**Narrator:** Lucille Evans (LE)

**Company Affiliations:** Canadian Wheat Board (CWB)

**Interview Date:** 27 November 2013

**Interviewer:** Nancy Perozzo (NP)

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**Summary:** Retired corporate secretary for the Canadian Wheat Board Lucille Evans discusses her career in a variety of roles within the organization. She describes her first role as librarian for the CWB's Market Analysis division, where she organized printed material, started an initiative to consolidate daily global grain market news, and learned about the international and Canadian grain industry to better help the analysts. She then discusses moving up to assistant market researcher, continuing and expanding her work in compiling and analyzing grain market data for the analysts and marketing division. Evans describes moving up to become a full market analyst in charge of Western Europe, where she created and maintained relationships with customer countries, performed market projections, occasionally staffed the international offices, and became the first woman to travel for the CWB. She then discusses becoming the assistant corporate secretary and eventually the corporate secretary, and she explains her main roles of liaising between the CWB's commissioners, the general staff, the government ministers, and the advisory committee. Evans recounts other initiatives she was involved in, like hosting foreign delegates, speaking at Canadian International Grains Institute programs, creating affirmative action programs for women in the CWB, setting up a daycare and fitness centre, and running elections for the advisory committee. Other topics discussed include the impact of the European Union on Canadian wheat export to Europe, stories of her overseas travels to the Mediterranean, differing support for the CWB from the private and cooperative industry, memorable colleagues she worked with, and the removal of oats from the CWB's monopoly.

**Keywords:** Canadian Wheat Board (CWB); Grain market analysis; Grain market research; Grain industry research; Grain statistics; International trade; Grain marketing; Women in the workplace; Corporate secretary; Boards of directors; CWB Advisory Committee; Single desk marketing; CWB—Library; Librarians; Market projections; Canadian International Grains Institute (CIGI); International Wheat Council; North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); United Kingdom; Belgium; Portugal; Greece; Malta

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NP: Good afternoon, it's Nancy Perozzo again in Winnipeg, and it is November 27, 2013. I'll have the person who is taking part of the interview this afternoon introduce herself. In one or two sentences say something about your connection with the grain trade.

LE: My name is Lucille Evans, and I had the good fortune of working for the Wheat Board for 24 years during a time that was very interesting, sometimes very tumultuous, and I remember it all very fondly. That was from 1971 until 1995.

NP: Great. Now I usually start out by asking people where they grew up. Are you a farm girl?

LE: No, I'm not. [Laughs] I come from Steinbach. I was a town girl. My only connection—I used to say this to people at work—my only connection to the grain trade is that my grandfather, who came from southern Russia, owned a flour mill.

NP: Really?

LE: Yes. Then the revolution started, and that's a long story, but then the family was forced to flee Russia and come to Canada and start a new life. They came to Steinbach, but then they were given, I think it was the CPR gave land along the railways to people, and he took advantage of that and went to start a farm in Elbow, Saskatchewan, and then the Depression hit. I guess they never did all that well and came back to Steinbach and retired. So that's my only connection to the grain industry. [Laughs]

NP: Did you say that was your grandfather?

LE: My grandfather. My mother's father.

NP: Did they ever tell stories about what it was like, those early farming days?

LE: Well, I've seen pictures, and my mother has talked about it. My grandparents died when I was still pretty young, and I didn't know any of this, but my mother talked a little bit about it. She enjoyed the life there, as far as I can understand. She rode the horses. Her two brothers worked the farm. She talks about going to the down dances and some of her boyfriends, and that's about all I ever really heard. She didn't really talk too much about the hardships. The hardships had already come when they were in Russia and that was primary in her memory. So she didn't talk too much about time in Elbow, Saskatchewan.

NP: But there was wheat in your roots. [Laughs]

LE: I guess so. [Laughs]

NP: What about you, then? What was your initial education and training?

LE: I went to high school in Steinbach. It was a great town to grow up in. Then I went off to university after Grade 12, and I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree, and then I took my teacher's training certificate, which was one more year of university, and then I was qualified to be a high school teacher.

I began to teach here in Winnipeg at the St. James Collegiate. After three years I realized, "This is not for me. I want something where I can have my own desk and deal with adults and do something really interesting." So not having to deal with Grade 7s, 8s, and 9s. I had looked forward to maybe getting a degree in being a librarian. Then, to make a long story short, I was married to another man at a time, and he was hired by CIDA—Canadian International Development Agency—to take a job in the West Indies teaching teachers. I went with him, and while we were there, our marriage broke up. I came back to Canada, and I mention that here in my paper, and I decided, "I have to start a new life, start over," and I didn't want to go back to teaching, so.

My mother actually drove me into Winnipeg because I had gone home to my parent. She drove me into Winnipeg to have an interview at, well, it was then called the Manpower office, to get a job. There were two jobs that interested me for which I got interviews—one was at the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) for the librarian's job for the Market Analysis department, and the other job was to start a career at Holt Renfrew's.

They both offered me the job. That was one of the major decisions, looking back on my life. I chose a very different road. I had decided that my life would be more fulfilled by working for an organization like the Wheat Board. Actually, I knew nothing about it, but I thought it would give more meaning to my life than working for Holt Renfrew. I love their clothes, but I didn't see myself just spending my life dealing with clothes. There are more important things in life than that.

NP: What a decision you made!

LE: Yes. It wasn't all that hard, but I gave it a long thought.

NP: And well, it turned out.

LE: I very quickly decided, before I got the interview--. Well, I got the interview and I had to--. With Harold Bjarnason. Do you know him?

NP: The name has come up, but I have not met him.

LE: Harold Bjarnason, at the time, was the director of this new Market Analysis department. I was asked to come to an interview with him and the director of, at the time, personnel, Art McLean. Since I knew nothing about the Wheat Board, I had to do a quick crash course. So I sent my mom—we were in Winnipeg still after my meeting with Manpower—and I sent my mom off to the Wheat Board to get some pamphlets of information. I took myself off to the Manitoba Archives, which at that time were in what we still call the old concert hall. You know the building behind the Bay's parkade? That building?

NP: Yes.

LE: I went off there and I dug up some information on the Wheat Board and then went off to my interview the next day. One of the questions they asked me was, "What did I know about foreign aid?" because the Wheat Board participated in a lot of aid programs. I said, "Well the only thing I knew about aid was the fact I have just come from living in the West Indies, and I knew that CIDA sent a lot of aid to that particular island." It was the island of Saint Kitts, and I'm not sure what was in those big, huge bundles that came by ship, but they were loaded on the wharfs, and nobody ever saw them again. [Laughs] So that was all I knew about aid. I didn't think that was a very good answer, but that's all I could say. I was offered the job the next day. So that's how I started in 1971.

NP: I'm just going to shut this off for a sec.

LE: Okay.

**[Audio pauses]**

NP: I'm interested in what it was like to establish a library for a group like that. Can you recall those days?

LE: I was a real greenhorn at the time, not really having had any librarian degree or studies, but I had worked as a volunteer librarian at the Fort Garry Library for some years, and so I just took that self-taught knowledge to the Wheat Board and organized the books according to the Dewey Decimal system because I had learned that while volunteering, and I thought that was, for me, the easiest way. I was at first a bit overwhelmed by the fact I didn't really know what market analysis meant. [Laughing]

NP: Small point.

LE: I was a real greenhorn at the time. I was just so amazed by all these young men who had been hired out of university. They were all just—one of them being Bob Roehle, for example—and I admired them all so greatly, and they were so nice, and they appreciated the work I did for them. I learned very, very quickly what their needs were and what it actually meant—what market analysis actually involved. I very quickly caught onto doing research for them. I thought that there must be a quicker way of sending around information that would come into me daily from all the various newspapers from around the world.

My first job I gave myself, everyday, was to scan all the newspaper that came in from everywhere like *The Economist*, or magazines like *The Economist, Reuters*— particularly *Reuters*. I would go out and read the tape that was coming off the machine. I would clip them out and paste them on a page and give that to my secretary to type up really, really quickly, and that was done by noon. Then every one of the guys in the department would get a copy, including Harold who was my boss. I think they were very pleased with that. At least I always got very good feedback and that I had shown initiative and done something that hadn't been done before. That gave me a real boost. So I was just busy doing that, and then I got this promotion to be one of the assistants that I mentioned too.

NP: What would you say about how the experience in setting up the library and doing the survey of news from around the world, what did you gain from that that made it possible for you to move up? Because as you said, you started out not knowing anything.

LE: Like I said, it gave me a lot of quick knowledge, very thorough knowledge of the grain industry as a whole. I began to realize what was going on around the world in other countries, what countries were exporters, which countries were importers. I don't mean to brag, but I think I'm a fairly quick study, and I learn very quickly what it was all about, and I found it fascinating. If I hadn't found it fascinating and interesting, none of the rest of it probably wouldn't have happened. I guess I must have done well enough in that area to impress people that I deserved to move up. I was given a chance to be an assistant to the fellow doing the analysis in Western Europe and that was the chance to prove myself on the second step up the ladder.

NP: What did you learn about the Wheat Board because, again, the pamphlets would have given you a bit of information, and about the Canadian grain trade?

LE: First of all, my focus had been on the international grain trade, so I had learned--. I guess it took me longer to understand how the Canadian grain industry worked. I found it very unusual. This business of quotas and delivery dates and shipping dates and all of the things that related to farming in western Canada was very, very new to me. So I took courses. The personnel department

was very often offering courses to new staff or anyone else who needed to be given some more information on how the Canadian grain industry worked. I took some courses that were given at the Wheat Board and sometimes at the Canadian Grains Institute. You've learned about that along the way, I'm sure.

NP: Yes.

LE: In that way, I learned about how the Canadian grain system worked, how grain was delivered, how it was shipped, and all of those things. It was a very broad knowledge. It wasn't as detailed as my information on international grain trade, but the international side was the side I wanted to follow. That was sort of the route that I pursued and was given. I was very fortunate I was able to do that.

NP: What impression did you have of the international grain trading system? Again, taken from knowing nothing about it to knowing enough about it. Well, oftentimes librarians know quite a lot, because they read everybody's--. [Laughs]

LE: They read everything, yes, right.

NP: Any, I hate to use the word, but I will, epiphanies or "Wow, I didn't know that" sort of thoughts?

LE: Well, I very quickly learned, and was surprised to learn, about countries that were experiencing terrible drought, and how very, very important it was to get food and grain to them, and how very often that didn't work. I studied very closely the International Wheat Council's reports, what we used to call the IWC. That was also one of my very major sources of learning about the international grain system. One of my jobs was to keep track of statistics of what countries around the world were exporting and importing. So in recording those numbers I learned a lot, and I guess that was sort of an epiphany for me.

I was also busy reading material put out by the USDA, U.S. Department of Agriculture. There again a whole world opened up to me on how the American system worked and how very, very different it was from ours. In knowing, beginning to learn something about ours and beginning to learn about the American system, I began to realize I was very proud of the Canadian system as compared to the Americans.

NP: It almost sounds as if this period in your life was--. I was taken by something you said earlier about making the choice between Holt Renfrew and the Canadian Wheat Board and some things were more important than clothing, so you already had I think a certain foundation, a philosophy, and so is it fair to say that this period was a chance for you to develop your own philosophy?

LE: I think so. I wanted a life that was unusual. I think I inherited my grandfather's and great-grandfather's genes—and my father's—in wanting adventure and travel, and what was most important for me, and always has been, was to learn and keep learning about the world and what was out there.

NP: I'd like you to expand a bit upon what you saw as the difference between the Canadian and the American system, and what in those differences made you proud of the system that was developing, or had developed, in Canada.

LE: The Americans, as you know, did their exporting through private grain companies, and in Canada it was done through the Canadian Wheat Board. I saw in the American system the farmers who knew how to work the system and could read the trade reports seemed to be at an advantage over those who maybe we're not up on what was going on around the world and didn't have the knowledge of international marketing. The attacks that Washington would make on Canada with respect to our grain trade and the terrible things they would say about us— I mean the misinformation that they had about us—I found that very disturbing. Maybe we had misinformation about their side, too, but at the time, my heart and soul belonged to the Canadian Wheat Board and anything that I read that was an attack on it or the system, I found very disturbing.

I was very proud of our farmers. This came later in my career, but as I became secretary to the advisory committee, I learned a whole lot more about how things really worked out in the country and how much better I thought that system worked for them than if they had been American farmers. And yet there are lots of people out there who completely disagreed with that but--. I don't know if that answers your question.

NP: Yes. I usually don't have an answer in mind, so any answer will do. It's your answer. This is going back even a bit further because you had said you had done some research at the archives about the CWB. What did you learn there? Because that would have taken you back to the beginning days, I guess.

LE: Yes, actually, I was just going to say I don't really remember, but now that you say that I think I do remember reading about its history and how it was started. I can't really say I remember. I didn't have a whole lot of time, so I wouldn't have been reading volumes of things but enough to learn about its history and why it was established so that I could answer some fairly basic questions if asked. Obviously, I must have answered the right things because I got the job. [Laughs]

NP: That's right. I know a lot of people would not know what you knew when you went into that interview, I would think. Now, when you were working in the library and as you moved into the assistant market research position, who were—besides Mr. Bjarnason—who else was in the department at the time?

LE: There was Bob Roehle, Bill Spafford who--. Have you heard of him? He was my brother-in-law.

NP: Oh really?

LE: He married my sister. He met her through me. As you know, he's passed away.

NP: Yes. Yes, I tried for a couple years to track him down, and then Bob sent me a copy of the obituary so, yes.

LE: Bob was trying to get him to talk to you, I remember. He and my sister were married for a very long time, but their marriage did not work, and they divorced, but in the meantime, two children, so his children are my niece and nephew. They're very close. Anyway, Bill--. So there's Bill Spafford, Bob Roehle, Bob Bereska (sp?), Mike Halick, Alex Kubicek, Bill Coleman—he did the far East. I don't know where he is now. Georgina Vetanova (sp?), she did the Russian side of things. In fact, the last I heard of her, she was living in Thunder Bay, but she passed away.

NP: Oh darn.

LE: Yes. She would have been a very good one to interview. She had come over from Czechoslovakia. She was a very interesting person. Who else was there? I have to sort of thing about the areas of--. Oh, Paul Westdal! Have you talked to him? He was a really nice guy. Brian Oleson.

NP: Interview him for the second time tomorrow afternoon because we didn't get everything in. [Laughs]

LE: I know. I'm sure he'll keep you going for hours. He's also a very, very good friend. I was lucky they were all really nice guys and some of them became very close friends. They were very good to me. Then I met Doug, and we married shortly after I started at the Wheat Board, so they included us in a lot of parties and things. Anyway--.

NP: Doug's not a Wheat Board guy?

LE: No, no. He worked for the federal government in a different office entirely. Back to names--.

NP: That's okay.

LE: I've got to give you some anyway.

NP: They come up as we go through different stages anyways. In 1973 then, you moved into market research assistant position. You may want to say something about that or combine it with the market research analyst.

LE: I only did the sort of assistant business for a short year. What I did really there was continue to focus my research and analysis on Western Europe. I would bring anything I knew of interest and importance to Gary, who's last name I can't remember. Isn't that terrible?

NP: What would you look for? What were definite picks as far as information?

LE: He would need to know how the crops were doing. So I would be gathering information on what planting was being done in various countries—well in Western European countries—particularly countries that were members of the European Union because the European Union was really an exporter basically. So they were a competitor. I had to let him know what I was reading about, what their intentions were for exporting. Some of them had plans to import as well because they needed some of our high protein, good quality wheat. For example, the UK needed to import, so they did that. There were some other countries. Italy, for example, needed our durum to make pasta. So I would need to pass along any information that I was reading along to him and prepare tables and do--. Well just keep him posted on what was going on in Western Europe in terms of importing and exporting.

NP: Was that information readily available?

LE: Yes. I was surprised. There was a lot of material out there at the time. Most of it was on paper, or on *Reuters*. There was nothing like the internet. That was a long ways off. Like I said, the USDA prepared a lot of documents related to the world grain market. The European Economic Community, the EEC as we called it at the time, also put out a lot of material on the grain markets. Canada produced its material, but mainly I read stuff coming from the EEC and from the States, but mainly EEC. There were magazines, but a lot of the information, as I said, came from the International Wheat Council and from the grain divisions of the European Economic Communities head offices in Brussels.

NP: Where was the Grains Council? Where was their headquarters?

LE: The Canada Grains Council?

NP: No, the one--. Sorry, I may not--.

LE: Oh, the International Wheat Council?

NP: Yes.

LE: If I remember right, I think they were based in Brussels as well. Or maybe Rome. I might be mixing up the office in Rome. Rome had the United Nations Food Aid Program information. It could've been Brussels or London, maybe London. I'm sorry I don't really remember where that came from.

NP: Earlier on you mentioned that the Wheat Board had offices in--.

LE: Yes, they had an office in Brussels and in London. I got information--. The managers there would send information over on fax usually, and I would read those and put those together for the guy I was reporting to, just so that he didn't have to do a lot of digging around. I did it for him and concentrated my time on Western Europe rather than a broader spectrum that I did as a librarian.

NP: What was the connection between the market analysis department and the marketing, the actual salespeople? Were they one of the same?

LE: They were actually part of--. They were two sections of one big department. It was called the Sales and Market Development Division, I think. What the market analysis division was part of the market development, which was part of the sales and market development. I hope I'm right on that. Some of that organization may have come along a little later but Harold Bjarnason was the head of market analysis, and Carl Gusberti was the director of all of the sales of market development division, if I remember correctly.

NP: How do you spell Gusberti just—

LE: G-U-S-B-E-R-T-I.

NP: B?

LE: G-U-S-B-E-R-T-I. I think.

NP: And Carl?

LE: His name was Carl, yes. He was a good guy.

NP: Was there any sort of official lines or official ways of communicating between the salespeople essentially and the analysts, or was it they were both in the same place and they just--?

LE: No, we had meetings. I just remembered that as you were talking about that. We had meetings once a week where we would sit around a table and bring everybody up to date. Now I began to sit in on those meetings when I became the actual market analyst, not when I was just the research assistant for Gary in Western Europe.

NP: So how would a typical conversation go?

LE: Oh gosh. I can just see us sitting there, but we would go around the table and talk and report, make decisions I guess for what had to be done, given instructions by Carl or whoever was chairing it. I guess they went fine. I don't really remember anything in particular.

NP: I just wonder because sometimes there's not a seamless connection between being able to make sales based upon market analysis. So I was wondering how--.

LE: Whether there was any difficulty in sort of--.

NP: No, whether it just worked well or--.

LE: Yes, well, I thought it did. I wasn't aware of any problems. There's always the personal conflicts, but that's not important in the big scheme of things. I think we all tried to work very hard together, as I recall. There was also then later this market development side that was headed by, if I remember right, Dave Suderman. Have you talked to him yet? Yes. Was another good old friend of mine. So he was, I don't know if he was the--. Yes, he was the head of--. No, he was head of information when I started. Then later on he became head of market development.

NP: It sounds like the Wheat Board was a good place to be if you were looking for a career that allowed you opportunities. You didn't get in one spot and sort of stay there forever.

LE: That's right. If I'd had to stay in one spot forever, I would have--. Well, I wouldn't have stayed. I wanted to advance because I realised very quickly that this was a place where I wanted to have a career, but I wanted to move up, and I did.

NP: Now the market analyst position then, tell me about it. Was that where you started to get the ability to travel?

LE: Yes. That was 1974. I got, as I said, the job for market analyst for Western Europe. I didn't have an assistant in the manner that I had been an assistant to the former person who had had that job as analyst, so I did a lot of the research on my own and yet had to do--. Now I was really responsible, and I had to look for marketing opportunities in countries in Western Europe. That was a big part of my job. Also then doing liaising with Brussels and London. Well, in doing a lot of research—and at that time being responsible for looking for marketing opportunities for the Wheat Board—I did some work one day on Portugal and began to realise that maybe Portugal would be a good market for selling the lower grade wheat that was going to be coming in the fall. I just wrote up a two-pager on that, and a lot of the material that we as market analysts wrote had to be copied to the board, the commissioners. So I'd handed my report in fine, and a few days later Larry Kristjanson--. Have you talked to him?

NP: Not personally, but one of our interviewers did. I'm sorry I missed it because his name comes up in just about every interview.

LE: Yes. He came up to my desk. I was terrified, I had never really had anything to do with the commissioners before, and he said, "Well. Would you like to go to Portugal? Get ready." Oh me? So, okay. I agreed to do that, but it was to be—you know and this of course made sense, it's not that they didn't want me to go on my own, that just wouldn't have made sense—then it was decided I would go with the guy from the sales side of things because he was the guy in charge of selling feed grains. So he would be the one who would do the actual sales talking, and I would be there to provide background information to keep him informed as to what was going on in the country.

I was the first woman to travel overseas for the Wheat Board. I was a bit concerned that my traveling with a man would upset people, or, you know, tongues would be wagging. But I made it a point of getting to know his wife and people getting to know my husband, so that everybody realised that this was a serious, working relationship. It worked very well, and we were joined in Europe then by--. No. Oh a third person came with us, or was he there already? Herman Deitenbrok. I don't know if you've heard about him along the way. He was, for many years, the manager of Brussels office. But I think at the time he was there with Charlie and I. Yes, that's right. I'm sorry I'm babbling here.

NP: That's fine, it was a long time ago.

LE: I'm just remembering out loud here. I think, at the time, he was the manager of the Brussels office. So he joined us, and the three of them traveled in Portugal together and went to meet the people who were a sort of a central buying agency for the Portuguese government. We met with them, and Charlie and Harold and Herman made their pitch. I would just nudge them and give them information when they needed it. That was my first foray into travel overseas. It just grew from there.

NP: Was it successful, that particular one?

LE: In the end, I don't think it was. We may have sold a little bit at the time. I don't remember it as turning out to be a really big deal or a big signing of a big contract or anything. It may have opened up the door, because a few years later the International Grains Institute, I was sent to participate in the International Grains Institute's international--. They did international and domestic courses. They were doing a course that was going to be focusing on Western Europeans coming over to learn about our system, and since I was the analyst for Western Europe, I was asked to participate in the program as well.

I think that was an eight-week, six-week program. I have pictures from that and stuff if you want to see the gang. I got then to meet many of the buyers from Western Europe. One of them was from Portugal, so they had obviously sent him because there had been that tie established. They were all men. So several of them were from the UK. They were major buyers from the various companies in the UK. There were people from Germany, people from Italy. The buyers of durum wheat came from Italy. There were Spanish people. It was one of my best times, I think. It was a very interesting six weeks or whatever length it was. It seemed a long time.

We did wonderful things together. We traveled across western Canada so that they could see it firsthand how the system worked. In Vancouver, we were given very thorough tours of the harbour and the shipping facilities, so that they could see how it worked on the West Coast side of things. I don't think we went to the St. Lawrence. No, I don't think so. But anyway, we concentrated on a western Canada, and I had to give a talk to the whole group on my work as Western European analyst, so that was a bit nerve wracking because there were always guys in the room who knew a whole lot more in grain marketing in their own countries than I was pretending to be, but Harold Bjarnason was standing at the back of the room, looking very nervous. [Laughs] But it went all right. I wasn't fired or anything.

NP: You didn't have to keep a copy of that speech, did you?

LE: No, I don't think so.

NP: Unfortunately, it's before the time of computers, so yes, I just happen to have a little file of that, yes.

LE: No, like I said I think I destroyed--. If I kept that, and I'm sure I did—I kept everything—it's all been shredded or thrown out. We were moving, and it was just too much paper.

NP: Yes. I have a question about the Western European buying system. Would the vast majority of countries be represented by a central buying agency at that time?

LE: They could buy, if I'm remembering right, they could buy on their own, but if they needed any imports, they had to buy from each other. France was a minor exporter of grain, so if Germany needed something, it had to look at what France had to offer first before it went overseas.

NP: That must have made it very difficult to market in Europe.

LE: It was difficult to market to the EEC. That's why we had an office there, so that somebody could keep track of what was going on and have his ear to the ground. He had a very good connection with the Canadian government's representative to the European Commission. So there was a tie there between the Wheat Board and the Canadian government representation. He would be courting the people who were sort of the major grain-industry people within the European Commission. But the countries, like I said, they had to buy from each other. If somebody needed durum for pasta, they would look first to see what Italy had, and if they needed the higher protein durum that we had to offer, then they come to us.

NP: So that was the major market was in durum wheat?

LE: In durum wheat and high protein wheat. England, for example, they would be importing some grain from France, which was lower quality and also some winter wheats, but then they would come to us because their particular bread needed our wheat, the higher protein wheat. Now that was then, I don't know what it's like now.

NP: Anything else related to that? Any other incidents that you remember in your travels related to market analysis?

LE: Yes. That was my first trip was to Portugal. After that we were also looking at Greece, so I was churning out information on Greece, at the time, and thought that--. And at the time Cam Brown was at the head of market development, I think. Harold was still there as director of market analysis. Cam Brown was there, and he was really interested in feed grain. He was sort of the feed grains guy. He was interested in having a look at Greece. Then he--. And I'm not sure if Charlie Landry came along with us at the

time. Charlie Landry was the guy in sales, on the sales side of things who did feed grains. Cam was more into the whole actual marketing side to see what kind of grains they would need for feed. So I was the one providing the background information.

We went to Greece a couple of times to see if we could sell feed grains into Greece. The trouble there was that they were just about to enter into the European Economic Community, and they just weren't ready to buy from us. They were going to begin relying on buying European feed grains of which there was a fair amount, not always enough, but a fair amount. But we went there twice, and for a while the prospects looked pretty good. We were even taken to feedlots around Greece, and so that was interesting.

NP: In what way?

LE: Well, we got to look at farms that had big feedlots. You know, trudge around farms, and one of those, you know, you had to confess when you came back to Canada that you've been on a farm. So we did that. I'm just looking at my note here, we also went into Malta because Malta was a transshipment area in the Mediterranean. We thought that it would be good to get to know them a bit better because they could help us transship grain through the Mediterranean and into the Middle East, for example. Jean Tambay, he was an analyst—now the name comes to me—he was the analyst for the Middle East. He and I and this Herman Deitenbrok, who was the manager for the Brussels office, we're going to go to Malta and have a look around to see what it was like and to have talks with people there. I'm just remembering our flight there was through a horrendous storm on the Mediterranean and in some little plane that you thought was going to fall apart. We met with some officials while we were there and even the Prime Minister had promised to show up—I'm just remembering that in reading my notes—and he never did show up. We knew he wouldn't, but we sat and waited it out. That was kind of funny.

Also, in addition to going overseas, which I did quite often actually, I went to Brussels to work a few times when Herman was on holidays. One time I went with Herman on a tour of Western Europe to see firsthand how crops were doing and to go and to talk to various agriculture representatives in our consulates around Europe. I got to meet the guys who were in charge of keeping an eye on Canada's agricultural trade while they were working at our consulates or embassies. So we got--.

NP: I've often wondered about the interconnectedness of the Canadian Wheat Board, in particular, because of the grain and the federal Department of Trade.

LE: Of Agriculture or Trade?

NP: Well, I mean, even there, Agriculture and then there's Industry and Trade. So how did that all work together?

LE: Well, the guys, the agriculture department in Ottawa looked at all of facets of agriculture. It wasn't just grain. It was everything involved in agriculture, and also eastern Canada. It was all of Canada and all of agriculture, and the Wheat Board fitted it into that structure through the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

NP: And Industry and Trade?

LE: We would go and talk to the guys who were the Foreign Affairs department. I think they would've been more concerned just about public relations with a certain country, if it was good or bad, "Be careful, don't tread on so and so's toes and be careful what you do, be careful what you say." Or maybe, "This is not a good time to go." You know, they were--. I don't really remember a whole lot of connection with them. That may have been done at a higher level.

NP: It's more like the advisory, this not a safe country to travel in, or--.

LE: Yes. "Be careful what you say, be careful how you behave," that sort of thing. That relationship would've been carried on at a much higher level. We had a chief commissioner who would be talking to people at that level.

NP: The languages spoken--.

LE: Many of the analysts had a language specialty. This Jean Tambay that I mentioned, for instance, he actually came into Canada from Lebanon, so he spoke some of the Middle East languages. I don't know if it was Arabic. But anyway, he was French background, so he could handle the French side of things when we were in Europe.

NP: And Mr. Kubichek, of course.

LE: Kubichek, he had various languages. Georgina Vetanova, she had Russian. She also knew—well we didn't have a market in Czechoslovakia—but of course she spoke Czech. There are people who spoke French really well. There were people, this Bill Coleman, he could speak Chinese. So we had a lot of language expertise. I wasn't one of them. I could understand German. Oh, and this Gary that I worked for who passed away, he was German. He came from Germany, so he would've been a good connection there as well. Our bases were pretty well covered.

NP: Which I can see would be a real advantage for the--.

LE: Yes, it was. Now our office was in Brussels. So I'm not sure if anybody--. Well, Herman Deitenbrok, who was the manager there for a long time, spoke French as well, so he could have got along with the French side of things. So that was good. It was never really a problem.

NP: Who was the best customer in that?

LE: In Europe?

NP: Yes.

LE: In Europe? I would say the UK. They were actually one of Canada's first international customers—the Canadian Wheat Board's first international customers—and we would have long term agreements with them.

NP: And the negotiations or sales there would take place with--?

LE: The sales guys would do that.

NP: With individual companies? Or was there a central--?

LE: In the UK, it was individual companies. That would then be something that Bill Spafford would go and negotiate. That's what he did. He was the Wheat Board's top negotiator on the staff-side of things.

NP: Before we get too far past it, Tambay, how is that spelled?

LE: T-A-M-B-A-Y

NP: And is he around still?

LE: I don't know. I was asking somebody that the other day and nobody knows where he is. He left the Wheat Board.

NP: What was his first name?

LE: Jean. J-E-A-N. French.

NP: And Dietenbrock?

LE: Dietenbrock. Here, I got it here at the bottom.

NP: See how I close I've come to--. Oh, I didn't--. It was T instead of P and brock, okay. So I was thinking it might be the E-C-H but--.

LE: He came from Indonesia, actually, so he's got an interesting--. A Dutch Indonesian, one of those. Yes, he was in marketing development for a while, and then he became the manager of the Brussel's office.

NP: And retired there?

LE: Yes. No. Yes. He did. Then there was the London office. I would go when the manager there, who was Dave Yates at the time--. Y-A-T-E-S. I think he's probably passed away. I'm not sure. When he got his leave to come to Canada in the summer or the fall or whenever, I would go work in the office there for a few times, and then came the time I was asked to come home and take on the new position.

NP: What a hardship for you.

LE: Yes. [Laughs] There were, and that was an interesting time, too. I met with a lot of the buyers there from the different flour companies and the buying agencies, and went for long lunches. I don't know. You wondered when some of those people went to work. [Laughs] Long, long lunches and only be back in the office maybe by 3:00 or 4:00. It was such a different--.

NP: Maybe the lunch was their work hours.

LE: Maybe that was their work, yes. That was a very interesting time. People often wondered—getting personal—wondered how our marriage managed under that because I was away a lot traveling with a lot of men. My husband worked for--. You know he's just the most understanding guy in the whole world. We have a very strong marriage. He was working for the Secretary of State department. He had to do a lot of traveling within Canada, so we were both away a lot, but it worked well. We would come home and tell each other great stories about what we had done and what happened. In those days we wrote letters. [Laughing]

NP: Nothing like getting something in the mail, rather than email.

LE: But at the time I still had--. Let's see what I've told you out of everything I've written here. Oh! I'm going to show you one little picture, just a personal picture. **[Audio pauses]** You can turn it on now, if you want. Harold Bjarnason had wanted us, when I was in market analysis too, to do a projection into the future grain trade around the world. So we each had to do projections for the section of the world we were responsible for. We had to do this. I think we did this in—I forget what year—1975. And we had to do projections to 1975. I mean, we didn't have computers or anything. We had to figure that out on our own. Here I am working late at night with our cat sitting on my papers. [Laughing]

NP: Crunching the numbers.

LE: Crunching the numbers. I'm going to frame that one of these things. That was really interesting. Doing that project, again, this was 1975—I had been a year into the job—really helped me understand what was going on in Europe and get a grasp on it.

NP: Did you ever take a look back at when it approached 1985?

LE: Oh yes. We all did.

NP: What the projections were like and in relation to reality?

LE: They weren't all that bad. But you know, as other things happen in the world, suddenly things fall apart.

NP: What were the unexpected changes, both positive and negative, from the projected future? Can you recall any of them?

LE: No, I can't remember that. I don't recall if there had been anything really way off. I would remember. I don't remember anything that was just really way off the mark.

NP: Now before you moved into the assistant corporate secretary position, so we're looking at 14 years essentially as a market analyst.

LE: Well, six. Six in market analyst.

NP: Sorry, my math is not good.

LE: One year as assistant and six years as the actual analyst.

NP: Right. So were there any changes in the department or in the way of operating? Did connections with Europe change over time? Was there political changes there that had an impact on your role when you were there?

LE: I guess the most important thing, in the big scheme of things, was what new countries are going into the EEC, now it's the European--.

NP: Union.

LE: Union. And it used to be the European Economic Union. The biggest thing was keeping an eye on what countries were going to be joining. And if and when they did, then that had huge implications for Canadian trade because then, as I said, they would start buying internally. So we had to keep a really close eye on that.

NP: It was formerly called the communist bloc countries started to--.

LE: That and some of the--. We were nervous about some of the Scandinavian countries joining. We were nervous about Spain and Portugal joining. The UK, I don't think at the time early on was a member. So that was the things that would make huge changes. But other than that, I don't really remember any. Those six years of my being a market analyst were, I think, very good years in terms of world trade. We were living high on good trade and doing very well as an exporter, with the Americans and the Australians as the biggest competition. Things basically went really well and then started to change after that.

NP: Was this the time of the Russian trades as well?

LE: Yes. Russia was big, and that's why we had a special analyst for Russia.

NP: I think it's the first time anybody's ever mentioned the Scandinavian countries. What kind of trade did we have with them?

LE: Norway was a customer. That was one of my jobs when I was market analyst and all through my corporate secretary career—well my early part of corporate secretary—was to do some customer relations when people from Europe came over. One time—I think I've even written about it, maybe not—the head of the Norwegian--. I don't remember the name of the company. In fact, he gave me this bowl. That the head of the Norwegian grain buying agency, he and his wife came to Canada, we'd invited them. Oh! [Laughs]

NP: A photo-op. [Laughs] Lovely. I like that.

LE: Good. I like the bowl. He and his wife came over at our invitation, and then it was my job to be the hostess and take them on a trip across Canada. I just remember the year, 1978. They flew into, I guess--. Where did we start? Maybe in Ottawa or Toronto or maybe Montreal because we had an office in Montreal, the shipping office. May have been to Montreal. But anyway, I met them out east. No it was Ottawa. I remember now. I traveled with them across the country from Montreal all the way to Vancouver.

I was quietly a nervous wreck because Air Canada was threatening to go on strike, and so—I don't know how I managed this—but I had two sets of tickets. One was the official set of tickets and another one our travel agent had given me to use if we had to switch to another airline. I think Air Canada was doing something silly. So that was very nerve wracking. We kept just getting to an airport in time when the particular airline would go on strike. I remember that as being very nerve wracking, but we had a wonderful time. They were great, they loved Canada.

We went on a train through the Rockies. They thought that was just marvelous. By the time we got to Banff, my husband had joined us because often the spouses did go on these things. So he joined us in Banff and came with us then to the West Coast. Then when we came back to Winnipeg, and he got to sit down and talk business, that's when I got this bowl. He had spelled--. I'm not sure if it's a J or an I but I guess it's a J. And I love this. It's one of my treasures. Even my mom and dad got to know them at the time. I guess maybe we all had dinner here together here or something. When my parents were big travelers, they went to Norway one time and went to visit them. That was really nice. So yes, Norway was a buying country for us. Now, I don't know.

NP: To get that high quality wheat?

LE: I guess so, yes. I don't really remember that either, but I would think so, yes.

NP: You don't hear much of Norwegian bread. [Laughs]

LE: Sweden was, if I remember right, a bit of an exporter. No, you don't hear about Norwegian bread. I haven't been to Norway, so I don't--. But Sweden had a bit to export every now and then. Denmark was a member of the EEC, so they didn't need anything. Those were some of my experiences.

NP: One area that I haven't been able to interview in yet is the weather and crop forecasting, I guess, group. Any interconnection there?

LE: Well, we had a--. You mean locally?

NP: The Canadian Wheat Board had a--.

LE: We had a weather and crops department that looked out for what weather was doing on the developing crops, and they would also do that for around the world as well. That came in my later years as a market analyst. They kept an eye on the weather, and once a week we had a meeting to learn about the effects of weather on our crop and what was happening around the world. So that became a very useful department. They were also part of sales and market development division, that little section, the weather people.

NP: Have you mentioned all of the compartments or are we missing some? There's the research, the sales, marketing--.

LE: Sales, market development, and then the weather people came along later. I think that was it. And the library was part of it.

NP: Did the library continue to be an integral or did things change once computers came on the scene?

LE: That's a good question. Say, computers only came on the scene on my last few years, as I--. Oh no, in my last years as corporate secretary. But I remember about the library now. The need for a library became bigger and bigger, and the room I'd been given, it was about the size of, oh, it wasn't even as big as the kitchen. So I didn't have very much room. There was another library on another floor that had to do more related to Canadian production. So all of that was melded together and a main library was set up on the very top—the eighth floor—of the Wheat Board. It became a big central library. So that's where all our stuff went to. I think then the library that I set up, that room became somebody else's office, and the books were all moved upstairs to the main library. But by then we had a librarian who looked after all the books, not just on marketing.

NP: 1980, then, you took advantage of another opportunity.

LE: I think with--. I was market analyst. I had my eye on a job I really, really wanted, and that was to be—I didn't aim quite high enough—I wanted to be the assistant corporate secretary. One day—and I had even gone up to Art McLean the head of human resources or personnel as it's called—and I told him that I would really like it. He wanted to know what my goals were, and I told

him that that was my goal. So a few years later the position was open and that's when I got the call from London to come home and--.

NP: Why did you only aim for the assistant? Was it--.

LE: I don't know. I've often asked myself that question. I wish I had been a bit braver. I guess I thought that—Oh, this reminds me of another initiative—but I guess I thought that as a woman, that was as high as I could go on. For me, at the time, that was good enough. But in a few years time it wasn't good enough.

That reminds me of another initiative, I guess, that started when I was an assistant corporate secretary. Yes. Not more time for this, but it was part of what I did. Society was changing a lot, and women's affirmative action programs were becoming very important within the government and within other businesses. So myself and a woman who worked in public relations at the time, Maureen Hunter, I'm not sure just how we got it started, but I think we had asked the commissioners for the authority to set up a committee that would look at women's affirmative action programs.

We then looked around the Wheat Board to find women whom we thought had lots of potential and could move up higher if they were given the opportunity. We pulled them together into a committee and the commissioners—the Board—gave us the mandate to prepare a proposal to them for an affirmative action program that they could implement. So we thought, "Wow! This is amazing to be given this opportunity."

We met a lot with women and the government who were the experts on this at the time. Luckily my husband was also an expert at working for Secretary of State. He also worked in the area of women's rights, so he knew what was going on and it was very helpful. My friend Maureen and I, with the help of our committee, put together this huge document. We worked on it for a long time to try and prove to the board why we needed this and why especially we needed equal pay for equal work. That was really our main goal. Well, and also to provide the opportunity for women to move up. We didn't go as far saying they should be given priority over men, who were maybe more qualified, but if they were more qualified than the men, or if they were equally qualified, they absolutely had to be considered. That all became part of this huge document, and we were called in to meet with the board. I was so nervous. I can still remember myself sitting at the board room table, first time I had a chance to sit in a boardroom table and present a paper. Well, they looked around at each other and gave us the approval to go ahead.

Then to implement it. The directors of the various departments, some of the men were not very happy about this. So then we thought, "Well, we better educate these guys." We then began to organize workshops for people to go to, to learn more about women's employment opportunities. Some of the men almost had to be dragged into these things, and others went quite readily

and happily to learn more about what they could do for women. It did help quite a lot of women I think move up. It certainly helped me. I didn't do it for myself. I did it for all the other women I saw around there who were extremely competent and capable, much more so than the men sometimes that they worked for. Equal pay for equal work, we started to put that in place, and it worked fine. Then we went into rather lean years and immediately that kind of program starts to fall behind.

In the meantime, we also started to other major initiatives in the Board. We set up a daycare very early on. I think we set that up—I don't know if I have it in here—in the '80s, definitely in the '80s sometime. It is still running, apparently. That was a huge job to get that going. We had to hire experts in childcare, find a room where we could do this, and set up a board to help run it. All that eventually got done. It became a very successful daycare, something that the staff really, really took use of.

We also started a fitness facility, which I think we were the first organization in Winnipeg to have a fitness facility. That also started up in the '80s, I think. It became extremely popular, and we noticed that absenteeism went down. People seemed healthier, came to work more happily. There were classes—fitness, like aerobics classes—held at noon. We, at first, hired somebody from the outside to come develop the programs and to teach them. Then eventually our own staff was trained. You know, whoever wanted, was trained to teach classes. So we had classes at noon and half-hour classes. Then after work at 4:30, we had one-hour classes. There was also some structure with weights and things. I forget what they were called, just had a little bit of everything. You could lift weights, pedal, and stuff like that.

NP: Universal gym, I think.

LE: Yes, is that what they were called?

NP: I think so. I could be wrong.

LE: So that was really popular with the men. They were a little more reluctant to join in the aerobics classes. It is still the same way today. We were very, as women, we were very proud of the fact that we had helped set that up. And there was always the usual resistance, but in the end it worked.

NP: Now, very brave of you in the grain industry because, as you know, very few women--. Well, you would know that for sure in the analyst area, the purchasers, the sales, the mill owners and so on, almost exclusively male.

LE: I don't recall receiving any negative feedback. Maybe for the daycare because I think a lot of men still thought women should stay at home and take care of their children. We were a little worried about what farmers might think because they would worry

that it would be a waste of their money, but at the time, I was also secretary to the advisory committee, and they knew all about this. We took them on a tour of both of those facilities, and they were very supportive. So there was no problem in the end on that front. I don't recall any, you know, sort of public negative reaction to any of that.

NP: We could go in two directions now. I don't know if you want to—it's an hour and a bit—did you want to get some water or are you okay?

LE: Oops.

NP: Nothing to worry about.

LE: Would you like some tea or water or coffee?

**[Audio pauses]**

NP: I will start us up again.

LE: Okay.

NP: We took a nice break for tea and wonderful peanut butter cookies. Now we're moving along to--. Since we started with the assistant corporate secretary, maybe we should do the corporate secretary and then move into the advisory?

LE: Yes, that's what I was thinking.

NP: Okay. Is it possible to combine your assistant corporate secretary with corporate secretary responsibilities?

LE: It was not all that different. I was assistant corporate secretary from 1980-87 to 1995. When I retired, I was the corporate secretary.

NP: Now a lot of people hearing the term corporate secretary think that means you sit at the meetings and take the minutes? [Laughs]

LE: Yes. Or they think that I'm just a glorified secretary that takes dictation and all that. Well, it certainly was not. If a man had that title, nobody questioned it. But if a woman had that title, they weren't quite sure. It had a lot of major responsibilities. I had my own secretary. [Laughing]

NP: Was he male?

LE: [Laughs] Should've been, but no. Well, I'm trying to remember here what I've done, what I did. My main job, the main focus of my job, was to really be the liaison between staff and the board and vice versa, and also I guess to be a liaison between the board and staff to the federal government, to our minister's office. I was the connection there. Also, I was the connection between the board and staff and the advisory committee. I'll talk about them in a little while. So what I had to do--. I attended the commissioners, the five of them. I had five bosses. [Laughs] Wasn't always easy, but I managed. We had a meeting every morning, just the commissioners and I, and I would sit there and take notes of what they discussed.

NP: Was there a head commissioner?

LE: Yes. The chief commissioner.

NP: Who was that?

LE: When I first started the job of corporate secretary it was Esmond Jarvis. He has since passed away. Then after that, it was Lorne Hehn. I guess you are familiar with both names, both people.

NP: Yes. I've heard both of those names.

LE: Lorne Hehn came from UGG. He was president of UGG. I was very fond of both of them. I had good relations with both of my bosses—both very different people. But we got along really well.

NP: How would you describe their management styles—their philosophies—you say they differ?

LE: It was more of a personality difference. I guess that is what your question is, but Lorne Hehn was--. We were all a little wary of him because he came from UGG, you know? But he turned out to be this most supportive man who was interested in everything we did. He connected really well with staff. He made a point of going around and talking to them and getting to know them. Then we very soon learned that he was 100 percent on our side and believed in the system, supported it, encouraged it,

encouraged our work. I would talk to him, meet with him every morning before we met with the rest of the Board. Esmond Jarvis was more of a government man. He came from the government. The connection to the government, in those days, was a bit stronger or just more—maybe not stronger—but I was more aware of it. It was more something that I concentrated on a bit more, at the time.

NP: Did he come out of the government?

LE: Yes. See the chief commissioner--. Well, all the commissioners are appointed by the federal government, as is the chief, and he came out of the government. I think. Well, it would've been Agriculture probably. I don't remember what position he came from. But yes, he came from the government.

NP: So that would certainly account for a connection, a familiarity.

LE: That worked fine. Then under Lorne there was more, I felt, a connection to farmers. There was a connection from Esmond Jarvis as well to farmers but in a different way. They were both just different people.

NP: Now it's interesting that you said there was a little hesitancy or leeriness, if there's such a word, about Mr. Hehn because he came from UGG. Did you want to expand on that?

LE: We just didn't know what he thought about central marketing, since he was coming from a private company.

NP: So if he had come from Saskatchewan Wheat Pool--.

LE: Well, that would've been different. [Laughing]

NP: So for those who wouldn't understand, can you explain the difference?

LE: Well, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the Pools, believe very much in centralized marketing and farmers being involved. They supported the advisory committee in all the work that they did. The private grain companies—UGG and Cargill, for example—sometimes I felt that they were trying to undermine the system, but that was just the perspective that I had from my position, or that they didn't understand the importance of central marketing or have this belief in pooling that all of us were very, very loyal to. The matter of profit--. All of the Wheat Board's profit, other than salaries and operating expenses, went to farmers. We were all at the Wheat Board very, very proud of that. We were proud to work for an organization that had those principles.

I wasn't taught that the UGG and the Cargills didn't believe in that, but I began to sense it. I just sensed it that they thought they were different, that their principles were different, their priorities were different. I didn't think about it a whole lot. It's just they came from a different world. I may have been off track, but that is how a lot of us felt.

NP: You said you had five bosses. How much influence and sway in a board like that did the other four have or was it really not five people making a decision but four people to consult and one to make the decision. Is that how it worked?

LE: No, they all had equal say. He was named chief. I guess he had more say than the others, but basically, they all, when it came to a decision, it would have been very fair. They would have maybe done it by a vote amongst themselves or all agreed. Nothing really was done or implemented if most of them didn't agree.

NP: Did they both have the same, if deputy commissioners is the right term, or with each of the two that you worked with, were the other commissioners consistent? Or they changed over as the chief commissioner changed over?

LE: No, no, they changed. If one of them retired, then the government would appoint a new one. So there was a bit of a shift over my time there, not a whole lot. I have pictures of all them if you want to see them. Forrest Hetland was around for a long time.

NP: What was that name?

LE: Forrest Hetland. Jim Leibfried, I'm sure you've heard of him or maybe talked to him already. He was a wonderful man. Gordon Matchee, he was relatively new. Bill Smith, who unfortunately died in a terrible, terrible accident. I describe that as one of the worst days of my life at the Wheat Board. So that was very, very sad. He died in China. They were traveling down one of the rivers on a boat and as I recall it, the boat--. I don't know if he was in the washroom or some place where there were pipes sticking up out of the ground and the boat lurched, and he fell over this and ruptured his spleen. So he had to be taken to a hospital immediately, and of course that meant just driving him in a car over terrible, terrible Chinese backroads. He didn't make it.

NP: Was he on Wheat Board business at the time?

LE: Yes, it was Wheat Board business. He'd been on that boat with customers because he was the--. The commissioners divided up the countries between them. I should've mentioned that. He was the China guy. I think Adrian Measner was with him at the time. Anyway, we got a phone call from Adrian saying what had happened. It was the job of myself and Lorne Hehn to go and tell his family. That was horrible. We all liked Bill. He was a really nice guy. He had been a Saskatchewan Wheat Pool manager at one

of the elevators. So he was from the farm. He knew the business at that end really well. So it was really good to have him as a commissioner to provide that side of things. We all really liked him. It was a terrible! Then, oh god, we had to call the directors into the boardroom to tell them. That was awful. So then when that kind of thing happened—it only happened once with an accident—then the government would appoint someone else to take his place. Or when they retired.

NP: We sort of interrupted you. You were on a roll talking about you'd meet in the morning with the chief commissioner before the rest of the group.

LE: And then they'd discuss things. I'd always—well with Lorne Hehn particularly, and Esmond as well—we'd talk about what the board would speak about that day. I would bring issues that had come to my attention that they needed to look at, something that had come to me from, say, one of the directors. We would make an agenda, and then I'd pull it together, and we'd go into the boardroom. I guess it would've been about 10:00. They would meet for an hour and discuss these things and make decisions. Then I went back to my office, and I would record basic minutes as to what happened. Then every general director—that's what they were called in those days—would get a copy, so that they knew everyday what the decisions of the board had been.

That was something new. Up until then, often the directors and general directors didn't know what was going on. So this way with me I would bring the general directors and the directors concerns to the board rather than them running into board offices all the time. I would pass that along to the board. They would discuss it, and then I would go back and explain the decisions to staff. That was a large part of my day.

NP: So the decisions that the board had to make would be quite broad-based. There would be ones related to marketing and research then, there would be personnel issues, and--.

LE: Everything. The major, major ones that affected policy were done up in official board minutes, where they were especially typed up and signed. The other ones on the smaller decisions, whether they were on operating ideas or changes or whether it was a personnel issue or something, I would just write that up and that sort of informal minutes were done daily, and everybody got a copy, so we all knew what was going on.

NP: The budgets for the Wheat Board, I assume there was a finance department?

LE: Yes, there was a finance department, and they would--. Oh and then--. So the commissioners met once a day in the morning. Once a week the board held a meeting with the general directors—I guess I should call them executive directors—and if they weren't available, then some general director would represent them. Finance, for example, would be at that meeting once a week,

or he would go and see the board in between. But in terms of budgets and spending, that would come out at those weekly meetings. Then of course there would be annual budget meetings as well from finance. If a department needed a special budget approved that would happen at a weekly meeting, or I would set up a special meeting to deal with just one issue that would have a recorded board minutes. We did different things, different kinds of meetings.

NP: You'd mentioned that that position had liaison between the staff of the Workers Compensation Board and the board, and then between the board and the minister, did I have that--.

LE: Sorry, what was that?

NP: The board and the minister, or that was another part of the responsibility?

LE: Yes. Oh, okay. The board had to relate and correspond to the Wheat Board Minister's office. The minister would write a letter, for example, or want something done, and the minister's staff would call me, and then I would relay that to the board, and then they would get together and talk about it. That was one way of doing it. Or the minister would call the chief commissioner, and the chief commissioner would call a meeting with the rest of the commissioners, and they would sit there and talk about it. Then if they had made a particular decision that should be brought to the attention of the minister, then I would pull together a draft letter or draft memo and the board would approve it. The minister would come over now and then for meetings with the board. Sometimes it was behind closed doors to which I was not allowed. Sometimes I was. [Laughs]

NP: What were the issues during that time? Ones that stick in your mind?

LE: Here I have to refer to my notes because there were so many. I talk about discussing delivery policies, market development issues, sales plans, plans for sales missions to go overseas, district meetings where they would once a year--. You know what district meetings are? They talk about that. And I say meetings, meetings, meetings. Then it says my notebooks began to take on a different tone in 1988, along came the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. So there was a lot of concern that it would hamper Canadians' ability to be more competitive in a world market. So there was a lot of talk about that and it was something totally new. It says here that the board members felt that there would be pressure on them to allow individuals to export into the United States. Maybe you're aware of that pressure. It was very, very strong.

NP: In retrospect, did that—the Free Trade Agreement—make much of a difference on the Wheat Board operations?

LE: It sort of gave farmers the idea that they could--. Then the Wheat Board was challenged, I think, more often after that, in terms of farmers wanting to sell grain on their own to the U.S. More problems began to surface on that front.

NP: Restricted practices and whatever the term was that they--.

LE: They thought it did, yes. They thought they got better prices.

NP: Like you were in monopoly, and you were influencing unfair trade practices. Did you ever take part in those meetings or was that sort of more the lawyers and the commissioners?

LE: Yes, I wouldn't have been part of that. Usually that would come up when the advisory committee was in. They would bring that up. But the U.S. Free Trade Agreement, I remember, was worrying them a lot. Then a year later, Free Trade Agreement came out and a year later, oats were removed from the Board. That was a huge blow—a huge, huge blow.

NP: How did that come about?

LE: Well, that would've been something that was done discussed behind closed doors between the Board and the minister. Really all I knew about it was that one day Esmond Jarvis called us all into the boardroom and told us what had happened. As staff members and directors and so on, we could sense that the Board had taken this very badly because it was now beginning to mess around with their marketing.

NP: Single desk.

LE: Yes, single desk and starting to take away oats. What's going to happen next? Are you going to take away barley? Then eventually all [inaudible] was taken away.

NP: What kind of implications did getting rid of that one responsibility for oats, what kind of impact did it have on the organization itself? The staffing and so on, marketing?

LE: I don't recall it having a huge implication on just the daily workings of the place. It would have maybe--. I don't recall that there was any one individual who was responsible for oat sales. It would have been lumped into somebody who did, say, feed grains and that would've included barely and so on. I can't recall that it had a huge impact on somebody's work.

NP: It was more the philosophical--.

LE: The philosophy, yes. It was just a huge blow to what we believed in.

NP: Was that taken away without consultation of farmers, if you recall? Like it was just all of a sudden, the law changed?

LE: Yes. In fact, I have here that--. My notes record that on a January ’89 meeting, the Board called in Manitoba Pool to come in to tell them, so they knew what happened. I think it was a dark cloud hanging over the commissioners’ heads, but I don’t know whether others knew too much about this. There probably was lobbying going on. I’m sure there was, there had to be. The decision, as far as I know, the discussion went on behind closed doors.

NP: Was it phased in or immediate? I’m just wondering because something like Manitoba Pool and Saskatchewan Wheat Pool might have been--.

LE: I don’t remember. That’s a good question. I don’t know the answer to that.

NP: Not marketing other--. Well, no, they were marking other products, too, that weren’t Board products.

LE: They lots of other stuff. No, I don’t really know. I think, to me, it just seemed kind of sudden, just one day. But there may have been a date in the future, but I don’t know. I would have to look for other--. Dig in my notes and see when that actually took effect.

NP: What would you say were the highlights of your time as the corporate secretary?

LE: Hm.

NP: What did you like best doing?

LE: What did I like best? I liked being a part of the meetings. I liked being part of decision-making group. It was mostly my job to record the decisions, but I also had a say if I wanted to speak up. I liked that part of it. I knew the workings of what was going on upstairs. I liked working with the executive directors, you know, people like Brian Olesen, for example, or with people like Bob Roehle. They were a wonderful group. I enjoyed my work with them immensely. There were others whom I didn’t like a whole lot much. [Laughs] Mostly I liked them. That’s a good question.

NP: What do you think made the most successful managers there? What qualities did you see in the people who were successful at what they did?

LE: Maybe my idea of success is different from others, but they were open about what they were doing. They weren't trying to hide things or protect their turf. They were good to their staff. They were willing to listen to staff. They had a nice, genial personality. They were easy to talk to—some weren't—but most of them were. But I think the most important thing was that they had a very strong belief in helping farmers gain the most they could out of the market. Brian Olesen, for example, was out there tirelessly giving speeches, and the Board would go out and have these district meetings and meet with farmers. I think it was just being part of that, that world. I have written about some of the funny things.

My job was also very diverse. There were a lot of issues that came up that no one executive director, it wasn't part of their mandate. So then guess who would do it? Me. One day the King and Queen of Sweden came to visit. Nobody knew what to do with them. Why Sweden? They were traveling across the country. So we were plagued with calls from Ottawa as to what protocols we should follow. So I had to teach everybody these different protocols. [Laughs] Some for the Board and some for other staff that would meet them. So that was funny.

Written another time here, the Board was celebrating its 50th anniversary in London at our London office, and the commissioners all had to rent tuxedos from this shop in London. I had to send the measurements. [Laughs] So I had to get them to measure their pant leg length and all that stuff. All those funny little things that no one else would do.

NP: So did you have to curtsy?

LE: No, we didn't. I mean I sure remember not curtsying. I think we just had to shake hands. I forget if we had to do a little bow with our heads. But it was really funny. I had always wanted to write up a little story about that—the day the King and Queen of Sweden came—but I never did.

NP: Take us through that day because you don't have to write it, you can just tell us about it.

LE: I've forgotten a lot of it. It's just that we all had to line up. They came off the elevator. So Esmond Jarvis went up to them. There was a special way he had to greet them. Then he had to introduce everybody. I was sort of like his—beside him–like a wife making sure he was getting everybody's names right. He went along the line and introduced everybody to the King and Queen. Then they were taken into the boardroom. I guess they were given the talk about how our system worked and what we did.

NP: Interesting that they would be interested enough to visit.

LE: I'm not sure why. Maybe the government thought it would be--. Maybe they'd wanted to go to western Canada to find out how farmers worked. I don't really know. I'm sure I have notes on that somewhere. So there was different things like that, that would happen. Then of course lots of adventures with the advisory committee.

NP: Tell me about the advisory committee.

LE: Okay. The advisory committee was made up of--. I have pictures of them, too, if you want to have a look at the whole group. There were 12 advisory committee members. They were all elected by--. Like western Canada was divided up into sections. Each section had an advisory committee member. Every four years, there was an election held, which we arranged. That was one of my big jobs. I think I ran two elections. We had to organize that here and every grain farmer who delivered to the Wheat Board had a ballot. There would be several contestants running in each section--.

NP: Geographical area--?

LE: Yes. Then there would be campaigning on the part of the candidates, maybe two or three of them. Then the farmers would—on a certain day—elections were held. The results were then sent into us.

That happened every four years. Most of the time—well, all of the time—the candidates who won were all Wheat Board supporters. Every now and then, there were usually two or three who did not support the Wheat Board system because they worked in or came from certain areas where farmers wanted badly to deliver to the U.S. on their own. It was sort of that kind of area where they came from. A lot of that came from Alberta and some from Saskatchewan and from Manitoba, too. There would always be some who didn't believe that our system was the right system for farmers. They would make their views known around the table, and that was fine. They all got along well. Larry Maguire, did you read about him in the paper? He just won the Tory vote in Brandon. He was a member of the advisor committee for many years, but he was one of the anti-Wheat Board guys. Are you seeing Roy Atkinson?

NP: No, I tried to find him when I was in Saskatchewan. I did a western road tour this past summer. I had him on my list but unfortunately, I had the phone number for another Roy Atkinson who absolutely did not like Mr. Atkinson, and I ended up calling him a couple of times, and by the end of it he was beside himself and sort of threatening to have the police find me or whatever.

[Laughing] But Bob Rollie has mentioned, "You really have to talk to him." I won't be doing another road tour, but I may be able to do some telephone interviews. I understand that he is still alive.

LE: That's amazing. He was a chairman for a long time, of the advisory committee, so he and I worked together for many years. I just have a note here that one of my memories was we'd gone to Ottawa. I went with the advisory committee to Ottawa several times. They wanted to meet with ministers of transportation—at that time, it was Lloyd Axworthy—then meet with the ministers of the Wheat Board and the various ones over the years.

Roy Atkinson, he would just ram through what he believed should be done, no way you could stop him. So he wanted to get a letter to all Members of Parliament, and I think that the issue had something to do with transportation—I don't remember what though—and he and I stayed up practically all night to get that letter. He would dictate the letter, and I would go and write it, and we'd revise it and rewrite it, and then we had to make copies. Where we did that, I don't remember. We had to get those letters to every Member of Parliament by morning. Whether that letter helped in the end or not, I don't remember, but I don't think so. [Laughing] We, like I said, we traveled to Ottawa several times, and I would be the one who had arranged the meetings for them with various ministers. I would deal with the minister's staff on that.

NP: How did you find the ministers? Was it like department managers, some were good, some weren't?

LE: Yes. They were all very different. There was Charlie Mayer, who was--. Did you know him at all? He was basically anti-Board, but he was very pleasant and easy to work with. He and I had a fairly good relationship, but he went behind the scenes and sometimes and we didn't—at least I didn't—always know what he was up to. It wasn't my job to know what he was up to, but he just wasn't as easy to read as some of the others might be. Then there was Goodale—what was his first name?—Bob Goodale. He was very pro-Board. Is he now minister, or he's a minister--.

NP: He's a critic.

LE: He's a critic, right. That's right. He's Liberal. He was nice and easy to work with and he was the one that I--. Well, he was minister for many years, when I was corporate secretary. So I did a lot of drafting of letters to him, which I enjoyed doing that. The minister who was the very first one--. Oh, what was his name? He was a different kind of guy. I'm sorry, I don't have it written down here and I don't remember his name.

NP: Otto Lang wouldn't have been in your--.

LE: Yes, he was around. In fact, I think he was the Minister of--. He could've been the minister when we had that trip where Roy and I stayed up all night to write letters. But the one before him--. Isn't that terrible?

NP: Probably deserves to not have his name remembered. [Laughs]

LE: No, he was a good guy! [Laughs] In fact, one of our staff, have you talked to--? Now my memory for names is going. One of our staff anyway went to work in his office and enjoyed working there very much. There were the different ministers over the years. Like I said, the personalities were all different, but it was mainly the staff that I worked with. They would sometimes change. Sometimes they would stay on for different ministers.

NP: Would it make a difference if they were from the west?

LE: The ministers?

NP: Yes. Or did they tend to all be from the west anyway?

LE: They--. I'm not sure. Well, Otto Lang--.

NP: No, Saskatchewan.

LE: Saskatchewan. What about Goodale?

NP: Yes.

LE: I think they all were. The ones I knew of, yes.

NP: So at least you didn't have to start from square one.

LE: No, not at all.

NP: Did they come to visit?

LE: Yes. They came around quite often. Charlie Mayer came often because he still had his farm nearby. I don't recall when Otto Lang came. If he did come, I wasn't present at the meeting. Goodale came now and then. It was always on Fridays. I remember not enjoying Friday afternoons very much because everybody would rush home, but it was always the day the minister's office wanted something by the end of the day. So there I was until late in the evening, working on letters for the board and getting stuff sent. We were still faxing in those days, so it took a bit of doing. Always on Friday, get something done by the end of the week.

NP: And going to the Minister it had to be perfect.

LE: Yes. Well certainly worded in a way that the board was happy with. So that was--. I found those letters tough to draft.

NP: Well, perhaps you're not finished with the advisory committee, is that sort of where we're--.

LE: Yes, I still have some more stuff but go ahead.

NP: No, that's okay. This can be--.

LE: Anyway, back to the advisory committee. There were 12 of them. They came in for a meeting with the board once a month. There would be the advisory committee members, and the commissioners, and me. Then, depending on the agenda—which was my job to prepare—we would call staff members in to deal with that particular item on the agenda. If it was an operational detail like some quota problems or delivery problems, we'd bring in somebody from transportation. When it was time for them to come, I'd just call them and tell them, "Okay, you're on."

Or if it would be a bigger policy decision, whether it was the human resources person or Brian Olesen to come talk about policy changes or somebody. Bill Spafford would come in and report on sales, that kind of thing. A lot of people were included. I had to record the minutes and the motions. Then the executive directors and the board got copies of the minutes.

I had to, like I said, plan the agenda, and I would work with the chairman of the advisor committee, whoever it was, and we'd work on an agenda together. So he would mention the concerns he had. I would talk about or add things to the agenda that were concerns of the board, or individual advisory committee members would have called me to ask if they could talk about a certain thing. Then I would just run that by the chairman and the board and make sure that was okay. Then we'd work on this agenda. I had to draft the chairman's letters, make sure his stuff got sent out to whoever he wanted. I had to give them a lot of briefing background material. That was my job to prepare. That, attached to the agenda, was this big pile of papers. I had to make sure the elections, the two elections that I ran, were done.

NP: Normally when you have a situation like this you have your board of directors, were any of them farmers in your time?

LE: Of the--?

NP: Board of directors.

LE: Of the commissioners?

NP: Yes. The commissioners, yes.

LE: Yes. Lorne Hehn was a farmer. Bill Smith would have been a farmer. I'm not sure about Forrest Hetland.

NP: The reason I ask--.

LE: And then there was Larry Kristjansen. He wasn't a farmer.

NP: Yes. Was there tension between the commissioners and the advisory council just because they were two different entities?

LE: There was tension when it was felt that the advisory committee members were interfering in operational matters.

NP: For example, what would be--.

LE: Supposing one of them would come to Winnipeg and go and talk directly to, say, the director of transportation on some quota problem and want the transportation department to do something about it. Well, that was a huge no-no. Then the board would get upset. They were always told at the beginning of their term that they don't--. Their job was to discuss policy with the board and to give ideas for operational issues, but not to go in directly and try and make changes. There were tensions that were personal problems. Like Roy Atkinson was a real powerhouse, and sometimes he pushed too hard, according to the commissioners. Or he would go after an individual commissioner and really push hard on that particular individual to change his mind about something. So there would be those tensions. Sure, there was. It's just how--.

NP: How organizations work.

LE: I was going to say how committees and organizations work, you know. But it wasn't--. It was always talked about at their meetings. Sometimes the meetings got quite heated. At least they had the opportunity once a month to talk about these things. They came into the city. For some of them it was a big deal to come to Winnipeg, and their expenses were paid, and they could stay in a nice hotel.

NP: The only payback the volunteers get for doing things like this. [Laughing]

LE: They got a little bit of a per diem.

NP: Oh, did they?

LE: Yes. And we paid for their expenses while here. So that was nice. I had to make sure all that was paid. Let's see, I've written down here that I developed a travel policy for them, in terms of how we would pay for their travels around their area, or whether the head of the advisory committee would, say, travel to Ottawa on his own, to see if we would pay for that.

NP: Were there expectations that they did travel around their regions?

LE: Yes. Yes, it was expected. Those expenses were fine. Sometimes it depended on what they charged, little things like they were given a certain amount on how much they could spend on lunch for example. But I wrote all that down because it had been all loosey-goosey and up in the air at first.

Brian Olesen helped me with this, I think. We brought a facilitator in one time and had sessions with him to get talking about all kinds of things related to their role as a committee. They came in it to take different courses. They would come to CIGI and take courses there. We'd pay for that. That's basically, I think, what the advisory committee's side was all about. They kept me hopping. It was a large part of my job. I would spend a lot of time on the phone with many of them and I enjoyed it. Oh, and we traveled. We went to Ottawa a few times. Each new committee would get a trip to Vancouver to see the shipping facilities. Then every year in the winter there would be a district meeting. Oh, you've heard about those. So there was a lot of work involved on their part in living up to their role as representative of their area.

NP: You said that you ran two elections. This advisory committee, did it come into play early on in the formation of the Wheat Board or was it something that was relatively new?

LE: Well, I'm not sure. They'd been there as long as I can remember. They were certainly around when I joined the Wheat Board. I know they were there. Just thinking about the stacks of the minutes, old, old minutes that I saw, they'd been around for a long time. But I can't say just exactly when it was formed. I'd have to look at the act. I think from pretty early on.

NP: One thing that comes to my mind is that when I started learning about the Wheat Board, which would've been when I started working on the plain language material as a consultant for you, I don't think it was generally understood by the population that it was a farmer-directed organization. Now, do you think it always was a farmer-directed organization? Did it walk the walk, shall we say, as well as talking the talk?

LE: You mean with the Wheat Board?

NP: Yes. The Wheat Board.

LE: And if they walked the talk?

NP: They walked the walk of the "We are a farmer-run organization"?

LE: I think so. I think that's one reason why I liked working there because they did. I always had the sense that they were trying, not only the commissioners, but staff and the advisory committee, were trying to do their absolute best for farmers. Everything had that long-term goal in mind. Everything that we did, that was the main reason why we did something. If somebody went on a trip somewhere, it had to be something that would benefit farmers in the long-run or in the short-term. Our costs were handled very carefully because we wanted farmers to have as much of the benefit of final payments as they could. Salaries, we got good increases but nothing ever extraordinary. They were fair but nothing major, major. I think I can honestly, from my perspective, say that, yes, they did walk the talk.

NP: Did you have—I'm now reflecting to some of the other questions that are fairly general questions that we ask everyone—did your work put you in contact at all in any substantial way with the Canadian Grain Commission?

LE: My work? My job?

NP: Yes.

LE: Not really. I would meet them at social gatherings, or if there was some kind of reception being held at CIGI, I would meet them. They would come to have meetings with the board now and then, and I would go into the meeting and take minutes. But my job didn't really relate to them very directly. I knew who they were, but I didn't have any connection.

NP: And no issues related to them? They sort of working hand and glove--.

LE: Not for me.

NP: No hot topics that--.

LE: No, no. That would have been left for people more in the operations area.

NP: What about the railways?

LE: No, not really. That wasn't--.

NP: Same thing?

LE: Same thing, yes. I was more--. I knew more what people, like, say Brian Olesen and Bob Roehle were doing on the policy side. I really didn't get involved in operational things.

NP: What about one of the things that the Wheat Board did because--. And it became more apparent to me because the restructuring of the Wheat Board, some questioned who was going to provide the support that they used to provide to science and research related farming. Anything to comment on in that area? Did your work put you in touch with any of the research projects that the Board was supporting or funding?

LE: Only what I knew on paper. Again, that would have been something market development people would be working on, people like Dave Suderman. I've asked you about him already? You've talked to him. So he would, but no, I wouldn't really.

NP: What would you—and you may have already answered this, but I'll ask again just in case there's some things that come to mind—what would you say would've been the major challenge that you had? You can divide it up if you had major challenges that were different in each of your positions or just pick one that you felt was--.

LE: Starting with corporate secretary, the first thing that comes to mind was I didn't have enough hours in the day. [Laughs] I'm one of those people who thinks I need to do everything. Mind you, I handed off a lot of work to my secretaries, but I made very sure I knew what was going on and what was being done. There weren't enough hours in the day, and the board got so much correspondence. That was another thing I had to do. I forgot to mention I had to look at their correspondence. I was the first one to see the correspondence that came in. I opened all the letters. That was fine with them. That was my responsibility. I would sometimes draft a reply for them to look at before I even gave them the letter, or some as I would give them the letter and say, "Okay, I'll work on a reply for you," or I'd give them the letter and the draft reply right away. There was so much correspondence. So that was a major. I usually did that after hours. [Laughs]

NP: Oh, my goodness.

LE: I had good secretaries though. They were a great help, and I still--. I would have to spend a day trying to understand the issue that the writer of the letter was dealing with, so that I could prepare a proper reply. I finally figured out a system, whereby I would send a memo down to—if it was a question related to transportation—I'd send a request down to the--. I'm not sure whether I'd send it to the executive director or the general director. Anyway, I would send it down to one of those people, and they would direct my request for assistance on a reply to the staff who was, say, the guy who knew best about what the quotas were doing that year or somebody who knew most of what was going on in a particular area with grain cars and that kind of thing. They would give me a quick draft and it'd put that into a letter. So that took a long time. That was a challenge, I think, just dealing with the correspondence. It was often on issues I didn't know very much about, so I had to learn fast.

NP: The market analysis area would've been the bigger challenge there?

LE: Market analysis again there, as I said earlier, was trying to learn very quickly what marketing was all about and what it was that the Board wanted to know. What did the Board need to know about the markets around the world? What was it that would cause them to say, "All right. We've got to go after this market. We've got to do something"? Or if they'd come to one of the market analysts or to me and say, "Do we have any potential in such and such country?" That was a challenge. It was an interesting challenge. I mean, some challenges are difficult, and some are interesting. I don't know. I just enjoyed getting up in the morning and going to work.

NP: Oftentimes, with what you're saying about market analysis, they don't want to know everything that there is to know about the country, so just knowing what is critical to their decisions and isn't, that's a tough decision.

LE: They certainly do not. Yes, what is it that they need to know. For the advisory committee, I think the challenge was to--. They were farmers, and farmers are very unique people. They all had very different personalities. I guess the challenge--. I liked them all, some more than others. I'd never let them know that. Sometimes it was a challenge to work with the individuals because some of them were needier than others, and they'd be phoning me all the time for stuff. But you know, I shouldn't even mention that because I loved working for them. There's individual irritations sometimes which happens in any job so I wouldn't--.

NP: Even with coworkers.

LE: Right and I wouldn't call that a major challenge. I think--.

NP: I think just getting them to work together as a group would have been a challenge.

LE: Well, that was. Getting them to, even in a meeting, the challenge was to get them to word a motion correctly. That was a challenge. That was tough. Writing up the minutes was tough. That was a challenge.

NP: Just to make some--.

LE: Make sense of it because I had to--.

NP: Bring order to a bit of chaos.

LE: Bring order to it and make sure that I understood what it was that they were saying because often it was a lot of back and forth and disagreement and agreement. I had to decide what to put down in the minutes and what not to—or what not to bother putting in the minutes. I found the minutes a challenge. Those particular sets of minutes, because the meetings were long, they discussed a lot of things, and that was also stuff I often did after hours on weekends. I'm not giving you very good answers to challenges.

NP: No, no. I get the sense that you didn't have a lot of challenges because those things that came your way, you were interested in, and you accomplished them.

LE: Yes, basically.

NP: As you look back on your career, what are you most proud of? It could be little, or it could be--.

LE: Big?

NP: Broader. But it could be little things, it doesn't have to be--.

LE: Well, I've implied this already, the thing I'm most proud of is being proud I worked for an organization like that. That's very general and broad, but basically, I was very proud of working for them and that organization. I was proud of some of the initiatives that I took, whether they were small or big, something that nobody had done before. I was proud of the fitness facility, of the daycare, of having worked on that women's committee that we did many, many years ago. There were many things along the way that I'd have to really stay up all night think about it all, it's been such a long time. [Laughs]

NP: This is maybe more difficult to answer. Some people they just no problem, "I can answer this question." Others are saying, "Hm, let me think about that." I'm really proud of the fact that Canada, with so many things against it such as climate, geography, population, has managed to create such a successful grain industry. I ask everybody, what do you think that your job, and I mean your job within that organization, has done to contribute to Canada's success as a successful international grain trader?

LE: My job in particular? Me?

NP: Yes. Some of them there's no-brainer answers, yours is a little bit more difficult to answer, I think.

LE: I think the--.

NP: Well, the research. Let's take the research first then the corporate secretary.

LE: I think the market analysis side, making connections with European customers. Sometimes those endeavors worked and sometimes they didn't. But I think that working with the offices that we had overseas and being able to talk directly to the buyers, whether I did it overseas or whether I did it at a course and CIGI, I think that helped us to bond country to country. I kept up contact with some of those people over the years and it just made them more aware of what the Wheat Board, not just what the farmers on the farm are doing, but what the organization the Wheat Board was doing to move farmers' grain to their country. I don't know if that makes sense. But I think probably--.

NP: Well, it wouldn't be successful as a grain-growing country if you didn't have your markets and they didn't think of you favourably.

LE: That's right. I think I helped as an individual to foster relations with some of those countries. I just think especially of the UK. They were one of our biggest markets, and I used to see and talk to those people quite a lot.

NP: The corporate secretary position. Now, it might help to look at it almost, well if that position did not exist, would the corporation be less successful and as a result since it was such an important corporation or board, would it not have been as successful in doing what it was supposed to do?

LE: I think what I did in terms of keeping staff apprised of what the board was doing and vice versa, I think it helped the staff perform better. I hope it did. I think it did. And in turn, they could relate better to the farmers and to buyers because they had a better idea of what was going on.

NP: The changes that occurred, you had said that your notes started to change a bit with the oats going. I don't know if you want to make any comments about the overall change and philosophy about marketing through a single desk or whether you'd rather just leave that? [Laughs]

LE: About that time I guess it was the late '80s, or mid '80s—yes mid '80s—that pressure started to build with the single desk marketing business, and it never really went away in all that time. The pressure just became more and more intense from all sides. From government—our government, the American government--.

NP: Farmers themselves, would you say? Or at least the number of farmers?

LE: Some of the farmers, and some of the farmers became more vocal about it. I know that it really got the staff down. It really, really did. Some of them felt as if somehow they were failing, which wasn't the case, but a lot of people started to feel really down and depressed about it. Somebody like Lorne Hehn would come in and he would give morale-boosting talks to the staff, which was really nice, and assure them things would be fine, and he was going to fight for our organization, for single desk selling. But as I say, the pressure still mounted and I think that was probably one of many reasons why I retired. Not that I couldn't take the pressure anymore, I could have, but it was getting tough.

NP: Life if short, you have other things to do.

LE: Yes. Exactly.

NP: Do you keep in touch with people who stayed through the really tough times?

LE: I stayed in touch with some people for a while. Then, like I said, I was busy doing a new life. In the last few years, I started to go back into it because of the fact that the government was going to disband the Wheat Board. When that started being news, I started reconnecting with people. Then people like--. Well, Bob Roehle was behind the forming of retirees' association. You've probably heard about that. I got into that and started meeting up with my old pals again and talking about--. So then there we were again, facing the final blow had come, and what should we do now.

NP: I had a conversation with one person from the Wheat Board, somebody that you had mentioned. They were earlier on, and we were discussing it before the Wheat Board was disbanded, but when it looked pretty sure that it was going to. His comment was, "Nancy, this is business, not religion. Keep that perspective." Have you, now that a year has gone by—probably two or three years, since the writing's on the wall—what's your sense of the impact on the farmers? Since it was farmers that the Wheat Board was serving.

LE: That side of it I'm out of touch with now. So I guess I can honestly say I'm not really sure. The most recent farmer person I spoke to, have you run into Butch Harder? Okay well he and I got along really, really well. I really like that man. He was the last president of the advisory committee, or chairmen of the advisory committee. He always said that he must have been a real challenge for me, but we respected and liked each other a lot. [Laughs] So I've met up with him and as always, he was telling me about how he's still out there, trying to talk to farmers and discuss these big issues. Other than that, I'm really not in touch personally, or haven't been, with any of the farmers. And I only met Butch Harder because he was at Bill Spafford's funeral.

NP: Yes.

LE: I'm afraid I can't really answer that side of the question. I just know how it's affected staff. It's been a huge blow to many of us. Whoever that was who said it, I think we did at first regard it as a blow on our religion, quote unquote. It was. I think I said in one of my speeches as I retired that it was also a philosophy of life. And I believe it. It was. But now we have to move on. Bob Roehle, he helps plan the agendas for our retirees' luncheons. He managed to get one of the guys from the Refit Centre who's a nurse and who knows a lot about seniors' health. Bob got him to come and get—we like to have a speaker at our luncheons—and he got this guy to come and talk about our health and particularly our heart health. I said to Bob, "You know, it's time we do these kinds of things. We need to talk about other things now and not get all worked up and lose sleep again on all that the way we used to." [Laughs] But I think we're all beginning to realize that we need to carry on and--.

NP: Move on.

LE: And enjoy our retirement.

NP: Gee, maybe I could come as a speaker. [Laughs]

LE: That's not a bad idea, you know.

NP: Anyway--.

LE: I'll mention it.

NP: No, no, please, not yet. [Laughing]

LE: You don't want me to mention it to Bob?

NP: Not until we get our historic site status and those sort of things under our belt. But my next question has to do with it, and it is a question I would like to ask the group if I ever do go speak to them. We, as I mentioned, we really would like to set up an interpretive centre to go along with our elevator and to recognize the accomplishments of Canada's international grain trade.

LE: And all facets of it, I would think.

NP: And all facets of it. As much as possible. And you can't do that without talking about the Wheat Board.

LE: No, it's one part of the whole thing.

NP: Just the fact that it came into being, along with the Pools.

LE: And you know all about the history of that, I'm sure.

NP: That being the case, and in particular related to your market research area, what kinds of things would you like to see featured that would give people, who would know nothing essentially about Canada's—even in Thunder Bay—about Canada's export grain trade, could be showcased?

LE: Well certainly, I don't know whether you could do—well that would be rather simplistic—I was going to say a map that showed all the countries to which we have sold grain, through the Wheat Board. We'd be covering the whole world practically. When I have talked to people over the years, friends and also people I don't know all that well, just how many countries we sell to and how much, it just blows them away. They had no idea. That goes along with the market research side of it, I guess. Just making people aware of how broad our sales efforts were and to somehow make it known how very, very hard the Board worked--traveling around the world, talking to customers, or bringing them here to talk to our--. Sending people like Bill Spafford around who was, as I said, the chief negotiator to make deals. They worked really, really hard. How you present that, I don't know.

NP: Just a question about Bill, since I missed an opportunity to interview him. What was his background? How did he become a negotiator?

LE: Just hard work. He was just a really smart guy. He came, I'm not sure if it was right out of university, almost pretty near, and he was just this really smart guy who--. He's very tough. He won't let go of an idea. He's very good at figuring things out in his head, numbers, you know. And he makes incredible notes. He writes everything down and if he had this piece of paper there would be notes written down all the side of it.

He goes into negotiations really well prepared. And I think it was just his personality. Aside from being really smart, he was very aggressive. He knew how to make deals. Like my sister and my niece, just hated it. They would cringe going shopping with him because he would never want to buy anything at the price that it was being sold for. He always wanted to bargain for less. So he was extremely good at it. Drove all of us crazy but he certainly got the absolute best deal for farmers, because of his personality, I think.

NP: And he enjoyed it, by the sound of it.

LE: Oh, he loved it. And he went almost on every--. When the commissioners would go, the chief commissioner, or the chief commissioner and one of the others, it was always Bill who went and did the dirty work.

NP: I'm sorry I missed him because I think negotiating is just a fantastic skill, and a lot of people don't have it.

LE: No. And when I tell friends and others the fact that the Wheat Board had these long-term agreements that—three years, five years—that brought farmers stable income at prices they could rely on, and this customer would be there for a long time like China or the UK, people are amazed. They had no idea that we did that kind of marketing.

NP: No.

LE: So I don't know how you showcase it.

NP: Well, we're getting close to 5:00, so I'm going to let you go. I know you're used to working long hours but--. [Laughs]

LE: Not anymore, not anymore.

NP: So just thank you so much for sharing your stories and I'm thrilled to have a woman who moved her way up the system and did us proud.

LE: Oh, well, thank you.

NP: And helped others along the way. That's good to hear. So, thanks again.

**End of interview.**