

Narrator: Peter Eaves (PE)

Company Affiliations: Woodside Brothers Foundry (Port Arthur Iron Works), Collingwood Shipbuilding, Port Arthur Shipbuilding Company (Port Arthur Shipyards), United Steelworkers Union (USW)

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Summary: Machinist Peter Eaves discusses operations in the historic Woodside Brothers Foundry before it closed in the 1990s. He details the equipment and machines in the machinist shop, the foundry, and the blacksmith's shop, as well as the various projects the company did in connection with the local grain elevators. Eaves describes his own path to becoming a machinist through his apprenticeship in England to work on the *Alexander Henry* in the Port Arthur Shipyards. Other topics discussed include the origins of the Woodside Brothers Foundry, vivid memories of navigating the grain elevators, the working conditions in the foundry and machine shop, other local machine shops, and the location of Woodside Foundry artifacts in the city.

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Time, Speaker, Narrative
EE: Well, it's a pleasure to be here this afternoon for the purposes of this recording. Perhaps I can ask you first to give us your name, and we'll begin to get into it.
PE: My name is Peter Eaves.
EE: And we're involved in interviewing people who have worked in the grain trade or in association with it. Now, I don't think that you have ever been directly involved with the grain trade.

PE: Not directly.

EE: But you've played a support role, and perhaps you can explain how you came to do that.

PE: By trade, I'm a machinist. I worked for 14 years with Woodside Brothers. Woodside Brothers were founded in 1883 by four brothers. I believe they came from Medford. One was a machinist, one was a pattern maker, another was a molder, and the fourth one was a blacksmith. And they opened Woodside Brothers Machinist and Foundry. They were mixed up in manufacturing grain handling equipment and--.

EE: There's the connection that we want to get at.

PE: That's the one there.

EE: Were you trained as a machinist in England?

PE: Yes, I was. I came here after serving my apprenticeship. I lived in Toronto for two years. I didn't really like it—Toronto, I loved the country. I then moved to Collingwood, the shipyard. They shipped me up here for six weeks. At the time, the *Alexander Henry*—that was the icebreaker—broke its fluid drive, and I came up for six weeks to work on it and fix it.

EE: This would be at Port Arthur Shipyards?

PE: At Port Arthur Shipbuilding. I never did return. I ended up getting married and buying a house and having children and grandchildren and coaching hockey and soccer. And that's how it all happened—just by six weeks coming up here!

EE: So you came up via Collingwood, or via the shipyard there?

PE: Yeah.

EE: Which, of course, was involved in building ships more than repairing them, I guess.

PE: Yes. Yes.

EE: Building ships for the lake trade and so on. I had the pleasure of visiting the Collingwood shipyards sometime around '86 or '87, I guess. It was being taken down by, what, ten years later or so I guess? It lasted that long.

PE: Yeah. That's gone now.

EE: Completely gone now. It's all residential housing and so on. You and I were talking about the encouragement of shipping on the Great Lakes when we were driving in.

PE: Yes.

EE: And you asked about the canal in Sault Ste. Marie, and I was saying the American canal was open in 1854. The Northern Railway out of Toronto to I think it was Owen Sound was actually finished in 1885. So from that point onwards, it was probably easy to make that same kind of journey via Owen Sound rather than Collingwood up to the Lakehead by train and by ship. So you got here--. When did you arrive in Thunder Bay? When did you say you'd come up here for that particular job?

PE: Oh, I would say I got here in about 1975. I came to Canada in '71.

EE: Ok.

PE: A short while after the *Alexander Henry* job, I actually went to Edmonton for six months and worked for the Racing Company of Canada.

EE: Which company?

PE: The Racing Company of Canada, and their race car driver at that time was Gilles Villeneuve, Jacques' father. Little French guy. Then after that--.

EE: And a very, very good racer.

PE: A very good racer.

EE: His son's made a career.

PE: And after he'd finished the season in Canada, he'd then joined Formula One with Ferrari. And then, of course, a couple of years later he was killed practicing for the--.

OM: Belgian?

PE: Yeah, Belgian Grand Prix.

EE: What a shame. A tragedy.

PE: Yeah, then I returned to Thunder Bay, and I joined Woodside's. And that's how we ended--.

EE: So you worked for Woodside Foundry then for something like '76 through '88 roughly?

PE: It'd be somewhere around there.

EE: Roughly that period of time.

PE: Somewhere around there.

EE: Well, what kind of work did you do? Maybe you could describe the Woodside operation as you found it at the mid, or this would be after the middle of the 1970s. It was better than 90 years old by that time.

[0:05:00]

PE: Woodside's had some very, very old machinery, but it worked very, very well. They had a niche in what they did. They had a foundry where they cast things and the machine shop, and they had a blacksmith's shop. We used to do all kinds of things for the grain industry. An awful lot of head-pulleys, pulleys that the belts ran on that delivered the grain. We used to replace the journals—the shafts and the pulleys. The shafts would actually wear out, and the reason why they wore out was the pulleys did not run on bearings as we know them. They ran on what is known as a babbitt-bearing, and babbitt is--.

EE: A soft metal.

PE: Lead and tin and zinc mixed. And the reason they ran on babbitt instead of regular modern bearings as we know it--.

EE: Roller bearings or ball bearings?

PE: Is that they ran so slow and brief that if a bearing failed—if a modern bearing failed—you could have it heating up and sparking, and they didn't want any of that near grain dust for explosions and stuff. So we replaced many, many head-pulleys and tail-pulleys and re-babbitt and bore out the bearings and make the bearings to suit. Also, heaven knows how many times they would destroy the equipment that actually dumped the grain cars. Then we'd work round the clock to get them back up and operating because if they were busy. They had to dump cars.

EE: Did this involve your going to the elevators?

PE: Sometimes it did. Yes, it did. And also, in winter when the shipping season stopped, they would take down the high spouts—the spouts that the grain came out of onto the boats—and we would refurbish all of them. Those spouts look pretty big when you look at them on an elevator. They're even bigger when you're standing next to them, I'll tell you! [Laughs]

EE: I've been told—or we have been told—in the course of an earlier interview that they would be turned each year, that they would run down one face and then turned 180 degrees and what would have been out.

PE: Okay.

EE: And then there would be two more seasons of turning them both ways so that eventually they'd be in danger of wearing through. Now did you observe--?

PE: Uh, yeah, they will. The grain will wear the tubes out. Our part was mainly the top part where it pivoted.

EE: Oh, yes.

PE: It was--. They'd be about three- or four-foot round, and they had grooves there, and they were loaded with ball bearings, and that's how they pivoted out. Through wear and tear and weather, in the end, the ball bearings would rust, and they would get pitted, and we'd have to resurface everything to get everything so that it ran correctly again.

EE: And so that was--. Were their other kinds of work that you did as a machinist?

PE: We also built the Woodside grain sampler, which is used all over the world. It's an automatic sampling machine. As the grain goes along the belt, it also drives a little wheel which drove little cups, we'll call them, that occasionally--. They'd go around slowly and then take a peck of grain or something and tip it, and it went down to the side, and the inspectors would come along and take the samples to grade it, I guess.

EE: This was a Woodside--?

PE: It was a Woodside invention. The simplest invention I've ever seen in the world, and they made thousands of these things.

EE: Really?

PE: Yeah. We shipped them all over the States and all over the world.

EE: I don't suppose they were actually patented, or were they?

PE: They were at one time.

EE: Yes, the patent would have expired, but people were content to buy them from a good supplier, I suppose.

PE: Yeah, yeah. And we used to make the little aluminum buckets that--. And we'd ship them away to customers. It was remarkable. I think it was actually Art Woodside who invented that. That was the son of one of the four Woodside brothers, and he took over the company. I never actually worked for Art Woodside, but I knew him. When I joined the company, it had been taken over by Stewart Barrett and Bob Newsome, and Stewart Barrett had just died a month before I joined. Actually, Art Woodside, he died in 1996 at the age of 104, and he was in magnificent condition. How he died, I don't know. I guess he just wore out in the end.

[0:10:48]

But he did actually have a heart attack in his early nineties, and they took his driver's licence. And he was having no part of that, so he went and re-sat the test and got it back. And he lived in Red Lake Cochenour.

EE: Oh, yes. Over there.

PE: And his daughter was married to Ed Fahlgren, who did--. He was part of the mining industry, and he wrote that Northern something--.

EE: He was the Commissioner on the Commission of the Northern Environment.

PE: That's right. That's correct.

EE: Yes, I see. So Fahlgren had a Woodside as a spouse.

PE: Yeah.

EE: Well, well. That would justly explain the Red Lake connection as well.

PE: Yeah. Red Lake Cochenour.

EE: Fahlgren was from up there wasn't he? So Art Woodside would have been born in 1892, I guess. He would have been--.

PE: Yes, he was 100--. And the funeral was actually at your church, at St. Paul's.

EE: Well, well. St. Paul's.

PE: And the urn that he was in was cast at Woodside's. It was made of brass. Yeah, I remember.

EE: So Woodside was still in operation then in 1996, clearly, if the urn was cast for that purpose.

PE: Um, yeah. Um--.

EE: I'm thinking in terms of how long the operation actually lasted.

PE: It, uh--. Bob finally closed the place because most of the guys were retiring, and his son didn't want to continue the business. And he did a little work himself down there, but then there was a fire, and I believe it was finally demolished in 1997-1998, somewhere around there.

EE: Very soon after Art Woodside's death.

PE: Yeah. It was finally demolished.

EE: How large of a workforce would you have experienced there? How many people were working there?

PE: About--. There'd be one welder, four guys in the foundry, and between--. At the most, there was sometimes eight machinists, but I'd say basically five.

EE: So this is about ten?

PE: Yeah, ten employees altogether.

EE: Right. It's one of the places I do have a memory of because I--.

PE: You did stick your head in? Yeah.

EE: I was walking through the machine shop one day in order to spend a couple of hours in the foundry.

PE: Yes. Were they pouring?

EE: With the pouring, yes. So we'll want to talk about that, obviously. But I'm sure you were there that day, and I'm trying to remember whether it was--. It must have been early '90s, I would think.

PE: I would think so.

EE: Yes. The first half dozen years, probably having been MP, I learned to be a little pushier about visiting places that I might have been earlier. So I don't remember exactly how I got in there, but it was very interesting to see the place.

PE: Oh, they've cast many things. All the canons at Old Fort William were made at Woodside's.

EE: You've worked in the foundry? Or helped?

PE: Well, when they were--. About once a week or once every ten days, they would pour iron and then Eddy Skavinski and I would go and help them.

EE: Why don't you describe the whole process, remind me of what I saw that day rather than my beginning to talk here.

PE: There was a very old blast furnace, and you'd load it with maybe three, four hundred pounds of coke. It would be lit, and there was forced air blowing through it to get the coke burning really well. Up the chimney, there was at the top—halfway up the chimney—there was a big gas flame, and that burnt off any pollution sort of thing. Then you would load in however much iron you needed, scrap iron that was broken up that was bought at Lakehead Scrap. It could have been old car motors or whatever. And after about an hour, it would melt, and you could look into the furnace through a little peephole, and you'd know how it was.

[0:15:41]

Then they would--. The furnace itself, the spout would be plugged with clay, and the clay, of course, dried immediately with the heat. They would break out the clay, and the iron would run down the spout into a great big ladle that held maybe 5-600 pounds, whatever. After the ladle had filled, you then had a big stick with another lump of clay on it, and you had to push it in the hole.

EE: On the furnace?

PE: Yeah, on the furnace. And you better not miss! [Laughs] Otherwise, there was iron pouring everywhere. Then they'd lift the ladle up and take it off to the molds, and the molds--.

EE: It was held up by the beams on the ceiling?

PE: Yes, a big beam. Yes, a big beam and a ratchet.

EE: And chains was on a ratchet--.

PE: Yeah, that would move it out or back, and two guys--.

EE: The two guys would be pouring it?

PE: One guy would be getting the impurities off the top so that it went down in, and it would go into sand molds. And they were the shape--.

EE: Describe these molds.

PE: The molds were--. First of all, let us say that we were making a train wheel. The first thing we would do is we'd make a wheel out of wood. That was the pattern, and it would be--. Every--. If the wheel was going to end up at two-foot diameter, the wooden wheel would be made at two feet and half an inch—a quarter of an inch per foot to allow for shrinkage when the iron cooled down. The wood would be white pine, one, because it was light and easy to machine, and two, when it was in the sand—which was damp but not wet--,

EE: My memory is of wooden boxes sitting on the floor--.

PE: Wooden boxes.

EE: With this wet sand in each of these boxes.

PE: Yeah, they would put a box down, and they would put sand in, and then the wheel would go on, and then another box would go on, and sand would be put on that, and it would be packed down. And then it would be turned over--.

EE: Very carefully, I suppose?

PE: Very carefully with clamps on. And then smoothed off where half the wheel was, and then flour would be sprinkled on top—regular cooking flour—and then the top would be put on, and it would be bound up again with sand. And then it would be split in half, and the wooden pattern would be taken out. Then a bead about half an inch of flour would be put all around the outside of where the void was that the iron was going in, and the other one would be put on top. And now you had your wheel was just the space in the sand. The flour was there in case there were any leaks. It would cook and seal it. Then they would pour the iron in, and it would fill up, and it would come up a thing called a riser, which is where the iron went in. And after it had set, after an hour or two, you would break the boxes open and there would be the wheel, and it would be all encased in sand. And you'd put it in--. Oh. You'd cut off the riser, which is the piece where the iron was poured in, and then you would put it in a big drum and let it tumble around with other parts—other wheels or--. And there was also wood blocks in there too. And it took all the sand off.

[0:20:26]

EE: The drum was motor-driven, I suppose?

PE: Yes, yes.

EE: Like a rock tumbling--.

PE: Yes, exactly. Like a giant rock tumbler. And then it would be taken up, and then it would be machined to specifications as required.

EE: And I suppose a railway car wheel is about as complex a molding as you made?

PE: Ah, well, there was some very complex--. The corner bearings are about six feet by eight feet, and they would weigh a couple of tonnes.

EE: What bearings?

PE: They were used as part of the dumping operation, in dumping the boxcars. And nickel would be put in the furnace as well to give it strength. Iron itself can be quite brittle and break, but if you put nickel in, it really toughens it up and it wears a lot better.

EE: Because I saw some much simpler things being poured the day I was there.

PE: Well, of course, everybody has seen all the Woodside manhole covers all over Thunder Bay. [Laughs]

EE: I'm thinking of those immediately. Were those also made with the two section molds?

PE: Yes.

EE: Because it seemed to me some of the molds were simply open to the air. The iron was just poured into them. What would that be? Or am I misremembering, in fact?

PE: I can't see them being open.

EE: Maybe I saw them before they were all closed up.

PE: I've actually got a Super 8 movie somewhere of it.

EE: Do you?

PE: Yes, I'll have to see if I can find it.

EE: Yes.

PE: I was thinking about that the other day. I'll have to--. And I'll let you have it, and you can look at--.

EE: Owen is wanting to say something.

OM: You can convert that to disk.

EE: One could, I'm sure convert the--.

PE: I'll have a look for it.

EE: I have a set of slides or other which I took that afternoon as well. I'm sure we can put it together with the 8mm in order to enhance the visuals. So the--. I've often said that the blast furnace itself was an old locomotive boiler.

PE: It could have been! It could very well have been.

EE: You couldn't confirm that?

PE: I can't remember as such. You used--.

EE: Because it was about that size, wasn't it? The width of a--.

PE: Oh, you could stand up inside it easily.

EE: Could you?

PE: Yes. Every year you'd have to re-line it with bricks. The firebricks.

EE: Yes, that's the thing, isn't it, the firebrick that has to be inside it. It's one of those fundamental aspects of the industrial era, I suppose, a foundry. The furnace that melts iron and so on and so forth.

PE: Yes, that--.

EE: In Africa they were made—in East Africa—150 to 200, whatever, maybe 2,000 years ago, furnaces of eight or ten feet high or whatever were apparently made, and iron was smelted there by African people. These things were found in the colonial era and people marvelled at first. “What was this?” Africans themselves, they had forgotten that their ancestors had done this work, that there was the physical remains of it. No doubt they had been smelting.

PE: When iron was originally made in the first place—using the limestone, nothing else—they referred to it as pig iron. Well, the reason they referred to it as pig iron is because when it runs off, it runs down little troughs, and it goes into little blocks, and it looks like a pig with the little pigs feeding on the mother. That's why they got the name pig iron.

EE: And, of course, the pig iron then would be further refined--.

PE: Further refined, yes.

EE: In this case, of course, it was these casting themselves that were the product of the foundry.

PE: Yeah, one of the first recyclers, I guess, Woodside's. Old iron into new iron.

EE: That's very true. It is, in fact, a quintessential process. The Woodside Foundry wasn't the only one in town.

[0:25:00]

PE: No. There was one at the shipyard, and that's gone now. That got knocked down.

EE: So there isn't one left in town anymore?

PE: There's none in town. I believe there's one in Winnipeg.

EE: Well, it could be very interesting if you want ornamental castings—plaques and that sort of stuff as I became involved with obtaining one for the Coalition for Waverly Park—we ended up--. In this case, it would be Rowan's, we ended up in Pittsburgh.

PE: In Pittsburgh?

EE: That's where the foundry was that took the order and cast the result and so on and so forth.

PE: And was it expensive?

EE: No, not all that expensive, no.

PE: Oh, okay.

EE: Owen?

OM: What did you do with the slag?

PE: Uh. [Laughing] That's why we are not very environmental. We flood it out the back roughly where Pool 6 is.

EE: That far away?

PE: Well, no. It was out of the back of the building on the way to Pool 6. Yeah, the slag off the top was--. Yeah. So we did recycle but we did do some naughty things too. [Laughs]

EE: Someone's reaction when I mentioned Woodside foundry a day or two ago was to frown and say, "What a dirty place," and so on and so forth. You may, since you've sort of half opened the door to that kind of question, want to say something about it.

PE: Well, it certainly was. It was old, and it was dirty, but it was bloody efficient in what it did in its day.

EE: Well, the people working there were skilled obviously. Your fellow machinists, similarly, knew what they were doing.

PE: Yes.

EE: The equipment was quite old you were saying?

PE: Quite old. Some of it was originally belt-driven off the roof, but they changed them over to motors.

EE: It would be steam powered originally, I suppose?

PE: Yeah. Of course, in 1884, Woodside's was the first place that hydro was generated in Port Arthur. And I believe that the generator is at the museum, at Thunder Bay Museum somewhere, because we got it back off them for the display on the 100th birthday.

EE: Well, this is the thing, a business can be pioneering at one point and really make its mark, and then sort of run down in a way with not much investment going into it, I suppose. The buildings didn't look as if there was any money being plowed back. The machinery was kept up?

PE: Yes, yes. In fact, the biggest lathe there was taken in payment because of default on the PD Railroad [Port Arthur, Duluth, and Western Railway].

EE: Oh, really?

PE: Uh, when was that? When was the--.

EE: Well, there's a book that pulls it all together very nicely, but the PD is before the First World War. The late 19th century. As a matter of fact, yes of course, because when the Canadian Northern [CNoR] Mackenzie and Mann were building into the Lakehead about 1903, I think. Or was it even earlier than that? Turn of the century, the 1900. Yeah, they opened through the Rainy River Valley on New Years Day '01 as I remember now. I had to know this for another connection altogether. And they took over the right of way—part of the right of way—and used the PD, so it would be the 1890s, I guess. So they lost--?

PE: We acquired it, and I actually ran it, and it ran very well. It made a hell of a noise, but it did the job. I only ran it once I think.

EE: Many people who will be listening to your description of things will have no idea what a machinist actually does. You've mentioned a lathe, but you can specify what part of your work that was. Can you tell us about what a machinist would be trained to do?

PE: We would make something out of raw stock metal, which, for example, could be a motor shaft. You would cut the metal to a set size, which would be within half a thousandth of an inch at least. For bearing fits, you'd need about half a thou to three quarters of a thou tight. And what you do is you heat the bearings up to put them on. Keyways, milling machines, grinders, shapers.

[0:30:01]

EE: Keyways if there were, for example, on a shaft--.

PE: If something was being driven, a gear went on it. There would be a square key which was cut in the gear and in the shaft.

EE: So the little hole in the gear would have half of the square--.

PE: Half a square, and the shaft would be--.

EE: And it would be moved as the shaft would have the other half that you cut.

PE: Yeah. And it would be set screwed on or shrunk on, or possibly a slide on and then a tapered key, which is known as a gib-key could be used. Flat surfaces, motor bases, machine parts for the spouts of the grain elevators, pulleys, boring them out.

EE: A variety of machinery. You began with the lathe, and here's something that spins. I guess--. **[0:31:02 crosstalk]**

PE: A milling machine, the lathe--. In a lathe, the work spins, the tool stays still. In a milling machine, the work stays still, the tool spins.

EE: And the tool could have all sorts of shapes or--?

PE: It could have. It could be for cutting a straight keyway or it could be a big flat slab mill for flattening a surface for a motor base, or--.

EE: And various sizes of drills, I suppose, for the--.

PE: Yeah, drills. You can also use a milling machine, offset it, for line boring. That is a number of holes on the same plane going through on one piece, but there'd be different sections to it so it perfectly lined up.

EE: By the 70s and 80s I suppose, a new shop would be computer-based, computer assisted, designed, manufactured. What, CanCam I guess are the kind of the initials that came in.

PE: CNCs [computer numerical control].

EE: You never had any of that I don't suppose?

PE: No. Canada Car, oh, what's it called?

EE: Bombardier?

PE: Bombardier has lots of CNC machinery, an awful lot. Woodside had none. The shipyard has one small piece because--. The CNCs, the tape machines, are basically for making many, many pieces identical. Whereas the shipyard might make one-off of something, and we'd make one-off of something.

EE: Right. If one looks back at the history of fine manufacturing if you will—and fine is what we're talking about—the machinist's capacity to take a piece of steel or metal, whatever it is—steel or other metal—and work that into the required shape using the machinist's own knowledge, skill, and the equipment obviously, it's very different from--. Or is--. It's different in kind from when you have mass production, when you have interchangeable parts, when you have machinery that you can set to produce thousands of whatever. So that is someone is building the colt revolver. Every colt revolver is like every other colt revolver of that name.

PE: Quite so. So CNCs are magnificent if you're doing mass production work, and they do fine work.

EE: In the history of manufacturing, it's about the 1850s that this becomes really clear. The great Crystal Palace Exposition in London in, was it 1854? It's close. Say the middle of the 1850s. The Americans who brought in a lot of their equipment—the revolver makers, the sewing machine makers, and so on—had been doing this interchangeable parts mass production—really quite astounding to the British at the time, because the British were still based in the machinist's skill—each part individually made and so on and so forth.

PE: Each part individually made. If you're mass producing, it doesn't pay to have people make hundreds and hundreds of the same when you can do it automatically and with great tolerance. They're fantastic these things.

EE: But if you're in the repair business--.

PE: You've got to--. It's one-offs. You don't know what it's going to be.

EE: You maybe need the machinists and the skills. Were there any other pieces of equipment in the machine shop?

[0:35:06]

PE: There was a great big planer, which is a machine that goes backwards and forwards, and it literally planes steel flat.

EE: So we know about planers on wood, but it strikes one as a much finer art to have that happening to a steel plate.

PE: Yeah. As Jack Munn who worked there once said, he went to the Henry Ford Museum--. I guess it's in Detroit, is it?

EE: Dearborn, Michigan comes to mind.

PE: Oh, okay.

EE: But it's the Detroit area surely.

PE: But he came back from its houses, and he said that they'd got a planer in there that was so modern he couldn't believe it compared to the one we were using. [Laughs] Ours must have been 100 years old, and that had belts going in every direction. They'd go one way, and then they'd, as the table came back, it would flip a dog, and the belt would jump over, and then it would go back the other way. It must have taken somebody a lot to work out how to design such a thing in those days. But it was a magnificent piece of equipment, but, oh, it was old. It was old.

EE: Of course, this place would be labour intensive and skilled labour would apply to things, with not much investment after that initial one that the four brothers originally had sunk into it to establish parts of it--.

PE: Newsome--. Bob did bring stuff along, but in the end, Bob saw that his son wasn't interested, and he was going to have to close it. So he basically ran it until it was done. In fact, some of the equipment, actually, a couple of the lathes were bought by Big Pines Trailers on Cumberland Street, and they just use them for making sometimes axles, when people break axles on trailers or boat trailers or whatever.

EE: So those machines are still at Big Pines?

PE: As far as I know. There's two of them. There's a South Bend lathe and a Willson lathe. I don't know where the rest of--. No, I do. Either Bruno or Hacquoil bought some of the other equipment just for doing repairs on their own equipment in their shop, wherever it is.

EE: So most of it actually got recycled?

PE: Yeah, and I guess the stuff that didn't went to the scrapyards and got turned into something else. Got shipped out as scrap and melted down and cast as something else.

EE: Is there anything else on the machine shop that you might want to describe? You mentioned there was also a blacksmith shop, of course.

PE: Yes.

EE: What would a blacksmith shop do between on the one hand the foundry over there and the--. Blacksmith's work is on a much smaller scale, I tend to think. My father did some blacksmithing.

PE: Yeah. We never had a blacksmith while I was there.

EE: He had been superseded, what, by welding particularly?

PE: Yeah. The thing about forging things is in the foundry you cast things in brass, aluminum, or iron. In a blacksmith's shop, you get the steel red-hot or hotter and you beat it with a hammer or with devices, and the advantage is that in steel, like wood, there is a grain. As you forge it, the grain stays. It gives strength. Rather than machining something--. When you machine something, the grain is cut. It's just like cutting a piece of wood in a round. So the grain is cut wherever you are. If you forge it, the grain flows as

you bend the metal, and it adds strength. That's why Snap-on wrenches are all drop forged. They're not machined. They are machined in the final little bit to make them shiny and the tolerances, but basically, they are drop forged.

[0:40:19]

EE: Now what does that actually mean in the making?

PE: Drop forging is where you have a piece of metal that's red-hot, and you put it on a shape of what you want it to be, and a press comes down and smashes it into that shape. It may go to another one that makes it a bit better, and then a third one will cut the flashing off, and then they'll let it cool down, and then they'll deal with it as they will.

EE: So the question initially would be, of course, the quality of the steel itself.

PE: Yeah.

EE: If it's going to be so treated. Then it's a matter of those hydraulic presses, I guess, they are.

PE: You can actually see them making Snap-on wrenches on, is it Channel 37? "How's It Made?" Yes, I've seen them do it on there. It's quite interesting.

EE: Well, I guess for the economic and environmental historian, maybe the Krupp Works in the Ruhr Valley of Germany--.

PE: Krupp's.

EE: In the 1860s and 70s they'd make huge canons and things, but they had these--.

PE: From pen knives to battleships. The Krupps. [Laughs] Yes.

EE: Huge pieces of equipment were doing exactly that at that point. I wonder, would they be hydraulic actually, or would they be depending on the sheer weight of the thing coming down? In terms of the drop.

PE: It could be on a cam formation to make the press roll, or it could be hydraulic or pneumatic.

EE: I'm actually very hazy on hydraulic power, how the use of oil under pressure, how hydraulic technology developed. Do you know anything about its history?

PE: Hydraulic cylinders are very strong, as you can see, on a backhoe or on a bulldozer.

EE: I wonder who first came up with the idea of the hydraulic--.

PE: The guy to talk about hydraulic motors is Peter, Peter Stevenson. He spent his whole life with hydraulic--. Though he was talking to you about the grain and the dust.

EE: Yes, well he--.

PE: Did he tell you about the rats?

EE: [Laughs]

PE: At Paterson Elevator? No?

EE: Speak on it.

PE: I thought Peter would have told you the story! I don't know what he was doing. He was at Paterson Elevator, and something fell off the roof and ended up on the riverbank. The guys sent him down to get it, and he got down and got the piece. And then he's trying to come up the riverbank, and he said there were hundreds and hundreds of eyes looking at him out of the holes in the bank. I thought Peter Stevenson would have told you! He tells the story better than me. You'll have to ask him about all the rats.

EE: He forgot to tell us about the inhabitants of the Paterson Elevator area then, these four-leggeds.

PE: Yes. Oh, yes. Not the people rats, these were rat rats. Real rats.

EE: Oh yeah, quite.

PE: Yes.

EE: We were using the Paterson Foundation money for this project, so--.

PE: Oh, are you? Oh!

EE: Robert Paterson and his family are [inaudible][Laughing]

PE: Oh, I didn't--. Well, I will say one thing about the Patersons, they have now put a resuscitator in every arena in Thunder Bay, and there's one at our arena in Current River. I think it's magnificent.

EE: Splendid idea. Peter did say something about bashing through the walls, I think, of the various elevators. He put lines through. It was Peter, wasn't it? The Paterson Elevator was easier to get through than some of the others, and he didn't draw the conclusions. [Laughs] Obviously, it would be a reflection of the builders, not the owners to do that. Now where were we? We were talking about drop forging.

PE: Drop forging.

EE: About hydraulic power and things of that sort. As you were saying, there wasn't actually a blacksmith at the shop.

PE: No.

EE: Because really, that function really had been superseded by--.

PE: The last blacksmith I remember, he retired in about 1978, and he worked at Port Arthur Shipyards.

EE: After that?

PE: And then they never hired. Before then, they always had blacksmiths. And the last one retired, and I guess there are no more.

[0:45:10]

EE: I'm betting that the welder's function took over.

PE: Yeah, fabricating to a certain extent instead of--.

EE: Instead of the work. My father actually, to exemplify some of that, I think he learned blacksmithing from a blacksmith in Winkler, Manitoba in the late 30s. He had a small forge on the farm and so on and so forth. You'd crank it up and make it red. There was the big anvil and the hammer to hammer it and so on and so forth to fix things. He did a lot of those things, but he was very pleased sometime in the 50s to acquire the first welder, which I think was an airplane generator that had been converted by Princess Auto and Machine in Winnipeg to be used as a welder, to generate the electric power of welding, obviously. Yeah, he got to be very good with that. By 1970, he had a machine shop in Carmen, rather, in Carmen, Manitoba, and he spent the last five working years of his life running that with various kinds of machines on a much more modest scale, obviously, than you were working with in Woodside Foundry.

PE: What were they doing? Mainly farm equipment?

EE: Farm and Department of Highways. I know government--. I think Highways particularly when there were repairs to be made. But it was the farmers he was serving as well. He loved to give them a good deal and undercut his competition in the process, I guess. But a farmer to start was the farmer's sign. Was there anything else at Woodside then? We've talked about the machine shop and the foundry and recognized the blacksmith function was gone. Who was the fourth of the brothers that you described coming up? They were a nice set of skills.

PE: Oh, one was a machinist, one was a founder, one was a blacksmith, and one was a pattern maker, which is basically a machinist, but he made everything in wood. He made all the patterns. Whatever you wanted to make in iron, he made it in wood first.

EE: And that's a very interesting point to make because people—lay people—hearing “pattern making” are likely to think of paper, I would guess, as the pattern, particularly those who have watched say their mothers sewing clothing. You know, there's the Butterick or whatever it happens to be company on the package of the paper pattern, but in this case, the pattern making in the foundry is quite a different skill. You've already described, of course, the way in which the white pine would be warped and so on.

PE: In fact, Bob Newsome, the owner, he used to make any new patterns for the foundry.

EE: Because you'd have an inventory of old ones?

PE: There were literally thousands and thousands of wooden patterns in Woodside's up in the second building. They could be gears from three-inches diameter to six-foot diameter gears either for the mining industry or--. There would be wooden patterns for where

they shovel the coke onto the boats for the engines, the coal-fired boats. We had the wooden patterns for the boilers for them, for ships that sank 60, 80 years ago. I think a lot of the patterns that we used to still use went back to whoever needed them, be it United Grain Growers [UGG] or Saskatchewan Pool or whatever, but a lot of the other patterns, I believe, went to Thunder Bay Museum.

EE: So there wasn't a glorious fire, because these things would burn well?

PE: No, the fire mainly was, I believe, in the machine shop and office part. All the patterns were returned to whoever had paid for them in the first place, whichever company we'd manufactured them for, or were sent to Thunder Bay Museum.

EE: Was the inventory of patterns quite well kept up? I mean you've got thousands of them. Or were they sort of lined up by size?

PE: No. Newsome knew where they were. [Laughs] Nobody else knew anything. I'd be up there for days looking for something if he'd be on holiday and I'd be trying to find things. But he knew where it was, but he never told anybody. It was all in his head.

EE: How long did he work there?

PE: Bob Newsome was in the Navy in the war, and after the war—

[0:50:05]

EE: In the engine room, I suppose?

PE: I really don't know what Bob did in the Navy. After the war, he was the machinist—the one machinist—for the elevator in Churchill. Him and Margaret lived up there, and then Margaret became pregnant with Ronnie, their first son. They have a son and the daughter. He decided then to return to Thunder Bay. He had a friend called Stewart Barrett, and they both worked for Art Woodside—the old gentleman that died—and Art wanted to retire, so they bought the business off Art.

EE: So they'd worked there for some time, and I suppose he added to the patterns.

PE: Oh, yes. Yes.

EE: So he had a sense of what was where. But there wasn't an inventory of any kind?

PE: It was wherever it landed, but he knew where it landed when he threw it.

EE: Right.

PE: Bob died a few years ago. I went to his funeral. His wife is still alive, Margaret, and I believe Ronnie lives in Whitehorse or Dawson.

EE: Oh, he went further north still?

PE: He actually owns the concrete company up there.

EE: There's another industrial function, if you will, turning Portland cement into good concrete.

PE: Yes, he is.

EE: I looked at a book on bridge building the other evening. It was fascinating, anyway. Were there any other sections of the Woodside Foundry that we haven't yet talked about?

PE: I can't think of any offhand.

EE: It was quite an institution, quite a business.

PE: Yes.

EE: In its day.

OM: Who did the paperwork?

PE: The office work?

OM: Mmhmm.

PE: Margaret, Bob's wife. Yeah. She looked after payroll. She looked after billing. You know, I actually got out the daybook of sales for 1968. I had it on my dresser this morning and I meant to bring it, and I forgot it. Because I said, "Can I have it?" And they said, "Yes." When the place closed, I was down there, and I took a couple of wooden patterns, and they gave me the daybook for 19--. Why it was 1968, I don't know. But it was 1968, the daybook of all the work that went through and how much people were charged. It was quite amazing, you know. "*The Chronicle Journal*, \$11.50." [Laughing] I don't think you'd get away with that in these days.

EE: Given what else is at the Museum, maybe at some point you'll be depositing the book as well at the Museum?

PE: Well, I might give them the book. Some distant--.

EE: Some distant day. Write it into your will what's to be done with it.

PE: I guess I should look for that Super 8 movie.

EE: It would be very interesting. Well, let's--. We've had an interesting--. You've done a great job of sketching--. People who don't remember, or weren't around or whatever, the Woodside Foundry was on the waterfront south of where Marina Park and the yachting area and so on is now. Between the road to the Pool 6 elevator—now extinct—between that road and the railway track, wasn't it?

PE: Yes.

EE: Did it actually have a railway spur line in or not?

PE: No, it didn't. There was a split on the rail line, but we were on the lakeside of it. We would have been basically north of where the second—what would you call it?—the second part of the Marina is going to go, where they're going to dredge and put the second, the boats that had been displaced by the building out.

EE: You were across the railway tracks from, what, the Andras Apartments or were you--.

PE: Yeah. And The Co-operators used to be there and The Chronicle Journal.

EE: The Chronicle Journal just a little north.

PE: There were innumerable bars on--.

OM: Cumberland?

PE: Cumberland. But I can't--. The Vendome maybe. I don't know these. They'd closed by the time I--.

[0:55:03]

EE: In 1885, downtown Port Arthur had over 40 hotels and public houses.

PE: Did it?

EE: Yes. Downtown Port Arthur was busier in 1885, I would wager, than any point since then. [Laughs] Or simply in our day.

PE: The only old one that I remember and I've been in was the Mariaggi.

EE: Yes, the hotel.

PE: And I actually went to the closing night. They had a function there. I ended up sitting with Lawrence Timko, and Lawrence had had too much. [Laughs] But maybe that's the only night in his life, but Lawrence had had too much. I'd had too much, and Lawrence had had more than me! [Laughing]

EE: Talking about artifacts, although Lawrence is running again, isn't he?

PE: Yes, Lawrence is running again!

EE: At large. What would you like people to know about the work that you did? The places you worked.

PE: I would--. A lot of people know me, I would like to think as the job itself that I was very good at what I did. I would like to think that—it might sound a bit corny—that any parts I made helped in some way the development of Thunder Bay.

EE: Or the successful operation of the grain trade!

PE: Yes, or the grain trade, or any part, that whatever I did helped in some way the growth of Thunder Bay or the development of Thunder Bay.

EE: What might surprise people most about the work that you did? Or interest them if surprise is too strong of a word.

PE: One thing that would surprise them is the strange hours. You regularly get called at 2:00 in the morning. As soon as something breaks--. After the boss is the first one that gets called, you're the second one that gets called because you've got to fix it! [Laughs] Morning, noon, night, Saturday, Sunday, holidays.

EE: You had a regular work week?

PE: Yes. Yes. We worked from 8:00 to 4:30, and Monday through Friday.

EE: That's an eight-hour day with half an hour lunch?

PE: Eight-hour day, 40-hour week. But the number of times that Eddy Skavinski and I have worked round the clock or around the clock one and a half times. It always seemed to be when the grain dumping operation went down. The dumper shafts broke or got bent or somebody decided to pull the grain cars into the shed with the engine still attached at the other end with the brakes on them. Everything had to be torn apart and then all hell would break loose.

EE: So you have seen some real disasters at the elevators?

PE: Oh, I've seen some great ones.

EE: What's the one that--.

PE: Richardson. I think the best one was—I don't know if I've got my figures right—but you can back 17 grain cars onto Richardson's dumper, and I have seen them back 19 up. Two went straight in the lake. [Laughing] Right off the end! That's a mess.

EE: I've been in that elevator, actually, so I can picture that.

PE: I don't know how many times they did it. I guess they never learned! [Laughs] The number of times it was in the paper.

EE: Woodside's could have produced something that could have made it a little more difficult to do that.

PE: Well, we did also cast the things, the buffers for the wheels, and of course, we did cast all of the dock bollards for the elevators that the grain boats tie up with, the ones that the hoops go around as they bring them into berth. Yes, all those.

EE: I trust they compensated you well when you were called in middle of the night? Time and a half or something?

PE: Time and a half, we were. Bob was there. A good man to work for. Cantankerous guy, but he was very good. He only fired me four times and hired me five. [Laughing]

EE: He observed employment standards, I take it.

PE: Yeah.

EE: [Laughs] Well, I can certainly understand the surprising nature of that. And your good wife put up with this, not to mention the children.

[1:00:10]

PE: Oh, yeah.

EE: [Laughs] What are you most proud of in the work that you did over the years? You may have practically said that already, but--

PE: Oh.

EE: Contribution that you made, I suppose? If I ask the--.

PE: I don't think there's one item. I'm just proud of everything I've done.

EE: Sure. And you know that your work, you think that your work, contributed to Canada's success?

PE: Yes.

EE: In the grain trade. Getting those unloaders back into service.

PE: Well, yes. I guess if you--. Especially the dumping systems. If you're not dumping grain cars and you're shipping grain out, sooner or later, the elevator's going to go down unless you can dump cars. Apparently when the season is on, or the push is on before the freeze-up, they want to get what they can out and clear the locks and everything before freeze-up or they close it.

EE: There's always a seasonality even today in the grain trade.

PE: Yeah.

EE: That isn't to say, of course, the grain doesn't move in the wintertime. It can move by train all the way to Quebec City or whatever. Was Woodside Foundry affected by seasonality in employment in the same way? Was winter a slower time for you?

PE: Um, no, not really. If anything, I would have thought that it might have been a little busier because that's when they did tear everything apart and refurbish everything ready for the next season. As I was saying with the grain spouts or the dumping systems or they'd take the pulleys out, and we'd re-babbitt the bearings. We were pretty steady. I was only laid off for four weeks once.

EE: Really?

PE: Yes.

EE: Over the 12 years?

PE: In the 12, 14 years.

EE: Or 14 years.

PE: Yeah. That was all.

EE: Well, that's quite a good record. A good place to work. Do you see major changes in the work that you were doing over the years? Given that there wasn't much technological change at the Woodside Foundry, I guess. Or the Woodside Brothers' business.

PE: Of course, there's nowhere near the number of elevators that we used to have. I mean, that is basically--. Now I guess, Dingwell's or Fabmar or Fairbarn's do most of the work, and possibly Peterson's. Peterson's Machine Shop.

EE: Petersons Machine Shop?

PE: Yes, they're on Russell Street.

EE: And that's the main operation left now in machine--.

PE: Yes. Peterson's, Dingwell's, Faribarn's. Fabmar are actually more marine or fabrication. They're in the East End.

EE: Did you have a sense that the future of the Woodside business itself—if the sons had wanted to take it on or a son had wanted to—was being impacted by the slowdown in the grain trade? The closing of elevators?

PE: Yes, I think so. That was part of the end of--. It had reached the point where it was a going concern, but it needed a great amount of money spent on it. And with Bob being of retirement age and his son not being interested at all, he just folded the company up.

EE: Yes. CanCam would be all the rage. Your computer-assisted design and manufacturing and so on and so forth. We were talking about that earlier.

PE: Yes.

EE: But that would have been a complete, probably a new shop, actually.

PE: Yes.

EE: I suppose. Do you know whether any of the one's you've mentioned—Peterson's, Fairbarn, and so on—are they using CanCam to any extent?

PE: Dingwell's would be, and possibly Fairbarn's. Peterson's Machine Shop is a very, very good shop. Very nice, very modern. Does lots of work, but mainly one-off things. Specialty stuff for mines or--.

EE: That's the machine shop would essentially--.

PE: Yeah, yeah. And they do fabrication as well, but--. I actually did a bit of work for them about two years ago. They phoned me up. They had to do some vertical line boring, actually, on site at Abitibi Bowater Mill.

[1:05:23]

EE: Oh, yes.

PE: Or at Great Lakes, as I call it. Nobody knew how to run it, and one of the guys remembered that I'd run one once. So they phoned me up and I went over there. And they said, "You've got ten days." I said, "Ok." Well, he came on the--. And we had to do it at nighttime. So we had ten days starting on a Monday, and by midnight Wednesday, I phoned him up. I said, "Well, it's all finished." They couldn't believe it! Yeah.

EE: And I trust they paid you for ten days? [Laughing]

PE: Oh, yes. Oh, well, no, they didn't, but they were quite generous. I will--.

EE: A bit of a bonus for them

PE: Paul Peterson, I like him too.

EE: Yeah. So you've seen that shop. Do you know how long it's been in operation?

PE: Peterson's?

EE: Yes.

PE: Hm. His father owned it, and it was first called a really strange name. It was called Detco.

EE: D-E-T-C-O?

PE: I think so. Brian Blucher worked there. And what happened was it was quite successful, but there was a squabble amongst the owners. Dave Peterson--. And in the end, it went out of business, but then Dave Peterson opened Dave Peterson's, it was Peterson's Machine Shop. It did fantastically. I guess Dave was about 50, and the secretary walked in the office one day, and he was dead at his desk! And his son took over, Paul. In fact, Paul was at City Council last week making a presentation on something. And Paul kept it going, and Paul would only have been about 23 or 24 at the time. But he kept it going and he's made a great success out of it.

EE: Sure. So if we wanted to pursue machine shops, Peterson's would be a good one to--.

PE: Peterson's and Dingwell's and Fairbarn's. Fairbarn's is on the same street as Peterson's. I believe it is Russell Street. Yeah.

EE: I've seen the names without ever really having knowledge to connect them with. You were a machinist, a member of the International Association of Machinists?

PE: Um, no. I was a member of the Steelworkers. I've been a member of the Papermakers. It doesn't make much sense, but--.

EE: Well, that's industrial unions--.

PE: The Steelworkers were Woodside's, the shipyard was Steelworkers, and of course, the Provincial Mill, Cascade's was Paperworkers, Energy, and something until it closed.

EE: Sure, right. All right, United Steelworkers [USW]. And this was on the industrial--.

PE: Henry Gerow.

EE: Henry Gerow, yes.

PE: Henry Gerow, and--. Oh, I can't remember the other gentleman's name. But it was in the age of Henry Gerow, and he's been dead a long time now.

EE: Yes, quite a while.

PE: Is his wife still alive? Holly?

EE: I don't know. I was thinking of Holly the other day. I'm guessing that she may. She used to work at the University, as a matter of fact.

PE: Oh, did she?

EE: I think. She may have remarried and left town or whatever. I'm guessing because I don't think I've seen her in years myself, actually. And you weren't involved in the union very much, I don't suppose. So all of you at Woodside's were Steelworkers then?

PE: Yes.

EE: Right. Your own local, or--?

PE: Our own local.

EE: And so you'd be--.

PE: It was 50556 in my mind, but that could have been the shipyard number. I can't remember the local number off the top of--.

EE: But you had a different local?

PE: Yeah.

EE: So this would be negotiating contracts and so on and so forth?

PE: Yes. I was the president of the local at one time. Yeah. There was a negotiation once in the office, and it was with Henry Gerow. And we were going after a certain amount of money, and there was no way Bob was going to pay for it. Anyhow, I got mad, and I took the office door off the frame. Anyway, the long and the short of it was that in 48 hours, we got exactly what we wanted for our contract, but I had to pay for the office door. [Laughing] I wish Henry was still alive. He would have told you the story about me taking that office door off. [Laughs]

[1:10:36]

EE: You went straight through that door, I take it?

PE: Oh, yeah. I opened it without turning the handle. [Laughing] But two days later, we got the raise, but I had to pay for the door.

EE: This was another of the changes—or the challenges rather than change—that you had a better agreement. I don't suppose you'd have much in the way of thoughts about major challenges that the grain industry has faced? Or perhaps--?

PE: No, no. I know a few people who work in the grain industry now. It seems rather touch and go.

EE: Enormous changes.

PE: But basically, nobody works for them. When I came here, I forget how many people worked, 1,400?

EE: My memory is that in '84, when I was running that--. Frank Mazur was president of Lodge 650, or chair of Lodge 650 Grain handlers, he would talk, I think, about 1,800.

PE: Oh, ok.

EE: On the waterfront. And if we had a tenth of that now, I think we're doing well.

PE: Yeah, there's--.

EE: Enormous change of all sorts. What are your most vivid memories? Other than taking doors down! [Laughs] Vivid memories of the job you'd done. Was it dangerous work? How dangerous was it?

PE: Um, no. There was one instance I had to go and check something at Canada Malting, and it involved me using a manlift. I don't know if you've ever seen one. It's an endless belt that goes from the bottom of the elevator to the top to the bottom. And you stand on it, it takes you up, and then you get off at the right floor or you'd go right over the top. I didn't like that at all, but when I did get to the top of the elevator, they said, "It's down the hall, and it's the door on the right." So I went down there, pushed the bar, and I walk out. I'm not kidding you, there was a square yard platform with no handrails and nothing at the top of the elevator. I just backed in and sat down. I couldn't stand up for 15 minutes. My legs--. I was terrified. Absolutely terrified. I don't like heights at the best of times, but I just walked through this door, [laughs] and there was nothing! It was that big.

EE: So one door that worked or you could take out.

PE: And the grain spout was there, but I thought--. Well, I never thought! I just walked out. I was terrified. Absolutely terrified. I was so terrified I didn't even--. I finally went down all the stairs, and I went back. I said, "Somebody else. I just can't do that. I can't."

OM: Told them about the door though?

PE: Yeah. [Laughs] You'd think at least there'd be a rail!

EE: So it was just a platform?

PE: Just a--. Yeah. And what's worse, it was expanding metal, and you could see through that as well. [Laughs]

EE: It was water down below, I suppose?

PE: Yeah. Well, a lot of good that is, I can't swim, Ernie! [Laughs] Mind you, if you fell off an elevator, I would think it would be like hitting concrete.

EE: Well, that's a pretty vivid memory! Any others? [Laughs]

PE: Um. No, except every time they did cast iron—and they'd usually finish about 3:00—we always got a case of beer and sat outside the door and drank the case of beer. And as always, Bob Newsome drank more than anybody else. But I do remember that.

EE: It's very hard, hot work.

PE: Yes, it really is hot.

EE: A fellow would really be dehydrated. I have two minds or whatever about the rehydrating qualities of beer.

PE: Yes. Gatorade might have been better, but it never seemed to win the vote. [Laughing]

[1:15:02]

OM: What would be the temperature indoors in the working environment? Temperature indoors, Fahrenheit or Celsius?

PE: In the machine shop, fine. In the foundry, hm, it would be very hot. Very hot when iron was being poured and very steamy. Not that healthy, I would think.

EE: It's coming out at, what 1,800 degrees?

PE: Yeah.

EE: Something of that sort, and into the mold.

PE: Into the molds and even--.

EE: What I probably saw initially when I was there was these molds open, and then--.

PE: Ok, they could be opened before and then they'd put the top on.

EE: And then they were re-closed down. I saw actually what was inside there and then the covers that were put on. I do remember the two men with the ladle going from one mold to another.

PE: To another. Pouring iron.

EE: Pouring the iron in and so on and so forth.

PE: Cranking the--.

EE: Yeah, moving it along.

PE: Moving it along and around.

EE: I remember that stuff clearly. There never was much in the way of pollution control at the place, I don't suppose?

PE: No. Only in the stack itself there was an after-burner while they were melting the iron.

EE: Designed to reduce the emissions in the air?

PE: Yes, yes. Or if anything burning went up, it could get a good blast and burnt up. If you didn't, it'd take off into the bush and set the waterfront on fire.

EE: Right. I don't remember the foundrymen wearing masks or anything or that sort?

PE: No.

EE: No. Because I don't remember being offered any masks.

PE: No.

EE: So the--. I don't know how dangerous air around a blast furnace is.

PE: I would think it's not very healthy.

EE: That's probably a fair description. Places vary, I guess. Lead smelting in Trail, BC. Cominco and all those Italian workers and the manager writing once in the '20s, "What would we do without our Italian workers working through thick and thin smelting the lead," and so on and so forth. I don't know what their life expectancy was, but I would guess it was significantly less than that of people who, say, worked in the woods or--.

PE: People were expendable then.

EE: Yeah.

PE: Before.

EE: It wasn't actually being stated, but it was the case. Any worker's comp experience over the years?

PE: Um--.

EE: Were you fortunate that you worked carefully as well?

PE: I did get a piece of steel in my eye, and I was off for a number of weeks. I went to see at Port Arthur Clinic—I can't remember his name—Falk, Doctor Falk. And he had me down, and he was looking through something at the iron, looking, and looking. And he poured different dyes in my eye to see different reactions. And he said, “You've got to relax. You've got to relax more.”

EE: [Laughs] “Knock me out, Doc! Knock me out!”

PE: So I said, “I know. I'll relax.” And he got this big needle. Oh, jeez! I didn't believe it. He stuck it through my eye! I thought he was going to give me an injection. [Laughs] He stuck it right through my eye and never told me. I nearly ripped the arms off the chair. That was Doctor Falk. Do you know him?

OM: Yes.

PE: Not a very good bedside manner, that doctor! Very good doctor, but yeah. I remember him sticking that needle.

OM: He built a gigantic barbeque, a barbeque in the '70s. I was on the receiving end of one of his pigs that he roasted on this item. I think it was in the planning and fabrication stages for at least 20 years, I think, before he unveiled it. He had plenty of his, what we called a gang was together on the north shore. That's where I first met him. Apparently, he's still alive.

PE: Is he?

OM: That's what I heard. His name came up in a meeting I was at last week.

PE: Well, George Gwozdecky is still alive.

OM: Yes.

PE: He used to be my doctor.

EE: That's obviously a healthy profession. People live a long time.

PE: Yes.

EE: Take care of themselves, I suppose. Was the steel in the eye a result of not wearing safety goggles?

PE: Yes, it was.

EE: And you wore them after that, I suppose?

PE: Yes, I did. [Laughs]

[1:20:02]

EE: Had they been available earlier?

PE: Yes.

EE: Enough said.

PE: Totally my fault. Totally my fault. Whenever I've had any kind of accident that's needed me getting stitched up or anything, it's always been my fault.

EE: Well, that's--. We could debate that at some length, couldn't we, because the way in which a work is organized can be a factor. Maybe at the end it is human error in many cases but--.

PE: Taking shortcuts.

EE: It is a matter of work organization that's part of that, so the employer always bears some responsibility I would want to assert. But of course, you're a skilled worker and--.

PE: I think I can say it's always--. It's because I've taken a shortcut or--. Well, there's a number of times I've--. "Peter, stop that. You're going to have an accident." "Ok." I've learned now. I don't heal as well as I used to! [Laughs]

EE: Isn't that a fact! I didn't ask you at the beginning because it was moving along quite nicely, but what was involved in apprenticeship in becoming a machinist? This was in Old Blighty, of course.

PE: In England, it was a five-year apprenticeship. The first year, I didn't turn up at the company at all. I went to college.

EE: Which college was that?

PE: It was Keighley Technical College, which is about eight miles west of where I lived.

EE: In Yorkshire?

PE: Yeah, of Shipley. Keighley's still in Yorkshire. Actually, for the first time in 50 years, they elected a Conservative yesterday. [Laughing]

EE: The world is going to hell! [Laughing]

PE: Yes, the world is going to hell. The first year I went to school full time. The second year, I worked at the company with some of the tradesmen there, and I also went to school once a week. In the third year, it was the same. Fourth year, the same. The fifth year, I was at work full time, but I had evening classes from about 5:30 to 9:30 twice a week. And then I sat my final exams, which was run by I think it was called the Humberside Engineering. Something in Humberside Engineering Examination Board. I've actually got it somewhere, and I--.

EE: So, a certificate?

PE: Yes, I've got all the certificates and all the original--. The deeds of apprenticeship were about this big and about eight pages of who did what and how and--.

EE: Keighley, the first year in particular, would not have been all theory by any means.

PE: No, practical and theoretical.

EE: They had machine shops and--?

PE: Yes, yes. They had their own machine shop. I would say it would be about a day and half shop, three and a half days in the classroom. Or you would often--. We took basic electrical wiring. I don't know why. Welding, plumbing. We never used it in the job, but it was part of the whole course.

EE: You needed to understand all those things.

PE: Of course, doing blueprints, making blueprints, all of it. Yeah.

EE: Well, it's an important part of becoming a skilled tradesman. The tradition is, of course, to think in terms of the apprentice, the journeyman, the master.

PE: Yeah.

EE: I guess the master stage is--.

PE: I am just journeyman.

EE: Just journeyman. Once you complete your apprenticeship, you're a journeyman, and so often that did mean exactly that. A lot of travelling around to jobs, I'm sure.

PE: Yeah.

EE: Well, are there any other thoughts you have? I have a question about the most important events that happened in the workplace during your career. I don't know whether there's anything to add to what you've told us. Quite a vivid account of--.

PE: I think I've covered everything. I hope I've answered any of the questions that you wanted or given you a little, at least, a bit of information that can be used in some way.

[1:25:07]

EE: You've given us very useful information. Do you think it's a good idea to preserve the--.

PE: Yes, I do. Yes, I do because it's--. In fact, it should be done with quite a number of industries. Grain handling, paper making. The way that's going, it's--. And sawmills.

EE: Yes, paper making certainly would be appropriate for Thunder Bay. Yes. Are there any questions that you think we should have asked that didn't come up? This is also the point in which I very often turn to my good colleague--.

PE: Not really, I think that--.

EE: To ask him whether our engineer has any questions?

OM: I remember way back when once a year it came out in a section of the newspaper, "Northwest Business", and Woodside was always brought up, I think, as the second oldest firm in Thunder Bay, and the first, of course, was the Hudson's Bay Company.

PE: Right.

OM: And then Woodside, apparently, was the second oldest business. And I remember driving as a kid up and down where we had a little camp out at Pebbly Beach, and we'd drive back into Westfort, and there would be this old building even then.

PE: Yeah.

OM: Or several buildings, I guess, at the point with "Woodside" on the side. This was all corrugated steel or--?

PE: Yes, yes. It was a wood frame with--. It was almost like tin plates.

EE: Pebbled?

PE: Yes, it was a pebbly--. I've actually got an oil painting of it, which my wife is not too fond of.

EE: I thought maybe you ripped off a little piece of the pebbly steel, but that brings it to mind.

OM: Now, and I always pointed it out to my friends when we drove down there in the '90s when you were still there. "That's the oldest," I always said it was the oldest building in Thunder Bay, but it isn't.

PE: No.

OM: I've since found out that that's the second or second reincarnation or reincarnation of the original building. There was an earlier fire.

PE: Oh, there were a number of fires. I believe there's reference to it in the *Thunder Bay* book, the fires. I've got that book, and I don't know where it is. It's the one that Walter Aseff hated.

EE: Yeah, Mauro's book?

OM: Mauro? The green cover?

PE: Yes, yes.

OM: I have that at home. I read that.

PE: And I don't know where I've put it! I've been looking for it the last--. Every three months for the last 18 months I've been looking around wondering where it went.

OM: I'll pass it to Ernie. If you and Ernie cross paths--.

PE: I've got one, but I've got to decide where I put it.

EE: Do you want a particular section copied? I think Michel's--. It may be my copy because I sold my library to my successor, Michel, and I think it's lying on the air conditioning vent in the office down the hall there. We can just put our head in and see if it's there.

PE: It might even--. I'll have to look on the internet about it.

OM: One of my friend's fathers had this big map of Port Arthur, and it was done in those days where it was an aerial view.

EE: This isn't the famous '83 or '84?

OM: Right. And there was Woodside Foundry in one of those little spots there.

EE: Yes. That's a lovely thing to have. Who had that?

OM: His name was Don Ballantyne. He was Doctor Ballantyne's father, who was Doctor Ballantyne out of the Port Arthur Clinic. They have it at their cottage out at Two Island Lake.

EE: Yeah. That's a fine memento of Port Arthur.

OM: Yeah. But Woodside figured prominently on the trail.

EE: For sure. It was a leading industry given the electricity that was brought in and so on and so forth. The brothers were marking the path.

OM: So you were part of history!

PE: Yes!

EE: A living artifact.

PE: A living artifact. [Laughing]

EE: I guess, you referred to memorabilia that you have, a number of things. If there are any things that you would sort of entrust to the project, I think Owen is chief archivist as well. He's sort of in charge of the storeroom. I'm going to be reconfiguring that. Maybe I should thank you at this point Peter. It's been splendid. You and I have known each other, of course, for many years. Maybe I should put on the record the fact that in the '84 campaign, the Epp signs—the first marked long version of the Epps signs—were four-by-four plywood painted were done by yourself!

PE: Yes, designed and manufactured by me! [Laughing]

EE: So that's 26 years ago. You and I have been acquainted for a long time. Thanks so much.

PE: And I thank you very much.

OM: It was a pleasure.

End of Interview.