itself. He had a number of votes because we had such a large membership at the international conventions. So, there was an election going on, so the political dynamic was he went and talked to the person who was running for the election and said he carried the votes with him into that convention. So, he negotiated a deal that if we supported him, they would give us our own system board, and sure enough that happened.

NP: And what was the advantage of having your own system board?

HD: Well, A, we controlled the money, and we controlled the decisions that were made locally. So, now we had a grain board that was--. People from the System board 17 was all the grain elevators. Well, that was our executive and our membership from the system board. We were only strictly limited to the grain side. So, now we just made the decisions that were good for us, spend our money training and doing things. We had sponsored--. For example, when the grain industry was in transition even in Mazur's day through the West Act group to Western Transportation Advisory Committee I mentioned earlier, we got them to hold a plenary session here with all the stakeholders from across the system. They had the influence to be able to do that, study what was happening, and so on and so forth. So, we were pretty innovative in that regard. But then we were able to, like I said, keep more of the money at home and utilize it for our purposes of advocating on behalf of the workers in Thunder Bay that we represented.

NP: You said that he had strong moral and leadership values. Can you give an example of where you think--? Or, since you said that, what was an example of him showing that he was a moral person?

HD: Well, I think in part, for example, there was a strike going on, and they were trying to organize the support staff at the Port Arthur Clinic in Port Arthur, for example. So, he was in the picket line. And, of course, in those days, they were roughing up the women. This was happening, right? They had guards and police, and they really weren't--. We were there as part of the labour council—I wasn't there, but he was there as part of the labour council—and this was around '75. They arrested a bunch of them. So Mazur went to jail on principle. He wouldn't take bail. He actually went to jail to bring sort of notoriety to the dispute. Eventually, after, I think, about two or three days, somebody went and bailed him out, but he wouldn't let anybody bail him out before that because he felt strongly. They were advocating. So, there's a man ahead of his time. There was a bunch of women on the picket line, and he's a member of--.

NP: Who was roughing them up?

HD: Police and guards and people crossing the line, you know, who had to go and see the doctor. It wasn't a pretty picture. The other things were that he was a principled person, I thought. For example, the way we run our politics is if you supported somebody, you supported somebody, and you stuck with them through thick and thin, and good and bad. We carried that right to the end. It's not that you walked the lemmings off the edge of the cliff, but in one sense he's elected as the national president. He did make it all the way sort of to the top. He became the Canadian national president for BRAC for a term and a bit.

[3:05:20]

So, when we would indicate a time when they wanted to run a candidate against him, we stuck to our guns—even though we were sort of the black sheep of the family at the time. We kept our support. We knew we were going to go down, but we didn't waver from our proposition. And to this day, I carry those values with me, and we do the same thing. I've had the same thing occur regarding somebody trying to take out an incumbent. We just tell them, "This is how we do it. This is how we've always done it. This is how we always will do it." We just keep those lessons. Well taught and well learned going forward.

NP: Now, some unions have bad reputations for not being particularly clean. Was there ever a danger in the grain union group, that you're familiar with, where that sort of corruption was a possibility in--?

HD: Not in modern times. But, I mean, when the government brought Hal Banks in, for example. The government brought Hal Banks in regarding this whole Teamster thing, and the ILA, and the ships Seafarer's Union, and all this kind of stuff, right? They brought him in because there was alleged corruption there and Banks was supposed to come and clean up. The sheriff in town, clean it up. He was arguably more corrupt than the works of them. So it was force on force. In those days, there was a possibility that they could have had some undue influence, but going into the '60s, '70s, from what I understand, there wasn't any of that. Banks was sort of transposed out of the country.

But there was a time when it was a bit seedy, and there was this whole communist question. The Seafarers were viewed to be sort of communist based. So the Canadian government brought in someone to clean house of that particular perspective, right? There's a whole history that stands alone in that particular regard. But from our perspective, it never--. Once Mazur got involved, there was some issues with alcoholism. One of the leaders was an alleged alcoholic, and he had a responsibility, multiple responsibilities, and you could see that there was something going on. Mazur cleaned all that up and put checks and balances in place so that could never occur, and that he could never be brought into ill-repute in that regard.

From my perspective in the grain sector at least, I mean, I'm not sure about his private life, but he was clean as a whistle. We had our books audited twice a year, like, there was no opportunity for any type of corruption to occur. He took that right out of the system. He saw it for what it was and that wasn't his belief. He wanted the money to be used on behalf of the workers for the workers, for what it was intended for.

NP: Now, I had read a letter—a resignation letter, or at least it might have been minutes of a meeting where he resigned. What was happening there? It just sort of sounded like, you know, "If that's the way you're going to be, I'm not going to--."

HD: If I recollect correctly, there was an issue about this whole system board, and the system board was appointing the local chairman for this area. So, he's elected from-- It's almost like a political appointment. And this is the individual I'm referring to

who, arguably, had a drinking problem and that thing led to other problems. I think Mazur could see it for what it was, so he resigned and shortly after replaced that individual in that particular position. So, I think he did the honourable thing, if that's the situation. Then he came back in, and then by '66 he had actually become the local chairman and was holding the fulltime position and became the advocate. That other person became the assistant for a while, but then was shuffled out of there because, like I said, he had a dependency problem. The way I understood it.

NP: Who else was holding positions in the union when you first started?

HD: Well, when I first started, Don Taylor was the president, Joe Dziergo was an assistant. Every site had their own sort of dynamic, right? There was a few younger guys that had started to surface—Mike Poleck was one of them from our plant, Al Hilton was the one from the UGG plant. But there was a lot of old-school people because when you got elected in these positions, you know, it was senior people. You didn't see a big influx. These were the people that they knew. But slowly but surely, we started to transition. That's where Peron sort of surfaced, then you had Kostamo and Belluz, and all sorts of names like that start to get active.

[3:10:11]

NP: So, a lot of Italian and the ethnic names that wouldn't have been part of it to begin with?

HD: Except this is the second--.

NP: Second generation.

HD: This is the next generation, and these people are a little bit more educated, a little bit more knowledgeable, and then it just evolved. Then some of these people got knocked off and other people took over. Some people were just inherited to positions, and nobody would run against them. So, you didn't have any new ideas or thoughts there. Sometimes that wasn't good because there was new demands being placed on the old system, and the old school was still dealing like it was the old school.

For example, in shift work. They had it at first that if you were on shift, you had to stay on shift, and you had to be a 4:00 to 12:00 for the whole year. Well, those types of issues weren't palatable to people. So some of the people that became managers even fought those fights. You look in the files you can see they filed grievances from people that transitioned and ended up being senior managers that became foreman after, where there was injustice like that and unfairness. But those were simpler questions to answer because it didn't make any sense, right? A rotation made sense. How can a person live a life being on a straight night

shift? But that's how it was sometimes in the rail industry, like certain sectors had that. We sort of came from that transportation, rail sector, so sometimes there was rules that were archaic and unfair and unjust that were applied there.

NP: Bill Halverson? Was he there when you were there, or had he gone?

HD: I met him after, but yeah, if he was there, I don't recollect that he was there for any length of time.

NP: Because he was an electrician, I think. So, when did you go from fulltime elevator employee to fulltime union?

HD: Well, I never really was a fulltime elevator worker. I mean, for three years I worked fulltime in the grain business, but that was about it. From '82, '83, '84, I think. In '86 there was an election, so I think in March of '86—so probably the election was in February—we ended up knocking off the assistant, and then I started working for the union fulltime at that stage. And basically, I got put back in the plant. We had a strike in 1986, so they put me back in the plant for a few months. But it was so busy, and Mazur was really in a position he was starting to transition into the national office, so they brought me back because his focus was becoming spread because I think somebody was becoming ill. So, he stepped down and Mazur filled in, so they sensed that happening. I was off for maybe six or seven months and then they bought me back.

Then Richard McFarlane ran for the vacant position, and then I worked there until about '91. Then in '92, I went back to the plant for a little bit longer. Same thing—we were losing members, so you couldn't afford to have the two bodies. Shortly after being laid off, there was enough people that had issues that they decided that I would--. Well, somebody had to run, and so I put my name forward. Probably Mike Peron, if he would put his name forward, he would have probably to this day be doing what I'm doing. So, he certainly was capable of doing that, probably had a longer, more entrenched history in the labour than I did.

NP: And where was he working?

HD: He was working at Parrish & Heimbecker at the time, but he had worked--.

NP: Is he still around?

HD: Yeah. He worked at Sask Wheat Pool, but he came from the mines in Red Lake as early as 17. He got sort of taken on somebody's tutelage very early on in his career. So he got a lesson in life right from the get-go coming out of that. So, he's got real strong union values, but he's retired now. But anyhow, it ended up that he backed off and a couple people still let their names stand, but I was the frontrunner for whatever reason. The other fellow, like I said, disgruntled enough people more than--. Really,

he was totally capable of doing his jobs, but his mannerisms offended some people for whatever reason. Then it ended up that if somebody of some credibility didn't put their name forward, and if he was to get knocked off, any sort of Joe Blow could go there and then you'd end up with somebody that really wasn't the appropriate person to be in that position. So, we were almost mandated to run.

NP: Mr. McFarlane, is he still around?

HD: Yeah. He's a bit ill now these days.

NP: Okay. Did you ever regret the decision?

HD: No. When I ran in '86 and knocked off the president from the assistant's position, not that I regretted it, but I felt bad about it. But I didn't regret it. But I felt bad because the person that we took out was a really solid character, right? And even in Richard's situation, I had no ill-will against Richard. Richard had more or less saved my life at the grain elevator at one time, and he was a pretty decent guy. I mean, he had his ways about him. But I mean, over time he was the steward there, and we learned a lot from him too over the years. He was on negotiating committees and stuff. So, again, I felt bad about it, but the evolution was that he wasn't going to have the job at the end of the day, and either somebody that was part of the team was going to get it or somebody that wasn't part of the team was going to get it.

[3:15:42]

I'd been going to school and advocating and sitting on the executives and this type of thing, so it made sense that either myself or Peron or Donny Hutsel—the three of us, one of us—the three were the prime candidates and ought to be in that position if Richard wasn't. And in fact, Donny had run for the position against Richard when he first got elected, but he had lost for whatever reason. There was some question about his degree of support, where mine was more--. The dynamic that I had in their sector, was I had a group of friends that were cross-sectional, across all the terminals, more so than Donny did, I think. And I was younger, and playing baseball and these types of things—everybody knew me, right? Then we were doing these social things, like the boot hockey tournaments and everything like that, so I--.

NP: You were a good schmoozer.

HD: Yeah.

NP: Is yours an elected position?

HD: Not anymore, but then it was.

NP: Then it was. So, when did the shift come?

HD: In ’99, when we merged with Steel.

NP: So, is there a president now?

HD: Yeah, there’s a president now. Joe Rizzuto is the president now. He’s from Richardson’s. Good guy.

NP: How do you spell that name?

HD: R--. I always get this wrong. [Laughs] I can’t remember whether it’s--.

NP: [Laughs] See, when we transcribe, we need to know how to spell things.

HD: R-I-Z-Z-U-T-O.

NP: Rizzuto, okay. Okay. We do want to end this sometime, so I’m going to now check my questions and see which ones I haven’t asked.

HD: Go for it.

NP: There’s a general set of questions about changes, and I think we’ve probably covered all of the changes. Are there any that you can think of that you haven’t covered that--?

HD: No. The only one that we haven’t really touched base on is this whole—we did slightly—is the whole deregulation or transition away from the weighing and inspection divisions at the terminals, right? In a very limited capacity.

NP: Yeah, let’s deal with that then. That question usually comes up as well when we talk about the implications of no Wheat Board any longer, where there was grain directed here. But from what you said, it may not have been in Thunder Bay’s favour.

So, let's talk with the Wheat Board first because it was the first one to go down. Well, no. Let's go back to the Pools, all of the Pools amalgamating and eventually collapsing. Have you said everything that you'd like to say about the implications for that on the Thunder Bay waterfront and your--?

HD: Yeah, I mean, the takeovers, we sort of referenced that, is that once one company took over the other. They call them synergies. We call them job losses. The bottom line is you had an overcapacity of infrastructure, so they could handle the same grain from one facility or two facilities versus three or four facilities, and that's just the nature of the beast. It reduced the workforce complement immensely.

NP: But from what you've said, you managed to actually delay the inevitable?

HD: Yeah. If those takeovers hadn't occurred, there could potentially still be six companies operating in the waterfront in a fairly inefficient manner. There'd be a lot more jobs. Just the nature of the beast. Because each kingdom creates infrastructure and people that have to fill the positions. Now, the companies wouldn't be making as much money, but they'd still be making money in all likelihood. But again, when you start competing against the bigger interests, deregulations--. This is why you see like at Cargill, P&H, neither of them big enough to survive on their own, but together they create a new company like Superior, and they're becoming a force to be reckoned with against the Viterras and the Richardsons.

NP: A viable operation.

[3:20:00]

HD: Yeah. Sustainably viable, where before they were viable but questionable. Hanging onto the--. They'll be a lot better situated now than they were previously.

NP: Changes to—you referred to some of them--. Well, let's talk about the Wheat Board, because I did mention that. So, is that something that sort of even--.

HD: Well, the Wheat Board is, like I said, I made some comments earlier--.

NP: The previous though, the previous Wheat Board before this new quasi-Wheat Board.

HD: Well, at one stage they'd say, "The Wheat Board, would we be better off with it or without it?" The Western Transportation Grain Act, and they had the subsidy for transporting grain that they delayed it--.

NP: Crow Rate?

HD: Yeah. So, I mean that's a different beast than what the Wheat Board is. So, the Wheat Board, at one time, used to be, I thought, an advocate for Thunder Bay. They'd always use us. There was capacity here. They'd use Churchill to some degree, but in the end, because the companies tried to destroy the Wheat Board, and they failed on a political basis, the Wheat Board became their worst nightmare. They survived the onslaught. Then what they did was they went around, and they did sweetheart deals with companies—MTI—for slightly less. They're moving all their product through there and getting first preferential treatment, and it was at our detriment. That's because the companies didn't finish the kill. [Laughs] You can't go after somebody and try to legislate them out of existence, and then they're your worst nightmare because here they are, they remain after the fact.

So, without a doubt some of it was commercial—they claim it's all commercial—but I would suggest to you that there was a lot of politics at play there too. "You try to legislate me out of existence? Well, now I'm going to hurt your purse. Your purse is going to become a lot smaller now. We're going to start all these kind of deals, and we're going to put all kinds of pressure to have you change your cost structures and how you guys conduct business." With no recognition that some of these companies have all the infrastructure. So, I mean, the Great Lakes can, what, have no infrastructure? No costs? Everything that goes within all the political dynamic that's out in the Prairies, they avoid all that? And then they get all the grain coming into the Lakehead? How does that make any sense?

NP: My understanding of what is happening--. I'm going to shut this off here now because I'd like to come back to it, but I just want to state my understanding and then ask questions from it. **[…]** Then. We'll continue.

HD: Okay. I mean, as far as Wheat Board goes, there's some debate about what's actually occurring there. The bottom line though is that they're really technically being legislated out of existence over a five-year period. Basically, they've opened up the market, and the other grain companies have marketing arms and capacity—both in the Prairies and here in Thunder Bay, and in the lower St. Lawrence—and they're going to be competing, and are competing, for more than their fair share of the market. What we're sort of seeing is that there's some allegiance, I think, still to the Wheat Board from some of the farmer groups that like that particular single-desk type situation.

But the fact of the matter is that the economics will drive the system, in theory, and I think in practical terms. What's a little bit disturbing is, because they don't have any infrastructure, the Wheat Board is now, through whatever method—because it wasn't

really a company per se, it was a single-desk seller that would contract out and move the product through the other competitors—they're now becoming a competitor in itself. You're talking about boats, and you're talking about I guess cars, and you're talking about terminal—one of which is in Thunder Bay, which they purchased. So, doesn't make any sense to me that the Wheat Board is recreating itself as a competitor in the marketplace against the private companies. It's a beast that they sort of suggested they were going to legislate out of existence, so on what basis is a Wheat Board going to survive? It won't be a single-desk seller. It's going to be in the marketplace as it is now, competing head-to-head against the private entrepreneurs in Thunder Bay.

NP: So, it'll be another company?

HD: It is another company now is what it boils down to. They're fighting for their market share. They may have a niche market because they have a history, but I mean, it doesn't make any sense to me that, somehow, they should be allowed to create this competitor against that. And even if they do, I guess time will tell whether they can actually live in the marketplace.

But it sure does seem strange to me. And it really calls into question the whole relationship they had with the MTI, and they look at who was running that particular company. It was somebody that came from that public sector into the private sector, transitioned—and next thing you know they built their market share, and now that facility is being sold to the Wheat Board? There's a lot of questions to be asked about what occurred. How did this all sort of unfold over time? It's not as transparent as what it might seem.

[3:25:15]

NP: Let's say that those who predict what will happen in the five-year period—we're two years into it—so at the end of the five-year period, any kind of government backstopping of expenses for the organization will stop and that organization called the Canadian Wheat Board is left standing on its own. Is it an advantage to Thunder Bay to have another player? Or is it better that that organization disappear?

HD: Well, from my perspective it's better the organization disappear because, if you look at infrastructure and your capacity in the waterfront, if you have enough capacity in the waterfront to handle what's going to go through Thunder Bay, why would you need another competitor to split the pie into another slice? MTI was the same thing. When they came onboard, first they were going to be strictly, basically, a non-board, 200,000 tonne a year. They weren't going to affect the other operations. Before it's all said and done, they were closer to 2 million tonnes a year. They had a third of the market share and had first dibs on what grain would come into Thunder Bay. We would get the residuals at the other facilities. So, I mean good for MTI, however they did their business to be able to come up with that deal. But shame on the rest of the companies for letting that happen, including right back

from the get-go, where Saskatchewan Wheat Pool didn't do their job and enforced the caveats that allowed that competitor to be created.

But it makes even less sense, the Great Lake Shipping or whatever or Upper Great Lakes, buying and operating that facility. Good on them. They had the perspective and they made money with it. But I mean, the Wheat Board buying that facility? The Wheat Board? It just doesn't make any sense. It was legislated out of existence and now it's going to be a competitor bidding in the marketplace. Good for the farmers maybe, bad for the rest of the people who are competing for that grain across the waterfront. Somebody's going to pay the price for it, and it's just going to be some negative consequence come from it.

And that's if the Wheat Board can even survive at the end of the day. Because you get into the competitive marketing scheme, what does the farmer care? It's not really the Wheat Board anymore, it's a company that's going to be marketing your grain. They're going to want to go to where you get the best bang for your buck. Plain and simple. The Wheat Board has no advantage. It doesn't have any competitive advantage against the other companies, or at least shouldn't. A lot of the expertise that's at the Wheat Board is getting recruited and cherrypicked by the other companies to boot. So they're losing a lot of their competitive advantage. Those people are bailing and going to the private sector.

So, in the long term, I'm not sure what happens to the Wheat Board. Do those assets get purchased by somebody else? Does somebody else not on the Wheat Board come in, a Bunge or somebody like that? Who knows? But in my view, it doesn't make--. From what I know about business economics—and I don't profess to know a lot—but this doesn't make any sense to me.

It wasn't a good thing when MTI started handling CWB wheat. It cut into and reduced our members, from the union perspective. It was good for the people that worked there. They were displaced grain handlers a lot of them—all the more power to them. It did create jobs. There's 50 jobs out there. No problem with that. But a lot of that's at the expense of people that are at the other sites, and that's what we have a problem with.

NP: And if the other arrangement had worked, that you had talked about earlier, with something like the Air Canada. "We're bringing in new pilots. They're in a different agreement than the people who had--."

HD: Yeah, that wouldn't have been so bad because initially, again, they didn't claim to be going after that market share from the CWB. It wasn't even available to them. But it became available to them, and the next thing you know the whole system got bastardized in some way. Really because the other three grain companies—or other five grain companies—basically had their head buried in the sand, or some people would say their head buried somewhere else. But in any case, they dropped the ball and at

the end of the day, like I said, it cost them a lot of money. And it cost our members a lot of money as well because there was less grain to handle in their facilities.

NP: The other thing that we had talked about just as we headed into that discussion was the changes that had come about just recently with the Canadian Grain Commission, which is a government organization.

HD: Yeah. Basically, it's really where they oversight. They've privatized the oversight, and they're going to leave it up to the customers and companies to more or less police themselves. There is some degree of some boats that are going offshore that there's still some requirement that there be some inspection done. But for the most part it's been just transferred to the private interpreters and basically that's who's going to do it. The companies are going to do it, or else it's going to get contracted out to--.

[3:30:16]

NP: Licensed by the Grain Commission or just--?

HD: No, just that they have certain accreditations that they have to follow, standards that the customer will dictate, and that's what they'll follow. They have certain standards. The standards are still there. So, they'll give the quality assurance or specifications, and that's what'll have to be met. And if they think they need to, they'll have people oversighting. In some cases, private entrepreneurs confirming certain grades or whatever for a fail-safe or check and balance. So, it's unfortunate, but this is what the government did. It's not uncommon to what they do when they deregulate other industries. This is really just deregulation of that particular component of the grain sector.

NP: Is there any indication that it'll make any difference? Or is it too early on?

HD: Well, the companies are claiming they can do it better themselves. They can do it more efficiently—and whether that's true or not, the proof will come out. The test will be the proof will be in the pudding in the long run. But initially maybe there is some cost savings for the companies who are trying to do it internal. But I guess, if you get a boat turned back, then how does that factor into the equation? And again, that can easily happen. You're talking boatloads that are worth $5-10 million. If you screw up, there'll be significant consequences in that particular regard. It's your reputation being put at risk because you're doing it inhouse now, versus before they had some standing, those particular government agencies.

But there's a lot of jobs lost because of it as well in the oversight. You know, what happens in the deregulation? Well, if you look at what happens in the meat industry—and this is a food sector—what happens there? You hear all kinds of horror stories. I think

in the paper yesterday or the news yesterday, one of the CBC shows had done some kind of a study on the health and safety or cleanliness of restaurants. The standard is less than adequate. If you look at listeriosis or other poisonings there are by lack of internal oversight. I mean, water and food are probably two things that you would think people would want to have pretty tight controls on. There seems to be some misnomer out there that somehow the private sector will police themselves. Well, when it's profit-driven, or there's costs associated with it, I don't think that system has worked, personally. But that's my own personal philosophy.

But I think the proof is in the pudding that when you see more and more returns of a product, recalls—I'm not talking cars, I'm talking food products—so I mean, what's happening to the whole standards on a global and a Canadian basis? Something's lacking here. We're really going down a slippery slope in the wrong direction. It is what it is, and we'll have to deal with it. Yeah. This goes back to Mazur's saying, where a person's brain doesn't start to kick in until their stomach's empty. Well, maybe you kill a few people or whatever, or lose a few million dollars on a couple of bad boatloads, maybe you'll think twice about it.

But in some cases, like I said, they do a lot more oversight. We've created some positions in some of the terminals in this regard. Some of the work has been contracted out. We've regained more positions in some of the terminals, and they're doing some of that work inhouse. So, it's creating work for us as well. But not all the companies, some of them are contracting that work out. So, we're not very happy about that. Sometimes customers want a third-party to oversight. In those cases, you need it, but not in all cases. A majority of the grain will be handled internal, off shipped, and you can probably do that with your inhouse people. But for whatever reason they've chosen not to. So, that would have to be an issue we bring up at the bargaining table to be able to resolve, I think.

NP: Well, here's a question. Some people find this very difficult to answer, but maybe you've got an answer off the top of your head. When you think back on your career—both working at the elevator and in the union part of it—what might surprise people most about the work that you did? Or do?

HD: As far as from the grain side, I think when people hear about how complicated a grain elevator is. There's a lot more to the picture than you think, and when you tell people about it and the size—I talk about a boat or these types of things—even when I bring relatives here and drive them around to a site just to have a look-see at it, they're pretty astonished by what happens at these particular facilities, eh? So, again, these are large facilities with not a whole lot of people working in them, but again it's a lot more complex than people realize. When you think about a food product and the end point, about how this sort of happens, it's pretty amazing when you think about it, right?

[3:35:05]

Sometimes when you tell them a few stories, like you break a lightbulb when you're throwing something in to poke a bin, what happens to that product? How does that get cleaned out of there? Or the few other stories, if there's mice or these types of things in the facility, doesn't that contaminate things? So, you have all sorts of stories about that, but again, there's all sorts of checks and balances now where they're much more so these days than they ever were in the past. It's an eye opener for them for sure. It's the complexity or, I don't know, the size. There's a lot more going on there than people ever dreamed of. Until you go see it you won't believe it, right? You won't even see that with our project we're working on, right? You take somebody into a grain elevator, they're going to be looking around, "What's all this stuff? Grain?"

NP: Yes, because behind the machines there's all the processes that you don't see unless you're there when it's being done, or when an incident happens that might not happen very often.

HD: So, then if you look at a TV show and you see how the farmer's plant and harvest and seed, this is highly technical. And the size of the equipment they're using, it's enormous. It's unbelievable. Even I'm amazed sometimes when you look and just see how technologically advanced they are at these things when they're harvesting and everything else. How can you go through a field with a plant and end up with a head of grain—like a seed—at the end of the process by just running it through a machine in a field? I mean, I was just looking at a show the other night and they were harvesting corn. It was the same sort of thing, right? They're coming out with kernels of corn at the end of it, like how do you do that? [Laughs]

NP: Yeah, how does that one machine manage to do that? Well, you didn't answer the question about what might surprise people about the union piece.

HD: Oh! I think that people really have no idea about how, I guess, savvy we are or how progressive we were, and how progressive we are. We're no different than the companies. We're partners, and that it takes foresight. It's not about dollars and cents. It's not about getting more. It's way more in depth than that. There's lots of complex issues. So complex that people would never imagine the type of things you're dealing with, they have no clue. And really, the type of odds that are against you by dealing with the companies. These companies are not--. It's not an easy process. You have working relationships, but there's a lot of challenges. As you see companies centralize, as you see companies become offshore owners, they become more and more harsh, and it becomes more and more difficult to maintain the standards that we've come accustomed to.

There's a real globalization. There's a real emphasis to try to lower standards for workers. You see this with pension rights. You just look around what's happening at Caterpillar, you know? They want to cut your wage in half or move your job Stateside or Mexico or China, these types of things. You hear this all the time. And yet, you also hear there's recalls because they're feeding

you poison chicken or poison drywall from what they're producing to China. Where does it all end? So, there's all these types of challenges. We have to be very astute and progressive in this regard, and professional. So, there's a lot more--. You'd never be able to describe that to people. They just wouldn't quite understand. When they see you in action sometimes, I think people are really amazed by what we're really about and what they thought we were about. They have no clue.

NP: They've got the TV version of the union.

HD: Yeah, exactly. The 30-second snippet, right?

NP: Yeah. Through your career then, reviewing it, what would you say you are most proud of?

HD: I think that having the opportunity to be able to advocate for working people, and really society in general, and the community. I mean, we've tried to do good work, and I've made sure that I'm active in the community and that the union stays active in the community and part of the labour movement. We participate in all kinds of functions and charity events, things like Shelter House. You know, if somebody needs a helping hand, we're able to help them out. Trying to instill those values. Those values have been instilled in me and trying to instill those in others, so we become a progressive group, open minded.

I guess if there was a highlight—I'm not sure it's a highlight—but I remember when the starch and gluten plant was going down, and ADM announced the closure. I remember Mayor Hamilton at the time, I got a hold of him. Interestingly enough, out of his mayor's office, he could look out the window and that's what he would see: Pool 8 and the starch and gluten plant right by the railway station. So, we struck a committee, and we got some dollars together from the economic development corporation in the union, ministry of mines, and the government. We struck a committee, and we were meeting three times a day, actually. And then finally Hamilton ended up making a call. We got a reprieve in the plant, and it lasted for another two years. So, that was a pretty good accomplishment because it really wasn't an economical plant to keep. Technically it was, but not for ADM.

[3:40:47]

NP: Was it Riverside--?

HD: Riverside Grain in the end.

NP: Riverside Grain at the time?

HD: No, it was ADM had bought it. It was a Labatt's company prior to that. So anyhow, it rose from the ashes. Unfortunately, it ended up in ashes, right, when it burnt down? [Laughing] But it rose from the ashes, and we got a reprieve. And, like I said, the market, they were putting significant hurdles, regulatory hurdles, against us to be able to move the product. A lot of that [inaudible] starch there went to the pulp industry and these types of things, so that sector started to weaken. When Riverside came and resurrected it, it was potentially, arguably, still viable, but there was too many--. They had effluent issues. They had a whole bunch of issues, challenges, that they couldn't overcome.

NP: Who was Riverside Grain?

HD: Just a private, small venture company that had some people that worked in that sector before and restarted up the industry.

NP: When was this ADM starch--. What years were--?

HD: Probably around '93, '94, somewhere around there. I'd have to check the dates for sure. But anyhow, that wasn't--. There's many highlights, but that was one thing where we actually pulled a rabbit out of a hat. Again, there was a whole community of stakeholders came together—we had the former managers and everybody—and it was an amazing experience. There is so many other experiences as well, right? Just generally overall, just happy to be, as they say have the privilege to represent working people and do good work in the community. I think I've tried to do my best and that's all I can do, really.

NP: Well, did you notice how this really fits in very much with the first part of our conversation? Where you were talking about the work you were doing at Brent Park. You haven't changed much.

HD: No, not really. [Laughs] I belong to an organization, and they have these values in this organization. I remember talking to an individual, and he said, "You were one of us long before you ever joined us," kind of thing. I knew kind of what he meant there, just had a certain philosophy. That comes from values from your parents. What you instill. I mean, I was a badass with the best of them, and I made my fair share of mistakes, but I've done a lot more good than I have bad.

NP: You've made up. [Laughs] You've made up for it.

HD: I made up for it, yeah.

NP: You haven't told us about the bad stuff.

HD: Nor will I. [Laughing] It's not a part that I'm really proud of. But you make choices times--.

NP: That's okay, we'll get somebody else to tell us about it. [Laughing] Any other vivid memories that--. We're down to our last couple of minutes. Any other vivid memories?

HD: You know, when it was busy, when I first started working in the grain industry, and you're at a certain age and certain things are happening in your life, and you're a little bit younger, and a little bit crazier, and a little bit more adventurous. I mean, we spent a lot of time in the grain elevators, but there's a thousand stories you could tell that just make you laugh. Some of it's ridiculous, some of it's outlandish, some of it's just outrageous, and some of it's just good fun, right?

I remember we were doing a sit up contest one time, and for whatever reason we were going to the gym. So, we decided we were going to have a contest of who could do the most sit ups. Anyhow, I remember I did whatever sit ups to the number I could do, and we're all getting in there, and looking outside there. I forget how many I could do, but I could do quite a bit in those days. I think we had a dollar in the pool or whatever. So then, when we finished the contest, after I did all mine—and of course I strained my stomach muscles to say the least because there was money on the line, not a lot of money—then they came in and, basically, they just threw the money at me. They didn't do their sit ups, right, because they couldn't beat it. I did way more than they could. [Laughing]

[3:44:56]

But just craziness. I remember one time we always have a big cook up on Fridays or Saturdays. Two quick stories in that regard. We were doing the car shed, so somebody had to go stir the ribs; somebody's wife made ribs, so they had a big pot of ribs—sweet and sour ribs. So, somebody would go by and stir it. So everybody's going down and stirring it. Four o'clock rolled around and now we're going to break for supper, so we went down there. There was no ribs left in the container. Everybody that had gone down there to stir had a couple, so all there was was sauce left at the end of the night. [Laughing] So, lots of things like that. A tonne of good memories in that respect.

NP: Well, I'm hoping that I'd like to interview Tom Hamilton in a similar situation about his career. But then I would still like to get the two of you together to do just the stories, where we don't have to have questions and follow some kind of systematic approach. So, start jotting down your stories because those are always the ones that are more interesting to listen to. [Laughing] You know that we are working on, because you're part of our committee, on trying to get a grain industry centre established. So, if we are fortunate enough to have that happen, what about the union would you like to see featured there?

HD: Well, I think, one thing is that sometimes we're the forgotten lot. We're an afterthought. I think that we had a critical role to play. It's more than just what's in the body of a collective agreement, I think there's a lot to be said about what we did in the public eye, and what we did in different presentations--for example, the task force on dust explosions after the '45 and '52. We were a catalyst to having that occur, and having the current legislation requirements that are there. So, I mean, there's a lot of stuff that occurred in the industry that we were a party or a catalyst for. Those things should be recognized.

Plus, the fact is, the success of the companies is really based on the success of the members and their employees. It was fair day's work for fair day's pay. I think that recognizing that that component is not just bags that hang in the rafters in this regard, it's all part and parcel. Somebody filled those bags and threw them on the boat, kind of thing. All sorts of things go into the success of an industry. You'd have to capture that in some way. It's no different than the picture. We have a stand-up picture of the sampler with a little boy beside him there; that's all part and parcel. [Note: Herb is referring to a life-sized cardboard cut-out that we used in our public displays.] That's what the reality is. I used the sample scoop in the car shed and the boats, and that was part and parcel—one part—of what we did. One of many components.

NP: Even just knowing the job categories and the processes that required a certain expertise in order for them to operate properly, and that there's a pride in doing it and doing it well, which translates into what you were talking about—the success of the companies. Anything else you would like to add in our last three minutes?

HD: Last three minutes. No, I think we've pretty much captured the essence of it. I just congratulate yourself and others that have been working on this project for a number of years. I mean, you're persistent. I remember getting a call like probably 10 years ago about the whole idea, and you're still here long after I think you ever intended to be. Maybe not as far along as what we want it to be, but certainly we've made some progress. I think that it's an idea that something's going to come of it. I'm not exactly sure what will come of it at the end of the day, but--. It may not be exactly what we envisioned, but I think that there will be something. And I think the ideals will be alive. Well, even if it doesn't come to fruition immediately, over time I think it will. Hopefully sooner than later, but--.

NP: Well, I think what we've managed to do, and thanks in part to the cooperation from the union, is we've managed to raise an awareness of an industry that was in danger of disappearing from the community's view. For those in the industry, they know it's still viable and still operating, although at a much reduced number of employees, but we've got the history. We've managed to save some of it that might have disappeared otherwise.

HD: And that's good.

NP: Onward and upward.

HD: Onward and upward, yeah. And this Voices project is one part of that.

NP: Oh, for sure. This is a very big part of it.

HD: I mean, when you listen to the Speak interview—running out with his favourite sweater on fire—I mean, I knew the man, and I'd never heard that story before. I listened to it on the Voices tape. I know him personally outside of work, and I knew him at work, and I mean it was very--. There are several interviews like that. The Mallons' interview is another one. I think it really does represent like what it was all about at the time. And those guys were solid people in the grain industry, that I recollect at least.

NP: And that's what I like about putting all these pieces together is that somebody could be, you think, passing along a sense of a situation that is completely their own, but when you get all of the other people feeding in you really do get a sense of what was going on. Anyway, thank you very much. Finally, we got this interview done. Once we're off tape, which we will be very shortly, I'd like to get some of those names again because we are running out of time to get these interviews done under the timeline of our project. So, farewell listener.

End of interview.