

**Narrator:** Bryce Epp (BE)

**Company Affiliations:** SGS (Société Générale de Surveillance/General Society of Surveillance), Canadian Wheat Board (CWB)

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**Interviewer:** Ernie Epp (EE)

**Recorder:** Owen Marks (OM)

**Transcriber:** Sarah Lorenowich

**Summary:** Bryce Epp discusses his brief but interesting connection to Canada's grain trade through his involvement in a grain sampling program conducted by SGS and the Canadian Wheat Board in 2005. Epp details the precarious task of scaling farm grain storage bins with specially engineered sampling equipment. He describes the scale of the sampling zone, some inefficiencies with the project's management, and his interactions with farmers struggling to keep up with the growth of the industry.

**Keywords:** SGS (Société Générale de Surveillance/General Society of Surveillance); Canadian Wheat Board (CWB); Grain sampling; Grain inspection; Prairie grain elevators; Grain storage; Granaries; Grain marketing; Grain pricing; Manitoba; Manitoba farming; Farmers; Producers

Time, Speaker, Narrative
OM: I'll give you a countdown.
EE: Well, Bryce, it's a pleasure to have you here for what I think will be the last interview I do in this project—the Voices of the Grain Trade oral history project. Your experience in the trade was quite short, but I think it's a very interesting one. So let's do it properly at the beginning. If you can give me your full name and where you were born.
BE: Bryce Nolan Epp, born in Burnaby, BC on November 23, '72.
EE: Ok. So the question, you might just say a little bit about your life experience, because we're going to be focusing on a period in 2006.
BE: '05, actually.

EE: Oh, it turns out to be '05?

BE: Yeah. August 30, '05. Is that right? I know it's small print.

OM: '05.

EE: I was going to hang it on the damn Harper Tories, but I can't quite do that.

BE: Yeah, sorry about that. [OM laughs] Unfortunately these days I wear reading glasses and I don't know if I had them on when I-

OM: Those poor Tories have been kicked down enough, Ernie. [Laughs]

EE: It was an evil government. [Laughs] Anyway, what did your life experience include before you got to this interesting summer of 2005 then?

BE: Well, at that point, I had built a custom dream home by Seddon's Corner, Manitoba.

EE: East of Beausejour?

BE: East of Beausejour on Highway 44, the old Trans-Canada. I had been driving truck for some time around the western provinces, but this opportunity came up to do this job with SGS [Société Générale de Surveillance/General Society of Surveillance] and to do it with a friend of mine, Rob Heinrichs. So I took the opportunity.

EE: So how did they set you up then to do the work that you're going to describe?

BE: Well, so what it was, it was a lead we had followed up through a good friend of mine, Bill Reid. He was an inspector, a grain inspector, for his career, and he worked for SGS. So they were looking--.

EE: Had he retired from, say the Grain Commission [CGC]?

BE: Yeah. Yeah. He was no longer with the Grain Commission, but he was still working and working as a contractor for SGS. So he brought us in because there wasn't really any experience necessary, just a little bit of, I guess, fearlessness because some of the jobs entailed climbing high heights, and I was fine with that because I had done swing stage work in Vancouver previously.

EE: You might expand on just that for a moment.

BE: Oh, swing stage work? Yeah. When I was in Vancouver, I worked in the late '90s repairing high rises, so it required bosun chair work and swing stage work. I've never been afraid of heights, so I thought I would have no problem with that.

EE: Did they advertise or--?

BE: No, it was just--. They didn't need many of us and--.

EE: Did you run into Bill Reid, or--?

BE: Yeah, he's an uncle of one of my best friends, Jason Andrews, so through that connection—through Jason—I met Bill, and Bill told me about this opportunity. Rob, also a close friend, jumped on it, because it was a great opportunity. It was short-term, but that wasn't really all that apparent at the time when we were hired. Like SGS is a large global company, and actually other jobs had presented themselves while I was there. So, I mean, the opportunity was interesting, so we took it.

EE: So you got some training or briefing for the work?

BE: Right. So even though we were all--. Rob also had worked on the highrises in BC, so he wasn't afraid of heights as well. So we all did this training. I've got this still, the certificate. They sent us to Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association, to a company out in Saskatoon—and yeah, that's August 30, '05 was the date on the certificate—for a fall-protection course just because of the high altitudes or climbing.

EE: So their only concern at the outset was that you be safe when you were clambering up granaries or whatever?

BE: Yeah, they needed everyone to have this certificate for, I guess, for their insurance purposes. So they flew everyone in the group to Saskatoon except myself because at the time I owned a motorcycle, and I was eager to drive it whenever the chance arose. So I rode my motorcycle through the rain [laughs] most of the way—Saskatoon and back—instead of flying. That's when we took the training.

EE: How many--?

BE: We immediately started the job. There was three crews of two members in each crew.

EE: Six of you, then.

BE: There was six of us that did the province. It was sectioned off.

**[0:05:05]**

EE: And they gave you a vehicle to do it?

BE: They gave us a brand-new Ford F-150 crew-cab truck, 4x4 truck. So we were decked out in the most luxurious ride, leather interior. You now, beautiful, beautiful truck. And the really interesting thing about the equipment, I guess, is the harvester that collected the sample was custom made for SGS for this project, because this was a pilot project. So this had never been done. What they had created was this giant vacuum that was in a steel frame—big cylindrical vacuum—with a massive motor on top which was electric. It was driven by a generator that we carried with us. So we had a large Honda generator, like a 5,000-watt Honda generator, on the back of the truck strapped down with this collection unit, which had sections of pole that would be joined together to get to the depths of the bin. Because what you would do--. Do you want me to describe the process? Like the actual--?

EE: By all means, yes.

BE: So the bins that the farmers would store their wheat in was, it would vary from--.

EE: A lot of these stainless steel or whatever big cylindrical tanks that you see on the farms?

BE: Right, so those storage bins would average maybe only 20-30 feet tall, but sometimes could get up to 60 or 70 feet tall.

EE: Oh, yeah.

BE: And so what we had was on this vacuum cleaner. We had like a long hose, and then attached to the hose was a metal end, and then each one of these rods that were about six feet long would then be attached and held into place with a lynchpin. So each

section would be attached as you would go. So you would push--. You would climb to the top of the bin, open the hatch, turn on the vacuum, the guy in the bottom. We worked in teams of two, and the guy on the bottom would turn on the vacuum, and you would start prodding down into the grain, and you would try to keep an even pace. And then when you get to the end of your pole, you would flag to the man to shut the unit off, you would disconnect, and you would add another length. You'd stand up now—because now you're on a long pole again—and you would turn the vacuum back on and you would feed it down. And you would try and--. What they wanted was a continuous sample from top to bottom of the bin, as even as you could get. So you kind of had to figure out the speed in which you needed to push the probes. And you could listen. You could hear the wheat--.

EE: Swishing by?

BE: Swishing by the tube, and you got a feeling on what you were getting, plus the guy at the bottom. After a few, you would figure out dumping the machine. It would have a blow off, so if you overfilled the machine, it would blow out the top—dust—so you would know you were full. You would try and time it out. It didn't take us long before Rob and I had figured out, you know, teamwork.

EE: And how much were you pulling out of one of those?

BE: The idea was to get a five-gallon bucket out of each silo. So the really big ones, you would try and push it very quickly, of course, and the smaller ones, you know--.

EE: Could be done more slowly?

BE: A little more slowly. And that was the goal, to try to get an even sample from top to bottom.

EE: From every granary that a farmer had?

BE: Yeah.

EE: I see.

BE: So some of the yards, we were there for quite some time, each yard, but others, it was just a few bins. We'd come and go.

EE: And what did you do then with what you pulled out? You'd have a five-gallon bucket then?

BE: So you hammered the lid on, label it. And we were encouraged, if we collected too many samples to send them back courier. I think we only may have done that once throughout our—, because Rob and I were very efficient at doing the job, and we made it home most nights. We stayed in a couple hotels.

EE: What territory were you given? Or how was the province divided up in terms of the territory?

BE: Yeah, it was strange. I guess it was in three sections.

EE: Three teams, so.

BE: We had a western province from the southern border to about 75—Highway 75. So that's to Emerson, right?

EE: Yes. The whole--?

BE: Yeah.

EE: Oh, the south of the province.

BE: Yeah, pretty much the south of the province from the No. 1 Highway south.

EE: South of the No. 1 Highway 75 to the Saskatchewan border, then, and the US border.

BE: Pretty much. And actually, I think in the end because we did so well and finished our section, we moved up and started doing some more. And actually, they talked of moving us to Saskatchewan because there was the same project going on in Saskatchewan at the time and they were a little behind. But as it turned out, we never did have to help pick up the slack. They finished their project.

**[0:10:18]**

EE: How long did you take to finish the project?

BE: It's tough to recall exactly how long it took now.

EE: Were you at it for a month or two months?

BE: Oh, it was at least--. No, it was at least a month. I think it was more like six or seven weeks. Not including the bit of preparation and training.

EE: Sure.

BE: So through the fall, it was.

EE: Say, maybe the middle of September until the end of October perhaps roughly?

BE: Yeah, about that. Yeah, I think that would be about accurate. Without actually having--. See, I never had kept any records of that job that I could find.

EE: Oh, they kept the records?

BE: Yeah, they have the records, so. That's my memory.

EE: Did you get any kind of sense of what they did with your samples then? You brought them in and they, what, had a warehouse or whatever?

BE: Well, the point of it was to understand what was in the store holds so they could price it for sale, so they knew what they had right? That was the way that they would determine the price. So the different grades and the amount.

EE: But SGS wasn't buying it?

BE: No, they were working for the Wheat Board [CWB]. They were working for the Wheat Board.

EE: I see.

BE: The Wheat Board commissioned SGS to do this testing. So they were just working for the Wheat Board. So--.

EE: Did you get a sense of why the Wheat Board wanted this? Because this sampling was new.

BE: For pricing. I was told it was to help them better understand what was, you know, being held for grain rather than just what they had in--.

EE: Was there a big carryover in '05? I mean that is to say, was there a lot of crop from the previous year that concerned the--?

BE: Well, see, that I don't know.

EE: We'd have to check that elsewhere? Ok. Sure.

BE: Yeah, I wouldn't know that.

EE: That's fine. How well were they organized in terms of sending you out into this district, then, which is quite a large one? What is it, 200 miles long almost?

BE: Yeah, it was terrible. I mean, that was one of the conflicts, I guess, we had.

EE: It's a good 60 miles. I think 70 miles deep because I grew up a little--. Anyway, we don't need to get into that, but if it were 70 miles would it be 200 miles?

BE: Oh, it's a big section. Initially, they were setting the appointments at this central office.

EE: They were calling the farmers?

BE: Yeah, they were calling the farmers, and they were getting a terrible response rate, because that's another thing too, only the farmers that wanted you there--. It wasn't every farm.

EE: They could say no?

BE: Yeah, they could say no. Absolutely they could say no. And it got a lot of no's in the beginning. I think the problem was the way they were communicating the message because when I took over making the appointments, I was getting nearly 100 percent response to enthusiastically come and--.



EE: Affirmative?

BE: Yeah! So I think it was the message wasn't clear to the farmers.

EE: Who was making the call? What was the office staff like for this?

BE: Oh, they were from the Ukraine. Almost everyone. So there was--.

EE: Where my ancestors—our ancestors—came from!

BE: Right. But they were directly from, so there was a language barrier, you know? So I think there was an issue with the way that the message was relayed to the farmers.

EE: Because the company is Swiss, but they're employing Ukrainian-raised--.

BE: I mean, it's such an amazing global company from the little bit I got to know about it. I was offered a job driving truck in Iraq, driving fuel tankers for a wing of their company in Iraq.

EE: By them?

BE: By them at the time.

EE: What were they doing in Iraq?

BE: Hauling fuel. They had fuel tankers.

EE: Why did you turn that down?

BE: \$90,000 for nine months in non-taxable foreign income, but there's a good chance you'll be shot and killed or captured and beheaded!

EE: I'm being very ironic. [Laughing]

BE: I asked them if I could spend the money before I went. [Laughing] Had I been in my twenties, I probably would have taken the job, but I was a little--. Yeah. More cautious.

EE: So a company that's up for pretty well any challenge.

BE: Yeah, they were a global network. Interesting opportunities there.

EE: Anyway, back to these Ukrainian, what, girls? Women who were in the office.

BE: Yeah. These women, so they had their script, which was very poorly written from--. I understood. I saw what they were reading from after. It made no sense. So what I would do is, I took over for them and started--. Because they were just saying-- Okay, you're in a section. So they were calling farmers in the section without looking at a map to see where exactly their farm was. So we were finding they would give us these appointments and they would be across the province from one another back to back, and next to each other for the next.

**[0:15:08]**

EE: Yeah, do one in Winkler and the next one would be in Virden or something?

BE: Yeah, and then back to Carman. Like, I mean, you drive right past the place you just went through to get back to the one you were at before.

EE: And you were given them in order?

BE: Oh, it was crazy. We were missing appointments, phoning farmers from the truck. I mean, it was a disaster. So when I ended up taking over, I coordinated the map. I looked at where the locations were.

EE: Because you had a list of locations that had to be sampled?

BE: Yeah, yeah. And then, so, I would call and say I was calling on behalf of the Wheat Board, right? Because they understand who the Wheat Board is. They don't know who SGS is, but they know who the Wheat Board is.

EE: Oh, they sure understand who the Wheat Board is.

BE: So, when I'd say I'm calling on behalf—not from the Wheat Board, but on behalf of—because it was their pilot project. We were employed by them to get these samples. So I would say, “I need to come take a sample for grading,” and I told them what it entailed. “Climb on the bins. We're insured, and we had this paperwork with us. We would like to meet someone there if possible.”

EE: Did they have to sign off on it?

BE: Well, they did check up on us, you know? They did call back, the farmers, to make sure we were--.

EE: That you'd been there?

BE: Yeah, we'd been there and done the sampling properly.

EE: You didn't have to get a signature from the farmer?

BE: I don't think so, but we would get a name. We'd get whatever information. We had a sheet. We had some paperwork that we'd fill out.

EE: And so you grouped the locations, the farmers' locations, much more efficiently?

BE: Yeah, and that's what made our area so productive. We got so many samples and finished and talked of moving on to help other areas. And like I say, we did there help that one area in the end. So yeah, it went well in the end. It started off on a bumpy road. It was rough in the initial beginning of the project, but we got ourselves together and it went well. I worked well with Rob. It was great having a friend to drive around the province with and meet all these wonderful farmers, you know? Talking to them was very interesting. So, yeah, that was--. So we took these samples for that fall.

EE: Right.

BE: Of wheat.

EE: Owen's father was a grain inspector. Have any questions risen in your mind about all of this, Owen?

OM: Well, I'm just wondering about what it was leading to and all this.

EE: Yeah.

OM: Usually inspections would take place--. Well, I guess, would there ever be inspections on the farm before the stuff was--?

EE: I wouldn't have thought so, but I mean, I'm off the farm 60, 55 years now. So.

OM: Most of the inspection would have taken place in port here.

BE: Well, there's a laboratory in Winnipeg that I visited my friend Bill at, that he worked at for SGS. That's where they would all show up at.

EE: When a farmer brought in a load, and initial grading was done—as I remembered—at the elevator. This would be 60 years ago or so, and I don't suppose that really changed.

BE: Yeah, off the truck.

EE: Right off the truck.

BE: Periodically I was told throughout unloading, like by the farmers because--. Yeah, the farmers would say--.

EE: Yeah, yeah. I assume the grain flowing out--.

BE: Some of them would even would say, "You can just take from the door." Like they thought we were nuts, some of them, to climb these bins with this crazy contraption and all this hose and risk our lives to take the sample. They'd say, "Just take it from the door!" But no, we were really diligent about doing our job, and Rob and I took it quite seriously. They were paying us really good money, and so--. That was a little bit of the controversy too. They thought we were cheating at points because we ran our section so efficiently. They really did check to make sure we were--. But we were--.

EE: They'd call the farmer, "Were they there?"

BE: Yeah, and "What did they do while they were there?" You know? "The crazy guys climbed the bins." [Laughing]

EE: “Had they vacuumed the stuff out?” And so on.

BE: Yeah, yeah. So it was an interesting job for that fall. I rather enjoyed it. I’m sorry I didn’t continue into another--. But I mean, some of the things, like I said, they weren’t really interesting—driving truck for them and whatnot. [Laughs]

EE: No!

OM: So these samples would be sent, you’d seal them--.

BE: To Winnipeg. So, we seal them--.

OM: SGS lab? And then they would do what with that?

BE: Well, they would grade it. They would--.

OM: And then report to the Wheat Board?

BE: And then report to the Wheat Board the findings on what they had, and then that would allow the Wheat Board to be able to better understand their stock and how they could price themselves on the market. So that’s what I understood. I understood that it was to better help them understand what they had so they could better price what they had.

OM: And at this end, they would just be confirming, I would assume, what came this way.

EE: On this end, that would be what they actually had to try to export and sell to whomever. It does--. Did you get any kind of sense--. This was a first?

**[0:20:00]**

BE: It was a first and last from my understanding that it didn’t continue, because my friend Bill just passed away last month, and he worked for SGS up until--.

EE: All the way through?

BE: Yeah, up until when he became ill last year.

EE: But he never called you about more employment?

BE: No, not in that sense. I could have worked as maybe somebody else in the laboratory, like a junior or something. Some laboratory work.

EE: Or making calls for them. You could've been their dispatcher!

BE: No, they didn't like that at all! They didn't like--. I was stepping on too many toes, you know, in the office there.

EE: In what way?

BE: Well, I just think that I really outdid some people there.

EE: Oh, you showed up others?

BE: Yeah. That really rubbed some people the wrong way there.

EE: All these Ukrainian women?

BE: Well, whomever. I think it was just--. It was the one or two people who were running the project, I think, were a little offended that I'd stepped in and outdone them in this. It's just some really basic things, you know? I felt like I just--. I wasn't sure what their background was, but as a truck driver, my background was scheduling.

EE: Get there as fast as possible. Get the job done.

BE: And efficiently. Like the last thing you want to do in a truck is drive back and forth down the same road from one place to another, you know, I mean, unnecessarily. That's just a waste of fuel and time and money. So, I mean--.

EE: You were being paid by the--?

BE: By the hour. So we were like--. And that was part of the problem too. The other teams, I don't think, felt the pressure to make the project run any better. So they never really picked it up. They never took a hand in their areas in that way either. It was just Rob and I. [Laughs] Rob has a terrific, strong work ethic too. He's a good Mennonite with a good strong work ethic.

EE: Yours likely removed, but you understand a work ethic too, from the Mennonite group, I mean.

BE: Oh, and him. I worked for his dad. His dad had his own business for quite some time. Cosmic Cleaners in Winnipeg. He was very well respected in the business community. Very hardworking guy. Still working to this day, I'm sure. Rob's dad is well into his seventies if not eighties. He just bought a tool that does power removal of ceramic tile, and he's stripping floors with these power tools still. I mean, no, the work ethic runs deep in the Heinrichs family.

EE: Who were the other four fellows?

BE: I couldn't tell you, honestly.

EE: You didn't meet them?

BE: I didn't really--. Well, I met them at the base a couple times, but I mean, it was just in passing. We would be loading and unloading maybe some equipment time to time, but no. They were strangers to me, so.

EE: Yeah. And you and Rob were a self-contained team, hard at it.

BE: Well, you know, that was nice that we knew each other previously and then were able to do this job together. That too made it--.

EE: Was there one person running the office that you got to--?

BE: I couldn't tell you when that was, again. You know, it was just--.

EE: Did you make the calls from the office?

BE: I remember sending the contract to you, do you recall that? They had me sign a contract, and I remember you marking it up in great detail and saying, "Well, a lot of these clauses are illegal but--. They can have you sign it, but they can't hold you to it

because there's laws against these sorts of things." [Laughing] I remember that quite distinctly, and you sending me back this contract all marked up. I signed it and I did the job, but they--.

EE: You didn't keep a photocopy of it?

BE: No, I'm not good at keeping. I was really quite astonished that I'd kept this certificate. I think the only reason is I have a collection of business cards and some old certificates and IDs.

EE: And it sort of got lost in there?

BE: It just got jammed in there. I thought I recalled that.

EE: Owen, please.

OM: I have a question. Who designed the equipment? Or was this a one-of sort of a project?

BE: Yeah, I don't know who engineered the equipment, but they did a good job. I've got to say. I was pretty impressed with the construction of the harvester.

EE: Lots of suction?

BE: Yeah, they did quite a bit of work. I think that actually pushed our start date back. I think they were perfecting that. I think it was very difficult, and there was a lot of engineering and work that went into those harvesters.

OM: Sounds like it.

BE: I actually worked with big harvesters harvesting peat moss for Sun Gro.

EE: Out Beausejour way?

BE: By Beausejour. And they're as large as a house. They pick up peat off the ground with these large vacuuming units. I was just as impressed with these little ones. They did the job well. Like it was a long tube to--. They had really powerful engines. They'd



done their homework because even with all those probes on, we were still picking up grain down to the bottom of some of these bins, so. You know, it was really fantastic. It was a good machine.

OM: We could use that as a vacuum cleaner in our house. [Laughing]

BE: Oh, you could use this in a barn to vacuum up after a horse. It's--.

EE: Augean stables, the famous one that Hercules took on.

BE: Yeah.

EE: He ran a river through the mess stable to clean it out. [Laughs]

BE: Well, he'd never had a shop-vac like this thing. [Laughing] This was a shop-vac on steroids. It was magnificent.

**[0:25:03]**

EE: Well, are there any other aspects of the--. You've mentioned things of these--. I should put on the tape, I guess, that you're my son, so we've talked at times about this a little bit.

BE: Well, probably the only way you would have been aware of such a small role that I did play in that--.

EE: Yeah. It was completely coincidental, fortuitous, that you should have been doing this.

BE: Yeah, yeah. This small little pilot project might actually mean something to somebody at some point, but, you know, I'm happy to contribute. Sorry it can't be a little more detailed, but I don't have, like I say, any of the records other than the certificate to peg the date down.

OM: You didn't have any issues with asthma or--?

BE: No, I have no--.

OM: Did they have proper health and safety?

BE: No, no. No. [Laughs]

OM: Not--.

BE: But we did have lanyards, and we had, like I say, the fall protection program that they sent us to Saskatoon for was provided. You know.

EE: If you had fallen and broken a limb it would have been on your head, in a sense, because you weren't supposed to do that.

BE: Well, we had the proper gear. We had the gear, and we had the training.

EE: The Wheat Board probably required that under the contract they had.

BE: Yeah, I'm sure. I'm sure it was a requirement. It made sense. It made sense to put us through those programs.

EE: We learned yesterday that SGS and another company are here in Thunder Bay doing the grading, I guess, these days.

OM: It sounds like it.

EE: I don't know whether I should suggest that you just kind of wander by and case the joint sometime. [Laughs]

BE: They have worldwide laboratories. Like I say, the things that they're involved with--.

EE: What was the sense you got about how big the company actually was?

BE: Oh, it was massive. Huge! All kinds of laboratories and inspections on so many things. Like I said, the fuel thing popped up. Because that's the thing in any large organization like that, there's so many facets to a business like that where every little cog in the system--. So, yeah, at that point, when I mentioned that I had a Class-1, one of the recruiters had said, "Would you like to go to Iraq?" You know, it wasn't appealing. Then I think I rubbed some people the wrong way at head office, like I say, over that scheduling, because we were quite efficient once I'd taken over that scheduling. I stepped on a few toes.

EE: But you saved them money.

BE: Oh, sure saved them a--.

EE: You could have earned more.

BE: I could have milked it. Oh, could have milked it for all kinds of money if you're just--.

EE: Which is what the other four probably were doing. [Laughs]

BE: Sure! They were taking no initiative to make things better, especially if it meant rocking the boat. Because, you know, like I say, there was opportunities there which some of them may have actually capitalized on and may have had careers with SGS. And I may have really shot myself in the foot by stepping on those toes, but I just couldn't help it. I couldn't with any conscious--.

EE: We raised you well! [Laughing]

BE: Yeah! Well, I couldn't take their easy dollars. [Laughs]

EE: Darn!

BE: Wouldn't be the first time I've turned down some easy dollars or made some either. So, I'm not--.

EE: Well, you enjoyed the project.

BE: And I did. I enjoyed the project. It was fun. Yeah, it was a good time.

EE: Well, if there's nothing more to add, and there's no questions you have?

OM: Very interesting interview.

EE: Any questions we should have asked to--?

BE: Oh, no. I mean you prodded me a little and I think I provided what I mostly remember about the project.

OM: How were the farmers to deal with?

BE: Great. You know, that was one of the best parts.

OM: Anything that stands out?

BE: Um, yeah. I mean, the big--. Farming these days is a big business. A lot of them were really struggling. The ones that I did meet often were proprietors of small farms. Many of them worked other jobs and wives were nurses and bus drivers. There was a lot of buses in the yards. It was a tough grind for anyone that wasn't big farming. The big farming is just mainly leasing land to big producers that come in and, like, that harvest with massive harvesters that tour the country in these harvesting teams now. We didn't meet too many farmers that harvested their own stuff. Those were the small farmers we did meet, which complained of their struggles. It's definitely--. You can see. And the very quiet rural towns that we would visit, it was definitely a shrinking--.

EE: Maybe I should put on the tape my own sort of vaguer memories. But there was a time earlier when Canadian farmers would head south in the middle of the summer with their harvesting equipment and begin harvesting in Texas and work their way north as crops ripened, until by late August and into September they were in Canada doing the custom. It was custom harvesting was the work and the phrase. So, and that may well be continuing, actually, if farmers don't have equipment, they may be depending on people who are still doing that kind of thing.

BE: Oh, yeah. It's big, big money. These mega harvesters that they run now, you know, a small farm can't buy the type of equipment they need.

**[0:30:03]**

EE: At several hundred thousand.

BE: Oh, sometimes millions. These are massive, massive pieces of equipment.

EE: Do you remember any farmers in the, say, the Carman area? East of Carman or north of Carman?

BE: Well, I mean, there were familiar names on the list because of my, you know, heritage.

EE: The grandparents growing up there, or farming there, and north of Culross and all of that.

BE: Yeah, but I didn't prod too much. I didn't make it about myself.

EE: No, it's about their wheat.

BE: And I'm definitely not the historian, right? [Laughs] I'm there about them.

EE: Was it just wheat you were testing, incidentally? Or other crops?

BE: Um, I don't know. There was a couple. I would have--.

EE: Canola?

BE: No, we didn't do canola. No. We did wheat, but there was--.

EE: Flax or barley? Oats? They would be the crops that the Wheat Board would handle, particularly the wheat they'd have the monopoly on still.

BE: We did barley. You know what, I could talk to Rob. He might--. I never did get a hold of him before this interview. I thought of it, but then when I found this certificate with the date on it, I thought I wouldn't bother, but you know--.

EE: Things like that.

BE: Could add it to the record possible later on, a little footnote if I do.

EE: Sure. Yeah, we'll think about that. Well, thanks very much, Bryce, for telling--.

BE: Oh, my pleasure.

EE: Telling us all about this. It's been fun.

BE: Mhmm, yeah. I much enjoyed it.

OM: Yeah, it's certainly interesting. Thank you very much.

EE: And I think this wraps things up on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 2015.

BE: Great.

EE: Ten years after the--.

OM: I don't believe you, Ernie. I've turned this off, and I still don't believe you.

BE: [Laughing] That you've wrapped it?

**End of Interview.**