

Narrator: Bernard Domes (BD)

Company Affiliations: Paterson Grain, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

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Summary: Retired general manager and vice president of country operations Bernard Domes discusses his long career in the western Canadian grain industry. He begins by describing his upbringing on a farm, his foray into farming as an adult, and his move into the grain business with Saskatchewan Wheat Pool as a relieving elevator manager. He discusses travelling to country elevators, dealing with unknown and unkempt equipment, buying grain from farmers, and testing grain for quality. He then describes his move to Paterson Grain in a permanent elevator manager position. He recalls dealing with Canadian Wheat Board programs, like quotas and rail coordination, as well as grain storage issues. Domes discusses his change into management first as district manager then as assistant to the general manager, and he recounts his major responsibilities, like travelling across the Prairies and auditing elevators. He then ascended to general manager and vice president at a time of major elevator consolidation and rail line rationalization. He describes the process of trading elevators, decommissioning elevators, and choosing sites for new, larger inland terminal construction. Other topics discussed include electronic upgrades to elevators, labour relations in private and cooperative companies, and Paterson Grain's philanthropy in various communities.

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Time, Speaker, Narrative
NP: This is an interview being conducted on October 23, 2009, by Nancy Perozzo with Mr. Bert Domes in his house on Monty Hall Drive in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I'd like to start the interview by asking Mr. Domes to introduce himself a little bit more broadly, and since I already know that he grew up on a farm, just to tell us a little bit about his life in the early years on the Saskatchewan farm.

BD: I grew up in-- Wait, just a minute. Can you cut that off?

NP: Okay, we can cut anything out so don't worry about it.

BD: Hi, my name is Bernard Arnold Domes. I go by BAD, Bad. Anyway, I was born on the farm in Yellow Grass, Saskatchewan. I guess it was section 2, township 10, range 16, west of the second meridian, and of course I was brought into this world by a midwife, and well we stayed. I guess we moved from one farm to the other, when I was just a little baby—I think about 2 or 3 months old or less than that. We lived on the farm for-- Well we went to school in Yellow Grass. First of all, at a local school outside of town. It was a country school. Then for our high school education, we went into Yellow Grass, and of course stayed on the farm. My father needed help on there, so we stayed there for quite a while and then my mother got ill, and we had to go to the States several times a year to get medical help. So the wife and I, after we got married, the wife and I farmed the land, and we had some land of our own. We stayed there for, what, I guess three years, and then one year—I think it was 1951—frost came along and froze our crop, so we thought we better do something else. That's when we decided to go into the grain business.

NP: Just to go back a little bit then, was your father the original homesteader on the farm that you were born on?

BD: Well, he was not a homesteader on that land, no. He farmed at one time just south of Yellow Grass, and then this land come up for sale, of course, they bought this section of land.

NP: And where was his family from?

BD: His family well he came in from England. I guess that's where he came from, and his wife was—of course my grandmother—but I think she came from the Ukraine one time and this was back in the 1800s, whatever year I forget. My mother was born in the Northwest Territories which was at Yellow Grass, and she was born at the farm in the same house that I was born, of course. What else should I say about that?

NP: Was it a large farm?

BD: A section of land.

NP: At that time quite a large--.

BD: Yeah, one section. Well, I guess, yeah, it was probably the average-sized farm at that time.

NP: Did your dad ever tell stories about what it was like way back when in his early days?

BD: Probably he did. He did tell us about what Yellow Grass was like at one time, you know. They had a drug store. They had a doctor, and they had a three or four livery stables, and they had grocery stores, a tin smith, and two blacksmith shops and it was a going--. And a jewelry shop beside.

NP: Now I'm completely ignorant of where Yellow Grass is in relation to some of the bigger centres in Saskatchewan.

BD: Well, if you know of Regina--.

NP: Oh yes.

BD: Or Weyburn, Saskatchewan. We're about 18 miles, I guess, northwest of Weyburn and about 54 miles southeast of Regina.

NP: Oh, okay.

BD: Yeah.

NP: The southern part of the province then.

BD: Southern part of the province.

NP: Close to the American border? Not too far away?

BD: Oh yes, we'd be about 50-some miles I suppose from the border.

NP: So, the frost took one of your crops and you realized what a risky business this farming was.

BD: You know, when you go back and think about it, my wife and I walked through our field on August the 4th. It was one of the most beautiful crops you'd ever want to look at. As a matter of fact, a lot of people wouldn't even recognize grain like wheat, filling eight rows, and generally six-row would be classified as a good crop, but this was filling eight row and that night it froze and the grain actually stank the field.

NP: Even though I'm not a farmer, August the 4th seems like an awfully early frost.

BD: That was an early frost that year.

NP: A lot of people who would be listening to this conversation won't necessarily know what you mean by filling eight rows. They'd be thinking you'd be talking about rows in the ground, but I think it's something else, isn't it?

BD: Well, they would--. How would you classify eight rows? You have a head of grain and then the kernels would be formed around the grain whether it's two or six row or whatever and this would be eight rows around the circle up at the top.

NP: So a really good yield then.

BD: It would've been a tremendous yield.

NP: Wow. Complete loss with frost?

BD: Well, the old traditional one-tonne trucks at that time would carry a good grain about 100 bushels of grain. We combined it and you could get about 34 bushels in the truck. So, you could imagine the extent of damage.

NP: What year would this have been? Do you recall?

BD: That was 1951.

NP: Yes, and a matter of fact I think you said that, 1951. What was life on the farm like then on the standpoint of machinery? You mentioned the truck.

BD: Oh, the machinery at that time? I guess probably maybe a lot of people had tractors already, and they were McCormick Deerings, 10W20 and 15-30. That's what the size of the machine was. But there were other machines too. There were Cockshutt's and Case and Massey Harris, there were all kinds of them.

NP: So, once you decided to move into a different area of the grain trade, because farming sure is--.

BD: That's when we decided that we would enter the grain industry. So, I took up employment with the Sask Wheat Pool, and I was--.

NP: Were all of the companies represented at Yellow Grass or was it--?

BD: Oh, there was I guess at that time there was the Pool, Paterson's, Searle, Pioneer—it could've been Western at that time—but Pioneer, and United Grain Growers. It wasn't United Grain Growers at the time either, it was McCabe Grain.

NP: Ah, okay.

BD: So, there's five elevators in time.

NP: Right. Interesting you say that because yesterday we finished an interview with Richard Kroft who is Charlie Kroft's son, and he was talking about the buyout of McCabe's by--.

BD: Grain Growers.

NP: Or National first and then Grain Growers? I'm not quite sure whether there was sort of a quick two-step there.

BD: I don't know. I thought perhaps that UGG bought McCabe's out directly.

NP: Okay, yeah. I'm no expert, so don't rely on me.

BD: That would be, that would probably be after I left there.

NP: So, you went to the Pool for employment?

BD: About a year and a half.

NP: And what did you do there?

BD: Well, of course, I was learning the trade of buying grain, and of course I thought I maybe knew grain pretty well at that time. So, anyway, we went from one station to another, and they promised a station that you could have on your own. Well anyway, I had

took some stations over that were—a fellow had to go for an operation or whatever. He wasn't there for four or five months or whatever.

So anyway I handled a lot of grain for them but from one station to another it just seemed that they promised you something and they wouldn't come through with it, but in this one station I went to, one of the later ones, and got into the elevator and tried to start it up and of course it was run by small gasoline engines, this one was in particular, so we get in there to try and start up and go down to find out that the belts were torn apart. Actually, the rats chewed the lacing out of the belts. So, first thing you knew you had to lace the belt to get the machinery going, and then of course you tried to put the elevator into gear, so to speak, with a clutch to take it in and out of gear but find out that's rusted shut.

So anyway, you learn to start the engine or the elevator, but when you started the engine, you had to start the whole elevator, and that was a jackshaft from the engine over to the other side, under the office—the gangplank they call it—then was another jackshaft and another belt going into the elevator, and it was run by rope sheaves. They were big, long wheels with the ropes to drive the ropes up to the top of the elevator to elevate the grain. So, you get down there and first thing you know when you get the engine started it plugged up. They're running it a bit too fast. It plugged up. So, they have two inspection holes on either side of the leg, the elevating leg, so I got to put a trouble light in there, and it only went down about two feet, and it was full of dust and grain. The rope sheave, it was just creating a path in the dust. That's where it was running. So anyway, we got a fellow out of the country to come in, and I think we took three truckloads of stuff out of the pits to get that cleaned up. Then of course in the meantime I already had the clutch fixed up and--.

NP: So not everybody was good at maintaining their operation or their housekeeping.

BD: They sure weren't looking after their elevators. That's for sure not. One of the fellows out of the district, he was hauling grain out one day, in fact he was the director of the Pool, he was hauling grain this day and it was a real strong wind from the southeast. He come in and dumped his grain, and he said, "Domes, you better get oil on them rollers!" The old barn track rollers. And he said, "Get them fixed up." And I said, "I beg your pardon? You know there's an oil can in the basement of the engine room. If you want to oil them, you go ahead and oil them." I was getting kind of fed up at that time having to fix all this machinery and not that was the first elevator I had to do that either.

So then Mr. Bob Pringle out of Regina called me one day and he said, "I want you to go to Estlin, Saskatchewan. The man down there had a hernia operation or something and he won't be able to work for about four, five, six months," Well, I said, "Is there any living accommodations?" He said, "No. I understand you can have a half-tonne truck. You can load yourself up with a big couch to sleep on. You can take a loaf of bread or some sausage or something." That's exactly what he said! I said, "Well, if that's the best

you got.” They had already promised me an elevator a couple of times, but things came up that they needed somebody to look after these stations. And anyway, I said, “I’ll tell you what. I guess maybe that’s the end of our association.” So, I quit just like that and then I went to Paterson’s.

NP: Which elevator were at you at the time that you left the Pool then?

BD: I suppose it would be my hometown, Yellow Grass.

NP: Okay.

BD: Fellow by the name of Kennedy of course, Earl Kennedy, he was the manager at one time, and I don’t know that he ever come back or whether somebody took over. But, yeah, that was there. I helped out at Wilcox, Riceton, McTaggart, and Weyburn for them. Four different places. And handled a lot of grain at each location, too.

NP: I’d like to come back to talk about the grain handling in something that you mentioned earlier, but before I do, I’ve just been reading a book by a fellow, and I cannot remember his last name, but his nickname is Bing, and he used to construct elevators in Saskatchewan all over the place. Ring a bell at all?

BD: Bing?

NP: And it was around the time that you were--.

BD: No, not Bing. I don’t recall.

NP: Too bad I can’t remember his last name, and I can’t recall either who he’s building for. Probably the Pool but I’m not sure.

BD: Not at bequest now.

NP: All over the province. He travelled from place to place, fixing up these problems you’re talking about. He found them in quite a disarray as well.

BD: No, I don’t recall anybody by the name of Bing.

NP: Well, if I think about it, I'll send you his full name because I have the book on my bedside table, so I'll have a look at it. You might even enjoy the book. It's just his reminiscence of—probably starting in the 1930s—of going from place to place in Saskatchewan building and repairing the primary elevators.

BD: Primary repair crew.

NP: Yup. One of the things that you mentioned, just at the time that you were talking about leaving the farm and taking a job with the Pool as a buyer, you said, "I thought I knew a lot about grain." What did you learn in those early days that you didn't know as a farmer?

BD: I think maybe it just comes naturally. Just come naturally.

NP: So, the skills you had maybe as being a farm boy--.

BD: Of course, yeah, but other than that, you know when you got into your first location that I assisted, which was at Wilcox, Saskatchewan, the guy was pretty good at showing me various things.

NP: And what would you have to watch for?

BD: Well, it was all mostly visual for quality. You had your scales for testing for weight, for example, and you had equipment to assess dockage. He had the--. I recall at Wilcox they had to test for moisture. We had the old Brown-Duvel moisture testers, where you cooked the grain in oil and then it would take, it seems to me it would take about three quarters of an hour to cook this grain, and then you'd have to let it cool. Of course, as you cooked it, the moisture would drop out into a container, and then it would take about 20 minutes to cool and then when it would cool that's when the moisture would drip into a container and it would tell you exactly what moisture content was in a grain.

NP: So when a farmer came in with a load then, what kinds of tests did you have to do or was it largely visual? When would you have to do this longer--.

BD: Well, mostly visual. If you looked at the grain and felt the grain and you felt that it had pretty good weight, and then you'd have to just visually determine what grade you were going to place on it. There were various factors of course when grading the grain—there was mildew, there was starch, and whatever.

NP: And was it an easy process to agree with the farmer as to what the grade should be?

BD: Well, they had an idea too, of course. The grain trade was a very competitive industry so you couldn't be too wrong in grading your grain.

NP: Or they'd go to--?

BD: The opposition. For sure.

NP: Now, did I ask this? When you moved to Paterson then, it was Paterson in Yellow Grass?

BD: Paterson was in Yellow Grass, yes.

NP: And what happened there? What was your--.

BD: What happened there? I started off with Ozzie Barkwell. He was the agent—they called them agents at that time—stayed with him for a while and then right away they asked me to go to Woodrow, Saskatchewan, so I went over there. The guy apparently went on holidays, and he never did come back as a matter of fact. We stayed there for a couple of weeks or whatever and from there we came back and then they wanted me to go to, I guess it was Whitewood, Saskatchewan, or maybe Lumsden first.

This guy was going to go on vacation too, Lloyd Gerson, and that was of course when the elevator was run by diesel engine and you had to acquaint yourself with the starting of this thing, too, because if you didn't have enough air in the tank, the tank would start with pressure, open the valve on the tank, and the air would kick the engine into gear and away she go.

But if that was run out of air, you had to start it with your foot. You'd get into the rums [inaudible] of the flywheels, and you'd get it started of course. That particular, I think I was there about two weeks, and we had farmer were hauling grain over a valley, which had a bridge in it, and it was going to wash out and they were serious about that, so they were hauling grain until about 12:00 at night. Then you'd have to load cars during the day and do everything else, but I think that week, week and a half, I handled about 60,000 bushels of grain. Farmers were just hauling and hauling.

NP: Non-stop.

BD: Non-stop. At that time of course we were able to get cars to ship it out right away too. But from there, either it was Willcox or not Willcox but Whitewood or Lumsden, but then the district manager over there in that area, he approached me, and he said, "We want you to take an elevator." And then we went to Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan. We were there for--. What was it, Jo? 1953 to--.

JO: '57.

BD: '57. About four years, a little over four years. And then I was asked to come to Winnipeg to be a district manager for the Winnipeg territory. Four years after that, I went into the office, and I took a training to what was going on in the office.

NP: So, you must have been really pleased, both of you, to actually have a place that you didn't have to move out of in a couple of weeks.

BD: Well, yes, for sure. We were at Qu'Appelle for four years, and then of course came back here into Winnipeg. That was something else that we got a house, and of course I was on the road for four years.

NP: What was it like being an elevator manager of your own in a community? What were your living accommodations like? How do you establish connections in the community? Anything you can--.

BD: Our company, Paterson's, they furnished homes for their managers. At that time, they did. I guess it's changed now, but they did at that time, and the homes that they provided their managers were real good homes, and so anyway, at the time-- As a matter of fact your part of your salary they give us a home free of rent, but later on the government changed regulations where you either had to declare it as income. You had a reasonable rate of rent, and then they have to start charging rent, but the homes were good.

Being in the community of course you get involved in the various activities in the community. When I took over Paterson's down in Qu'Appelle, the fellow that had run the elevator I guess he wasn't too honest of a guy in dealing with because we had a coal business there too and things of that nature. It was a requirement to make weigh-overs in the elevators every so often, and I guess things didn't work out, and they fired him, of course. Then I took over from that situation. It wasn't a very pleasant situation to take over because he had a lot of friends in that district, but we survived, and we built the business up.

At that time in Qu'Appelle, there was Lake of the Woods, Paterson's, National Grain, and the Pool, those four elevators, and of course [inaudible] was competitive and besides, at that time, the availability of boxcars to ship your grain forward--. They had a kind of a more or less ordering system from the Canadian Wheat Board. They give you a number, so you could get X number of cars. Most of the time I was congested, totally. You couldn't get enough cars to build up your business.

So anyway, at one particular time this happened, and I had I think 50 orders, I forget the numbers anymore. But they had a number to it. But anyway, I was supposed to get several cars, and all of a sudden, the train come in and spotted them all at the Pool elevator. So anyway, I called my district manager at the time, Mr. Andy Anderson, and I said, "You better come to Qu'Appelle because I'll need you. What we're going to do here, seemingly, this agent is supporting the Pool more than the rest of us. We're going to have to put in the car order book. If we want some cars, that's what we'll do." And the CPR shunned on anybody trying to put in our order book.

NP: What does that mean? Putting in the car order book?

BD: We would go right directly to the railway or to the commission or wherever, and we say, "We want X number of cars." That's it. We just put an order in that was a safety--.

NP: Mechanism?

BD: Safety program or mechanism I guess you would call it for anybody that thought maybe that he wasn't getting a just deal out of a car. However, we got down there, and when the district manager and myself went over to the railway agent and he changed his tune pretty fast, of course, and we were able to get cars after that.

NP: The interviews that we're doing, I think a lot of them tend to be pretty sanitized as far as what goes on in various areas and was there much of this sort of favoritism or money changing hands under the table?

BD: I don't think there was money changing hands. I think it was just the Sask Wheat Pool. They were one of the bigger grain companies in the province, and I guess some of the people were cooperative minded and that had something to do with it. But that wasn't that certainly wasn't too extensive.

NP: Not a usual case, this was an unusual case.

BD: Yeah, and you could block that out of here, too, as far as I'm concerned, but that's the way it was, and it was difficult to improve your business. If somebody got the cars, they got the space, they could take in more grain. That's what it was all about.

NP: And that's what I'm learning about this during this project. That whole transportation issue is a very complicated issue.

BD: Yes, it became more so after a while with the Canadian Wheat Board being involved with the distribution of orders. They had various programs, and every company didn't agree with what program we should have. By and large they favoured the Pools, the Wheat Board. Sure, they did. And I'm sure that if we could've had more leeway in the acquiring of cars to free our system up, we could've done much better.

NP: Since we're talking about the Wheat Board, and I understand just from general knowledge that the Wheat Board had quota systems where looking at their orders and letting farmers know when they could deliver certain grains I imagine wheat, usually, to be delivered to the elevators in order to supply the terminals and the ships. That quota system how did it impact your workload? If at all.

BD: Well, with the quota system it was necessary for each farmer to get a permit book. In that permit book outlined the amount of land he farmed, and the acreages seeded to the various grains. The Wheat Board come in and they assigned quotas to the various grains, when they could be delivered, I suppose. It's all related to the sales that we're making. Each farmer, for example, if you had 100 acres seeded to spring wheat and if there's a quota of three-bushel acre, he could deliver 300 bushels. That's the way it went.

NP: Were you aware that calls were coming so that you could prepare, or did it really make any difference?

BD: It didn't really make any difference, really. No, it didn't make any difference. It's just you were able to take the grain as they opened the quotas if there was enough space. But no, it didn't really impact on your buying ability to buy more grain.

NP: Storage space in the elevators.

BD: Oh, well, that was another thing of course, storage space. We had annexes to the elevator for storage and some of that grain stayed in there for years, we never moved, and that's what it was all about. Well, elevator companies they were paid storage by the Wheat Board.

NP: So you could make money off of it sitting there, although you'd prefer it not to be.

BD: No, we could make more money handling grain, not storing, no. We weren't in the storage business. We were in the handling business. But if you had the grain there, you couldn't move it, you were getting something to look after it. And if you didn't look after it, if you bought it for a certain grade and if that grain went bad in the storage bins, and you shipped it out, you'd have to take the loss.

NP: And what would cause something to go bad in the storage bins?

BD: Grain beetles, rusty grain beetle for example. They'd come if it got hot in the summer or whatever. And the humidity, I think the top of the grain would get kind of dampish but--. Not dampish, but what do I mean? The moisture content would be greater at times than others, so you'd have to make sure that the surface was worked up so that the air could go through. But if, like I say, if it didn't grade what you bought it for at unload, then you took the loss.

NP: How long does grain last in storage under normal conditions?

BD: Years.

NP: So as long as it's well--.

BD: Well, looked after.

NP: The bugs don't get in.

BD: Oh yeah, for sure. Years.

NP: Did you ever clear out an elevator?

BD: Totally?

NP: Yeah.

BD: Not to my knowledge, and we always had grain in our elevators, for sure.

NP: I think the '50s was a time when there was lots--.

BD: That was a bad time. Grain was stored all over the place.

NP: Right. They're building big storage areas in Thunder Bay at that time. Huge storage areas.

BD: But, in later years in [inaudible], of course, that system was changed dramatically since that time. But it was an earning for the grain companies, if they were able to keep the grain in good condition.

NP: So, back to your--. You were at the Qu'Appelle elevator and then you became--.

BD: Well, we moved to Winnipeg four years after that. We moved to Winnipeg, and I was a district manager.

NP: What would you say the biggest changes were, other than a much bigger city, the biggest changes dealing with the Winnipeg area?

BD: Well, the idea is you had one elevator to look after when you were buying grain, and of course you're responsible for all your managers to buy the grain, and we had 25 locations when I took over here in Winnipeg area, so it was a matter of making sure they were buying it properly and--.

NP: How do you not buy grain properly?

BD: Well, best grade. There were a lot of times in particular when I moved here and there was, oh, a few stations that they had bought grain that had frost! The year before they had frost too, and they'd come into the elevator, and it was in the elevators and some of the fellows weren't just up to grading frosted grain. If they could grade it at one grade, and it certainly wasn't that grade, you'd take a big loss. I found that out when I got here.

NP: What kind of training did the elevator staff have for their being able to recognize things like frost damage?

BD: Generally, when we took people into the grain trade, young people starting out, we'd have somebody train him like the elevator agent themselves. They would be as an assistant, and he'd get his training from the grain buyer, and of course the grain buyer would get help from other areas too, like a grading department in Winnipeg.

NP: So Paterson had its own grading department at head office?

BD: Yes, we did.

NP: At head office.

BD: Yup.

NP: Was that pretty standard for the companies?

BD: Standard for all companies.

NP: What were some of the towns that you were responsible for as the Winnipeg--?

BD: Down north here we had 25 stations. Let's see, we got Teulon and Balmoral and later years Arborg—wasn't there at the time—but there was Meadows and Marquette, Dakota, La Salle, Culross, Fannystelle, Elm Creek, Holland, Cypress River, and then we come down Somerset, Swan Lake, Kane, Morris, St. Jean, Emerson, Dufrost, Ridgeville. I don't know. [Laughs] That's quite a few of them anyway.

NP: That's a pretty big territory.

BD: Well, yeah, it was about 100 miles west to Morris, St. Jean, did I mention Emerson/St. Jean?

NP: Emerson, I think St. Jean.

BD: St. Jean, it was to the border here 70 miles. And every year, not every year, but as soon as you could get yourself to the right timing of space within an elevator, which yet again was a requirement of the Canadian Grain Commission, that you weigh all your grain in your elevators. I think you knew that.

NP: Mmhmm.

BD: That was another job of a district manager, to go in there and weigh all that grain. Sometimes you could weigh most of it, sometimes not. Anybody that had these flat annexes, well then you couldn't. The space was so acute you couldn't bring it all in and weigh it anyways, so you'd measure it and get samples of the grain and hopefully, most of the time, we'd try to weigh the grain out into the bins so that we'd have a record of it beforehand. Then we'd weigh the grain in the elevator and what we call permanent annexes you could auger the grain in to weigh it and then auger it back out.

NP: What kind of annexes were those?

BD: They call them permanent annexes.

NP: As opposed to?

BD: Flat storage.

NP: Or temporary annexes?

BD: Temporary, yeah, storage.

NP: That's interesting because in that book I was talking to you about he talked about temporary annexes and I thought, "Gee they're building a lot of temporary annexes, were they really? They didn't mean that the annex was temporary, they meant the storage in the annex was temporary.

BD: Oh well, yes, I think it could relate to both versions. They were temporary because we thought we built them to store the grain and hopefully to get rid of it. After that you wouldn't need them, but they were there for years and years and years.

NP: They just became one of the sites, but not the desirable one if the--.

BD: Not the desirable ones, no. We had quite a few in the Paterson organization of what they call permanent annexes, where you'd run your grain into these bins, several bins, they'd maybe have upwards to ten or twelve bins, and then you could bring it in with an auger and put it out with an auger, too, of course.

NP: Now when you moved into Winnipeg then, did you become more familiar, or maybe were already quite familiar, with what happened sort of east of here shipping down to Thunder Bay?

BD: Yeah. Paterson's of course they had a terminal down there. Yeah, I was quite familiar with what was going on.

NP: Did you ever visit Thunder Bay?

BD: Yes.

NP: And do you remember the first time you saw the Paterson Elevator there?

BD: You just look at it, of course you know it's there, eh? They had the one terminal, and I don't know whether they called it the Synagogue or whatever that was a big annex beside it, eh? But yeah, I was familiar with their operations. Of course, the grain would come there, and they'd clean it. Every company would like to send their grain to their own terminal, but in later years they had to take an allocation of the grain that was shipped to Thunder Bay, and it would be divided between the various terminals out there.

NP: What was your first reaction to the terminal elevator itself? Anything you recall?

BD: It was something of a bigger nature, of course. But of course, you'd get familiar with these things by looking at pictures and reading and whatever. It wasn't a big surprise.

NP: I don't even know if it's possible for you to answer this question, because there may not be such a thing as a typical day but when you were the Winnipeg district manager, what would a typical day be like?

BD: You'd go out there. Of course, you'd set yourself an itinerary and hopefully that you can fulfill it. You'd go from one station to the other. Of course, you'd go through their books, and you'd talk to the manager about his family, about the business, the people in the community, or whatever. That wasn't on every visit, but you'd go through the routine of making sure that things were proper.

You might take a sample of the grain that they were buying, pull a hopper full of grain and just check it to see whether he was doing it properly, and of course certain stations were pay or payees. If a farmer delivered grain, they had safes in their elevator. They had cash, and a farmer wanted to get cash for the grain well the manager would make out a cash ticket and then he would turn it into the manager for cash. But on occasion you would perhaps count the cash to see if it was all there. If it needed an inspection bureau, that was a subsidiary of the Grain Insurance and Guarantee, they had insurance in all elevators. They would send their men out, and they would check the cash as well.

NP: They'd do a more intensive audit of the financial side of it.

BD: The financial side of it. Of course, mind you, their inspectors were actually to make sure that you were living up to fire standards, but they would also check the cash when they were going through. We didn't have that at every station but there was a few of them had it.

NP: What kind of challenges did you have to deal with in that position? What would you say would be tough things you had to do?

BD: Overall, you wanted your operations to go smoothly, and the more grain you handled, the more money you'd make, and that was a challenge. Every day you went out to make sure the managers were attuned to what was going on in the community and find out if there were any problems with any farmers or whatever. The thing is to get along with them and do the best you can. You had to kind of persuade them and work with them. You wouldn't want to be somebody that was just being out there as a boss. You'd have to be one of them.

NP: That would be the kiss of death.

BD: One of them.

NP: And you were!

BD: Well, certainly.

NP: Because you came up through that system, seeing those 25—I think you were saying, those 25 communities—so you would really see quite a difference in how the operations operated. There would be more successful ones and less successful ones I would think if that was--.

BD: Yeah, you could only expect so much of a certain community. Some people had, or some stations had, more accessibility to more grain, better land in the community, and probably maybe they grew better crops. There was a variety of things that you had to take into consideration. You just couldn't say, "You're not doing a good enough job. You're not handling enough grain." Well, you just couldn't do it.

NP: So how would you get that knowledge because there could be, just thinking about it, those are really important considerations, because you can't expect someone in The Pas, for example, running an elevator out of there to get the same crop yield down in Kane, let's say.

BD: Kane was another one, yeah.

NP: You would rely on your elevator operators to say, "This is what we can expect for business here. Even if we had all of it, we're only going to be able to do so well."

BD: You would take a survey of how much grain was growing in the area by looking at the permit books and calculating the number of acres seeded to wheat, oats, durum, barley, whatever. Then you'd figure out the average yield and then you'd say, "This is what can be expected within that particular area." By and large we would say, "We have 2 percent of the total volume of grain in western Canada." So we'd say, "All right, 2 percent. Well, we should get so much." But here again some people handled a lot more than 2 percent. But the average like I say was about 2-3 percent of the time. You'd strive to do your best to get as much as you could. Of course, there were so many roadblocks in there, and you couldn't get cars. How are you going to improve your business? First thing you know your customer is going to someplace else just because of the lack of space.

NP: From seeing all of your elevator managers, what would you say would be the predictors that somebody is going to be very good at the job versus some that just manage?

BD: There were variations of course. Some were better than others. Consequently, they got paid better than others too. Some guys they just maybe didn't put out 100 percent, and yet and some people didn't handle maybe their proportionate number of bushels or whatever it was. You knew you had to take into consideration how difficult it would be for them to succeed. You had to take a lot of things into consideration.

NP: And the ones who succeeded? Even in, let's say, over exceeded even your expectations given what they were.

BD: Well, we had a bonus deal in the fall of the year and at the end of the crop year we had a bonus deal. We would rate our managers, the whole [inaudible], from one to ten.

NP: So, no particular qualities in the person that sort of meant that they were going to do a better job?

BD: No, but you have to take everything into consideration. How difficult it would be for that manager to have handled that much more grain, and there were circumstances where quota systems or whatever, maybe some areas that would be froze out or drowned out, they couldn't handle the grain. The grain wasn't there, so you have to take everything into consideration.

NP: Did you ever have to let anybody go?

BD: Yes.

NP: What kinds of things lead to that?

BD: Well--.

NP: Many?

BD: No, no, no. At one location, when I first came into Manitoba, and I was on the road and the district manager that was going into the office, he took me around the territory. We got into this one location and apparently the guy was getting dried out in a hospital, so eventually when that was part of my first responsibility, but anyway I had to let him go.

NP: Personnel issues that come up in every business.

BD: Oh! Don't they ever! For sure. I had to let a couple, two or three, go which wasn't a pleasant thing but it was business.

NP: I'm sure.

BD: It was business.

NP: That's the tough part of management.

BD: The tough part of management.

NP: So that district manager position, I think you moved on from that, correct? If I understood, you were the district manager for what length of time?

BD: I guess from the 1st of January 1958, and then I went into the office four years after that, and I guess '62.

NP: How did your responsibilities change then?

BD: Well, I got into the office, and I guess I was kind of a general gopher [inaudible] at the time, in the grading room, knowing what that was all about there. Of course, I knew that from travelling. I used to come in every Saturday. We used to work six and a half days a week, you know, come in on Saturday and come into the grading room and do a lot of things there. Then of course, when I got into the office, I had generalized right through the office to know what each department was doing. Then later on, I guess it was about a year became assistant to the general manager.

NP: You moved up the system pretty fast then.

BD: Moved up the system, yeah.

NP: Very fast.

BD: Very fast.

NP: Six-and-a-half-day week. When did that end?

BD: We used to go like travel for five days. Saturday morning go into the office, spent another half a day at the office. So, you'd have Sunday and a half a day Saturday.

NP: You were on the road for the previous position every week then, or pretty much.

BD: Every week, yeah.

NP: Wow, that's not an easy life either.

BD: No, it's not an easy life, particularly when you had to take inventory at all these locations. You know. they'd like to have every station being weighed over every year, eh? So that was a lot of work.

NP: And what was accommodation like for you? A lot of those places would they have hotels or--?

BD: Some of them didn't. For example, well, of course in Winnipeg you'd come home all the time from these closer locations. But if you get out to the country a bit, like for example let's say Haywood, Manitoba, which is down at one of our locations, too, you'd go to St. Claude because they had a hotel there—good water. You could have a shower or something. That was good. But most of them had accommodations. I shouldn't say most of them, like Dufrost out south you'd go to Morris for the night or something like Saint Jean.

NP: Yeah, you were never very far from--.

BD: No.

NP: So assistant to the--.

BD: General manager.

NP: General manager. So what is entailed in that job?

BD: Well, again he was responsible for the outcome of what was happening at every location over the total line.

NP: Who was the person in that position when you first started as the assistant?

BD: Oh, he was Mr. Russ Livesly.

NP: And what can you tell me about Mr. Livesly?

BD: He was--.

NP: What was his background?

BD: His background?

NP: Mmhmm.

BD: Oh, he came up from being a grain buyer, at one time, I believe. One time he had a store in Lena, Manitoba. I'm not too sure. I think it was Lena, Manitoba, and then he went from there into the grain business as a district manager. He went back into the office just like the way I planned, I suppose.

NP: So he was responsible for all of the Paterson elevators in the country?

BD: That's right.

NP: In the countryside.

BD: That's right and he of course was accountable to the--. He was the general superintendent. That's what his job was, general superintendent, and then he had to be accountable to the manager which was Barry Knight at the time.

NP: Of country elevators, the manager of country elevators or the manager of the whole company?

BD: He would be the manager of country elevators at the time, yeah, Russ Livesly. I'm sorry, yeah, and then he'd be accountable to the general manager.

NP: So being an assistant to him, did your life change very much from being the district manager, or just your travels took you further away?

BD: Well, like I said, I was a gopher. I was doing everything. Of course, I had to know what was going on at every location throughout the line, then, of course.

NP: How many country elevators, approximately? [Laughs] I won't ask you to name them.

BD: No, no. I could name a lot of them. Oh, I think probably when I started we had close to 100 or 98 or something of that nature.

NP: How far west did they go?

BD: Went as far--. When I started, they were as far as Hilledale, Alberta. Then we had quite a few out in western Saskatchewan.

NP: Were they mostly Manitoba locations?

BD: No, they were split between Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

NP: Okay and then a few Alberta ones.

BD: A few, yeah. Well Alberta, we only had one. We had traded various elevators off before I got into the business, but they had several in Alberta at one time.

NP: When you were in the head office there as assistant was there much trading off of elevators at that point or were things fairly stable during that time period?

BD: We were trading elevators when I got into being an assistant. We were trading elevators. There was a formula for trading elevators. If you handled so much grain at one station and you wanted to trade out of that station with another grain company that had another station, you'd look at the amount of grain each handled and over a period of so many years, and if there was a difference in potential, then you'd come up with cash, and you'd take one company off one market and put him into a different market. So that's the way it went. That was just a handshake deal, just a verbal deal too, put on paper but nobody signed it.

NP: How does it get initiated?

BD: Well through, I guess, through meetings with the various head offices in the grain companies. Sask Wheat Pool, they come into the program later on, and they weren't really into the program of, if you've traded them into a station that they would pay you the difference or you would pay them the difference. They weren't involved in that, but they waited for you to get the heck out of a market first. That was their potential.

NP: So you decide to sell, and they say, "Okay."

BD: Well, if it come to the point where you weren't making any money at a station, you'd sell. You'd try to get out of it, and then you'd trade with them. Maybe you had something, but they were reluctant to trade. They'd sooner see somebody get off the market, and if then you have to close the station then they'd just close it.

NP: Because most of the time they would be--. They would have an awful lot of elevators that would already be in a place where you have an elevator so they're just glad to see you go.

BD: Yeah, down in the Soo line, for example, mainline elevators would be down six-seven miles apart. They'd have elevators at every location.

NP: So that's close then.

BD: Oh yeah, right.

NP: What would be more smart, let's say, more profitable?

BD: I can't blame them for what they were doing because that was business. If they didn't have to do it, why do it? If you could take somebody off the market and improve your own lot, so be it.

NP: Every ten miles might be a better setup or--?

BD: On the Soo line in Saskatchewan, say for example, between Weyburn and Yellow Grass there was Weyburn and there was McTaggart. There was Brightmore, and there was Yellow Grass. There was four and that was within 18 miles, and then there was Ibsen. There was Lang, there was Milestone, then there was Wilcox. There was Rouleau, Drinkwater. You go down the Soo line, and they weren't too far apart but maybe 10, 15 miles would be a better average. But down the Soo line they were scattered all over the place.

NP: And I imagine as grain farms got bigger, there was less need to have these smaller places so close together as trucks became bigger.

BD: Right. Now apparently, when you go down the main line in Saskatchewan or down No. 1 Highway, you'd never know the country anymore because some of the towns have no elevators at all. They're gone. Yellow Grass had five elevators. I think there's only one left, and that's Grain Growers. Well, they had built a new one since they dealt with McCabe's at one time. It's a new elevator but I think it's just a specialized elevator for handling certain grains or whatever.

NP: Quite a difference.

BD: Oh! Tremendous.

NP: People get lost a lot now I understand in the rural areas because they don't have the elevators to show them where they are.

BD: That's right. They were stand out flagpole for example in the community.

NP: Yeah. When an elevator was decommissioned and not bought by somebody, what happened then? Were they left standing or--.

BD: Whenever the station was just--.

NP: Just sort of closed up.

BD: Abandoned like more or less?

NP: Yeah. Was there any requirement to do anything with them?

BD: No. Generally, they were demolished. Yeah, that's what happened.

NP: Put out for bids?

BD: Well, nobody would bid on them.

NP: No?

BD: No. Once you left a station nobody would go back into it because there's no need for it. No, we'd just--.

NP: Would it be salvaged?

BD: Generally not. We'd get a fellow in that was demolishing elevators. He'd come in there and blow them up and just haul the stuff out to the nuisance ground and burn it. At one time, we had the CNR in the Wakopa subdivision in southern Manitoba. We lost seven elevators one time because they abandoned the line—the railways. So we had to close them all up. And of course, when we were able to get all the grain out of these elevators, we had moved one annex over to Killarney, one elevator to Elgin, another one over to Fairfax from that line. We had movers moving. But the rest of them were just demolished.

NP: It wouldn't seem to me that moving an elevator would be a very easy thing to do.

BD: No, it wasn't.

NP: What did that look like?

BD: Oh, they just put it on, I don't know how many wheels they'd have on them, like tire wheels, and they'd have about 20 or 30 hydraulic jacks that worked in unison to get the elevator straight, and if it went over a slope, well it would adjust itself. We would--.

NP: And pull them down the highway.

BD: Whatever. Some highways, generally in the country, down country roads. Then you'd have a problem with making arrangements with telephone, hydro, bridges, had to be shored up. There was a lot of--.

NP: And all of that at company expense?

BD: All at company expense.

NP: Hm. So you had to do some calculations to make sure it was going to be made worthwhile.

BD: I was involved in that, too, besides, that was an interesting project.

NP: So you want to tell me more about that because it's a very unusual project.

BD: Well, no, but like you say, you had to make all the arrangements with the various people like telephone, hydro, municipalities. You had to have insurance, and there was a lot involved.

NP: Getting the grain out of them, were you given at least enough notice to be able to use the track to grain out?

BD: Yeah, we were able to ship it out on the track before they pulled it out.

NP: At a loss? Having to sell off stuff you'd rather not sell off?

BD: We lost the business at all seven stations. So that was a big loss in itself.

NP: And other companies, I guess, were on the line as well?

BD: Oh yeah, sure. Manitoba Pool for example. I guess Grain Growers were on a couple locations, but yeah they--.

NP: Were you involved in negotiations to try and get them not to close the line?

BD: You know, the meetings were ongoing. Now when they decided, CNR, at that time, to close a line, they would just close it. But the CPR, not CN so much, but CPR held meetings at various locations. You could put in a brief as to why they shouldn't.

NP: Were you ever able to salvage a line that might have otherwise gone or was it just making you feel a bit better that you had the chance to say something?

BD: Not really. I think probably at times I think maybe they prolonged the abandonment, but it was in the works in a way.

NP: Yeah, the writing was on the wall.

BD: The writing was on the wall. That was one of the things that started the revolution, I guess you'd call it. With all these grain elevators disappearing and the rail lines of course going first. Then the elevators and farms got bigger.

NP: One of the people that we interviewed, Mr. Dawson from Cargill, I believe, anyway, he had this big map of the rail lines and the primary elevators from earlier days. On the other side of the map, he had maybe 20 years later. The difference in the number of squiggly lines showing the railways on one side versus the other, very major change, even in over the time I've become more interested in grain.

BD: Well, we had a map in our office at one time. We had—this was years ago too when I was in there—we had-- Well what happens if the railway starts abandoning various lines? I think we had 50-some stations pinpointed in western Canada. It was so long ago, and it's coming into realization now.

NP: Just taking a little longer time, I think, than people anticipated, but a lot of these changes were envisioned many years before.

BD: Yeah, well, certainly. At one time, if you had a 15-foot scale or 20-foot scale in your elevator and then farmers started buying big trucks, people were hauling grain with larger trucks, so you had to install larger scales and everything. They just kept progressing.

NP: The Seaway being an example, too, the ships starting out, you know there'd be hundreds of ships on the Kam River at one time because the ships were tiny, the elevators initially were also much smaller, and as the ships got bigger, it wasn't just a question of, "Oh great, we don't have to have as many ships!" But then the Seaway's too small. You have to expand the Seaway.

BD: Well, that was Paterson's, I guess, problem too. I guess the draft, the deepness of the water, they could just only load so they couldn't top up a big ship, so they had to pull it someplace else. Of course that was one of the problems that the shipping industry didn't like to put in a big ship there and have to move to get it topped up at another elevator.

NP: I think the assistance for dredging disappeared.

BD: Oh yeah exactly.

NP: So, yeah.

BD: A lot of changes.

NP: A lot of changes. Well, let's finish with you're the assistant to the manager.

BD: The manager of country operations.

NP: Country operations and then--.

BD: Well, after that, there was a fellow that he was looking after the paperwork in our office related to the operations in Thunder Bay, so when Mr. Livesly retired, and Lauren Paterson took over--.

NP: Was Lauren Paterson a Paterson or just the same name?

BD: No, just the same name.

NP: Two Ts instead of one or?

BD: One T.

NP: One T? Oh.

BD: Same thing. And he took over for I don't know how many years. He was in there, three years, and anyway he retired, and I took over.

NP: As the manager?

BD: As--. What did they call me? I guess general manager, eh?

NP: So this was with paperwork, you became responsible for paperwork in Thunder Bay?

BD: No. No, Thunder Bay was already gone, after that.

NP: Okay so when did you take over the position that Mr.--

BD: Oh, jeez I forget the year. It had to have been about four years, five years before I retired. Six years, I don't know.

NP: May have been about--. It doesn't have to be precise I'm just trying to sort of--.

BD: Might have been something like that, I don't know.

NP: So when did their elevator go down? Do you remember? When did they dismantle the Thunder Bay one?

BD: I'm not too sure of exactly when.

NP: I'm not either.

BD: No. I'm not sure.

NP: In the '70s maybe because we moved to Winnipeg in the '70s, and I think it was still there when we moved, so probably around that era. Would that fit with your career there, timing?

BD: But anyway, after I got to be the general manager of the grain division, and they later gave me the assignment of vice president and general manager of the grain division, so I had to--.

NP: So what were your duties then as the--?

BD: Well, there was no—you had to report directly to Don Paterson then—there was no general manager as such. You became the-- . I became vice-president and general manager of the grain division.

NP: And the other divisions were? Fee, shipping? Was shipping still around then?

BD: Oh no. Well, we had a sales manager of course, eh? And we had a person that was under the manager of country operations. I had an assistant general manager. No, he was assistant of country operations, then he became the manager of country operations under me.

NP: Which you had left.

BD: Under me.

NP: Yeah. So when you moved up to that position then, as sort of VP of grain division, what were your duties there? How did they differ from--.

BD: Well, we had a construction company too. Our boys built our own elevators, and in the latter years we had engineers come in build the high throughput, but that was after I left. But yeah, we built our own elevators. We had our own construction crew, and we were like--. I was responsible for where we're going to build, what we're going to do. If we're going to spend a great deal of money, I certainly had to go to the president to find out whether I could get the money in the first place. But that was part of the job. Overall, it was just to make sure the operations were going smoothly, that's it.

NP: So making the decision to build an elevator and build it that sounds like a pretty major project so what would be entailed in--?

BD: Well, you'd have to take the potential in the area, make sure that the rail line was sound, it was going to stay there, and sometimes it wasn't the right decision because later on some of the places that we built were traded off to another grain company. As times changed, the whole area of handling grain changed.

NP: Was the design of those elevators pretty standard so that--? Did you have special engineering staff or was it really mainly a construction project?

BD: More or less standard throughout the industry. But other than that, like I say, it was just a matter of trying to make a dollar. Trying to stay in business.

NP: Take me through sort of the decision making to build. How did you decide that, yes, things were looking promising here, besides making sure the rail line was stable? What kind of research did you do or reconnaissance?

BD: We would look after--. Initially you would look the area over as to how many acres there were seeded in the area, and what your opposition were doing, and what their percentage of the market would be, and what you expected you could handle at the station. You had to do that. And as a matter of fact, if you were at a station and you were doing quite well and you needed new facilities well, you know, it's either abandon the station or do something about it. So, then that was a major decision too. So you had a bunch of faithful customers, and so you had turned around, you had to take that into consideration.

NP: So could you retrofit an old one or that, just like many buildings today, it's better to just take it down and build a new one?

BD: Well, the older ones had small scales, and while we did install larger scales at some locations, that wasn't the end of all we had to have faster facilities. Perhaps maybe you could elevate a couple of thousands of bushels and hour, but then you need to have something that elevated 10,000 bushels and hour, so that speed up the operation so everything was and you have to load cars much faster too.

NP: Because hopper cars I guess were coming in and--.

BD: Oh yeah, certainly, and then the system, the railways, they give you some incentive. They give you a couple of bucks of whatever it was. It was a price tag on it, if you could have a 25 or 30 car spot and that was an incentive to--.

NP: Send up more than a couple at a time.

BD: That's right! So, you'd build your facilities so that you could at least fulfill the obligations of loading the cars in a certain length of time, so many in a certain length of time.

NP: One of my disappointments in this project was that I didn't get a chance to interview Mr. Don Paterson.

BD: Yeah, he's gone.

NP: Yes.

BD: God bless him, yeah.

NP: Yes. What can you tell me about him?

BD: Well, what can I say about Don Paterson? Very astute, he was a real gentleman. He, of course as you probably know then, I guess, he was an Air Force pilot during the war as was his brother John. John was a fighter pilot. They spent their time overseas and had a lot of trips and more, I suppose. Don was--.

NP: What did you admire about his way of running the company?

BD: Well, you know something, he let the people in charge of the industry run it. You would go to him with a proposal to build an elevator and how much money you're going to spend, and he thought perhaps if it was--. You had of course the board of directors too, maybe thought that perhaps it was within the budget and it looked good, fine and dandy. But yeah, he let the personnel of the company run the company.

NP: So he hired good people and then made sure that they--.

BD: That's probably maybe what they endeavoured to do. Yeah.

NP: We've covered an awful lot in your career, how long was it? The total career from the day you started to--.

BD: His book, the book that Paterson put out, you've seen it, I guess.

NP: Yes, I have. Rob got me a copy.

BD: I was 30 years in that book, but I was 37 and a half years.

NP: Okay, now we've got it on record

BD: There you are.

NP: Now you're corrected.

BD: Well, yeah, I was 37 and a half years with them. All my some of the stuff that I took out of the office when I left, and I don't know why the office manager gave it to me and I stuffed it away, I don't know where it is, but I guess they were just guessing. But yeah, 37 and a half years.

NP: So when you look back on that career and a very successful one, what are you most proud of?

BD: Most proud of? That I worked with a tremendous company. They were good. The Patersons were good.

NP: But you did work, too, and so out of what you did or accomplished, what--. And it doesn't have to be big. It can be small, some people who answer this question say, "You know, I was most proud of that piece of machinery that I helped design" or--.

BD: Well, you know I was proud in the fact that what I did, I did to the best of my ability, and I got awarded for it. Okay? What can I say?

NP: That's everything then.

BD: Yeah, that's right. They were a tremendous company to work for, and you had something to work for.

NP: You had something to work for.

BD: No, but you were happy to do the things that made the company prosper. Let's put it that way. That was your ultimate goal.

NP: And you're proud of what you did.

BD: Sure.

NP: And what they did.

BD: Oh, definitely. Yes, for sure.

NP: You know I'm just going to take a second here to look at my questions because I think we've covered most of them even though not in the order I've got them on the page but that's usual too. I just want to see if I've missed anything. Well, this question some people find difficult to answer but I'll ask you. What might surprise people most about the work you did?

BD: Well, probably surprise them?

NP: Like find unusual or "Gee, I never would've thought that," or--.

BD: I don't know. I think probably maybe the--. I was a no-nonsense person, and I was one of very few words, but I tried to express myself in a way to get the best out of people. Let's put it that way.

NP: That's a pretty important skill as a manager.

BD: Well, you got to do it somewhere down the road. I remember one time--. You can take this off the record.

NP: You want me to? Sure I need to take it off or just remove it from the--.

BD: Take it off.

NP: Okay, just a second.

BD: Not take it off, just stop it.

NP: Okay, just a second, I have to think about how to do that so I don't screw things up.

BD: You have to go back, maybe.

NP: No, I just have to press pause. **[Audio pauses]** Going back on tape now. I have a couple of questions here. I think we've actually dealt with them, but I just want to give you an opportunity in case there's something else you want to add to what you've said. During that 37 years, what would you say were the biggest changes? The ones that stick in your mind or the ones that had the most impact.

BD: I think they were gradual. They were just a gradual change in the industry. The allocation of cars for shipping of grain. I think maybe the railways disappearing at various locations, and then the building of larger elevators, the disposing of smaller elevators, and getting rid of certain elevators. It was just a gradual change in the industry, and I think it was just gradual.

NP: Mmhmm. Any--. And I can see why you say that. Any ways of doing business changes, I mean not the physical you get rid of the lines and so on, any changes in the ways of doing business or even though physical things change, the ways of doing business pretty much stayed the same?

BD: In my time, I suppose not so much. But I think after I retired that's when the big changes came about.

NP: How would you describe those changes?

BD: Well, when I retired that fall, or prior to my retirement, I was involved in acquiring rail line to build a high throughput elevator, one of Paterson's first high throughputs.

NP: These are the big--.

BD: Big concrete elevators in the country, that's right. That was as far as I went. We went over the design at the elevator with the fellows before I retired, but I said, "It's your responsibility. I'm retiring," I said. The changes really come after that.

NP: I mean other than physical changes, I'm thinking that one change might be is, at one point, all of these elevator managers lived in the communities and these people became their friends. Their customers were their friends.

BD: Oh yeah, certainly. They were friends, I guess, they were acquaintances.

NP: Some friends, some acquaintances.

BD: Some friends, I'm sure. And then of course the places got bigger, and they had more people working in each location. They might have had three or four people working in one location, and that made a big change too. Of course, costs went up even though they had a lot more grain. There was more to do. It involved more people.

NP: So, management at those elevators even became a bigger issue.

BD: I think the electronic issue was a big issue. They had electronic scales, in and out, and they get out there and they'd weigh the grain and immediately the ticket was printed out, there was nobody coming around to say, "Well, look it, you're stealing the grain." That was one thing that we emphasized when we had our managers meetings that said, "Our fellows, we don't want to take any grain off farmers. We got our shrinkage to look after and hopefully that will see us through. Other than that, we don't intend to make any bad enemies by doing so." And that was our philosophy.

NP: Smart business philosophy. Smart human philosophy but a smart business philosophy too.

BD: That's right, and we had the Canadian Grain Commission at one time, we had these weigh overs, and you had an overage of sorts. We had a couple of guys called up one time, and there was a reason for it. I went out with some members of the Canadian Grain Commission and the chief inspector. We went out, and it was resolved, and they cleaned grain for the farmer. The farmer wouldn't want his screenings for example, eh? So I'd throw it back into stock and when you ship it out that would show up and the end result would be maybe small overage or whatever, but it was the answer for it.

NP: Did you have much dealings in your positions with the Grain Commission? **[Audio pauses]** I'm going to turn it back on, just in case you have something to say there. So significant changes in working conditions, labour relations, advances in science and technology?

BD: Well, you know one thing about labour relations, Sask Wheat Pool, I think, were the only grain company in western Canada that had a union. They had a union when I was there, too, at the start. Yes, there was a union. The other grain companies didn't have a union, and we didn't have a union and with Paterson's and, you know, I would think probably of all the fellows that were in the country, I would think that only one would maybe opt to have a union. The guy had no reason in the world to think that way, you know, treated well, paid well, everything. Where he would ever want to further himself.

NP: Were salaries ever competitive or not competitive but maybe there's the word I want between companies?

BD: You had to be. Of course, Sask Wheat Pool had different working relations like particularly because they were different than the rest of the grain trade, let's put it that way. Where we would perhaps have one manager at a station and if you needed extra help maybe get it for part time help or whatever and that was it, but Sask Wheat Pool might have two guys along with the manager doing the same kind of work our guys do. But, like I said, initially the company provided homes for them, and even though, after we had to start paying, charging them rent, it wasn't near what the Sask Wheat Pool were charging. I'm going the Sask Wheat Pool because, again, this is kind of a--. They're a huge grain company at that time. Well, they still are.

NP: Sort of the benchmark that--.

BD: Yeah, benchmark. Anyway, I think all companies were probably maybe in the same position as what we were. We used to tell our fellows, "Look it, if you want a day off or whatever, go ahead and do it. If you want to work ten hours a day, I guess there's regulations in effect, but who's going to say anything? Unless you squawk, of course." But they did--. They were satisfied just working under the conditions we offered.

NP: Did most people stay with the companies they started with? Like the people working with their rural--.

BD: Oh, I think they--. You know we had--.

NP: You start out in the Pool, other than in your instance for example where they were promising stuff they didn't deliver, do they start in the Pool and end their careers in the Pool? Is there any kind of moving around?

BD: I think by and large they would stay with the company they started with. I don't think there would be any reason for--. If he was treated well, why would he leave, for a company that were treating them well? But for compensation, we have to be competitive in salaries. When you took everything into consideration--.

NP: Housing and so on.

BD: Yeah exactly. Working conditions and whatever.

NP: What part of the history of the industry through the years that you worked there do you feel is important to preserve and share with the public who are less familiar with that industry?

BD: Go over that again?

NP: What part of the history of the industry do you feel is important to preserve and share with the public? So, what do the people need to know about the grain industry? The past.

BD: You're not talking about the Canadian Wheat Board or anything like that?

NP: Not in particular, no. I'm just talking about the industry--. So if you even just limited to your own situation, what part would you like people to remember? And the reason I ask this question, there's a couple of reasons. One, it's unlikely people will sit and listen to an entire interview, but we will pick bits and pieces to share. So if you look at your own very, I don't want to say small, but your own place in that history versus the bigger picture, what would you like to not be forgotten? It would be sad if people forgot or never knew.

BD: I think probably, [laughs] as it relates to our own company, and I'm going to say the Patersons, that they have been socially conscious of what goes on in the world. I'll remember apparently one time, years ago—and this was given to me through word of mouth—but one time Senator Paterson, Norman McCloud Paterson, of course the founder of the company, he was out west one

time, one of his PR trips, and he stopped, I think it was at Kincaid, Saskatchewan, as I recall. But anyway, this was in the wintertime and cold weather, and this young kid come into the elevator office. Apparently, he had gunny sacks wrapped around his feet or whatever. It was cold. "Why is he wearing gunny sacks?" "To keep his feet warm." Well, there was no money, and of course shoes they didn't have quite enough money to buy shoes. And anyway, after that time, the senator initiated a policy that for every employee's wife, when she had a child, she was given \$100. That stayed on throughout the years, and I think it probably is still in effect, and the Paterson, he established Paterson Foundation, and you probably know more about that, living in Thunder Bay what he's done for Thunder Bay, because he's done a lot.

That same thing is going forward again with Paterson Global Foods, and just recently, or last fall when they had their 100th anniversary here and had a social down here in Winnipeg, maybe a couple, two or three of them. I was at one of them. They, as you know, they gave \$1 million dollars to upgrade facilities downtown Winnipeg for students wanting to attend Red River College, and the Paterson Foundation gave \$1 million dollars. That's \$2 million dollars, and you know when you work for a company that is socially--.

NP: Aware and responsible.

BD: Aware, yeah, that's right. And you know that has got to be one of the most outstanding things in my career, to know that I worked for a company that has done these great things.

NP: And you'd like that to be known?

BD: Oh yes, exactly. Exactly.

NP: Okay. We are coming up just past the hour and a half mark.

BD: That long?

NP: That long, yes, it's hard to believe. The time goes so fast, and I think we have some wonderful memories recorded here. I would like to thank you very much for taking part in the project.

BD: Well, like I say, I'm one of very few words, and I never did like public speaking.

NP: [Laughs] Well, I'm glad you're great one-to-one because otherwise we wouldn't have these memories.

BD: I remember Whittebolle, Jim Whittebolle I guess they call him. He used to work for the Canadian Grain Commission down here in Winnipeg, and he and I took a public speaking course down in Red River College at one time. He was there of course. I think Jim, I forget what his job was down there, but he had a pretty good job down there anyway. I had to introduce him, and he introduced me but that was quite an experience too. It was good.

NP: Yeah, so you're encouraged to take training and improve your skills.

BD: Yeah, exactly, but like I say, I'm not a public speaker. Like to start that program off, I could've been relaxed to put wherever you were born or what were you doing, that could've come across much better, I'm sure of it.

NP: You'd never notice to listen to it. It was just fine.

BD: You'll straighten it out anyway.

NP: Thank you very much. I'm just going to shut the machine off now before I run out of time as well.

End of interview.