

Narrator: Jeff Halvorsen (JH)

Company Affiliations: Dutchak's Scrap Metal Ltd.

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Interviewer: Nancy Perozzo (NP)

Recorder: Nancy Perozzo (NP)

Transcriber: Sarah Lorenowich

Summary: General manager of Dutchak's Scrap Metal Jeff Halvorsen discusses his company's connection to Thunder Bay's grain industry. He first describes his childhood interest in elevators and shipping, and joining Dutchak in university, working to become the general manager. He discusses the sorts of materials salvaged from decommissioned grain elevators, the different kinds of people/companies that go into elevators to salvage materials, and the prominence of illegal salvaging by individuals in poor socioeconomic conditions. He shares memorable events from his time with Dutchak, like helping a foreign ship crew move scrap into the scrapyards, finding an illegal copper wire processing operation in Pool 3, hearing about a man dying in a grain bin while trying to illegally salvage materials, and being robbed in the scrapyards. Halvorsen explains what happens to the scrap once they buy it, how materials are reused, and how scrap is shipped to other facilities by truck and barge. He discusses the single-use nature of grain elevators, and why many companies choose to salvage from them rather than reopen them. Other topics discussed include the growing interest in recycling, P&H Elevators' recent closure, and Global Recycling's partnership with Dutchak's in the salvaging from P&H.

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| Time, Speaker, Narrative |
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| NP: It's March 24, 2015, and this interview is taking place at Academy Drive in Thunder Bay. I'll have the person that we are interviewing today introduce himself and his current position. |
| JH: Okay. My name is Jeff Halvorsen, and I'm currently the general manager at Dutchak's Scrap Metal Ltd. |

NP: Great, and you're also a member of the Friends of Grain Elevators group.

JH: Yes.

NP: We have talked in the past about how a scrap metal dealer is even remotely involved with our elevator project. I know the interview's not going to be a long one, but I would like to have on record some of the issues that you're familiar with once elevators are decommissioned. So, maybe just, first of all, are you a Thunder Bay person?

JH: Yes, I moved here when I was 11 from British Columbia. So, I've been here since I was 11. Went to high school here, went to post-secondary education here, and have since worked here in the city. So, for all intents and purposes, I'm more of a local chap you could say. Yes.

NP: What was your first exposure to the grain elevators?

JH: The first time I remember ever thinking about grain elevators or looking at grain elevators, my father and I were trying to cross the bridge that's right beside TBT Engineering—the Mission bridge that goes to Mission. I remember a Paterson ship going through the bridge, or a ship going through that bridge, and then looking down the river and seeing the elevators. That is my earliest experience that I would have been, boy oh boy, I would have been 12 or 13 years old at the time, just after I'd come to Thunder Bay. That was my first experience with the elevators.

I fell in love with them shortly thereafter. I mean, this was way back to when my father bought a truck out in Saskatchewan, and we went across the Prairies. That was kind of neat because a lot of people just say it's a flat drive. I really enjoyed looking at all of the older elevators—the wooden ones and all the different kinds that are out there. I really got enthralled with how many Thunder Bay has, especially as I began to look at some of the different sizes that we have here, the different companies that are represented here, and how they're very large conglomerates, often around the world.

That was a big deal for me. So, got a little bit more interested in that and what was happening. I had a love of ships. I love trains. Everything is interconnected, so it just made sense that as I looked a little bit more into trains and ships—just more of a hobby type thing—elevators just naturally fell into that category as well.

NP: Have you been inside an elevator?

JH: Yes. I was inside the great Western Grain By-Products. I was in that one, and I have been in the bowels only, the bottom area, of Viterra terminal B when we actually had a saltie come to Thunder Bay late last year and the crew had scrap metal on their ship. It was the *Federal Mattawa*, I believe it was. The crew came from somewhere overseas, and they had a whole bunch of scrap metal—pins from some of the big opening doors on some of the bins of the ship, electric motors, things of that nature. So, they pushed it all over from Viterra terminal A in a shopping cart over to our facility. Then when I realized where they were coming from and where they had been, I actually got a call on the phone from the captain who asked if we'd like to come over there and pick some more of it up. I said, "Sure!"

So, over we went, and we watched these guys take it all off the ships. That was Viterra terminal B, I believe, they were parked beside, and they had to drag it all the way down from all along the dock, all the way to the very edge of the elevator. Then we picked it up from there because I got tired of seeing these guys pulling shopping carts full of--.

There's a lot of tracks over there, as you know, and they said that one guy complained that the trolley he was using didn't work very well for the terrain he was on. I said, "Well, that's because you're in the middle of a whole bunch of railroad tracks and a yard that isn't quite graded or plowed, and the road's in bad condition there." So, he was very disappointed. There was two guys pushing this shopping cart, one guy pulling it with a rope, and another guy trying to give directions as to how they should manoeuvre the road. It was quite interesting.

NP: Now, did you say where the ship was from?

JH: The *Federal Mattawa* I believe it was. Now, I believe the crew came from somewhere in India. That's where the crew is from, and they, I guess, go out on these ships for months at a time and they take their families with them. So, when the crew decided that they needed to relax from being on the ship—which is often after they came and delivered scrap metal because they received the money for that—they had heard from other crew members that Intercity Shopping Mall was a favourite place to be. So, I was persuaded to give all of the workers a ride. The next day that they brought scrap, they asked specifically for me—I had been nice to them because I enjoyed the ships and thought it was really neat that they were here—they asked me to go back and pick up some of their friends from the ship.

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So, when I got there, there was ladies, little children, babies, everybody. They piled into the back of a one-tonne, and we--. Literally, it was open-air in the back of a one-tonne with sides on the one-tonne, and we all drove to Intercity. We pulled up in front of the doors and everyone piled out of the back, and they all looked like they had come straight--. Many of them were in

white coveralls, something you'd expect to see when they were going in to do something that nuclear reactive or something similar. So, I can't imagine what people must have thought as these guys all piled out of the back, charged into the mall, and I just drove away.

I'm pretty sure there was something that was probably said or done, or maybe even somebody that was called, but they all seemed to have a great time. They came again for a third day in a row with some more stuff. They had had trouble getting their ship loaded. They had delays. So, they had, on their way to the mall, spotted the Old Navy at the Thunder Centre and went and blew their next earnings at Old Navy on clothes. That was a big, huge deal to them.

NP: Now, where would they have gathered all of this scrap from? Was it just old stuff off the ship, or--?

JH: This is stock that seemed to have become obsolete and repairs they had made. I know that part of their—aside from the captain who is apparently one half of the navigation—the other equal on the ship appeared to be the chief engineer, who made it very clear that he was the captain's equivalent on the ship side. He called it the navigation side and the ship side. He was the ship side, and the captain was the navigation side. On the ship side, he was responsible for repairing anything that needed to be repaired, fixing, fabricating—all of that is on the ship so it is self-sufficient. They can do it when they go to ports, but often they have to do it out at sea, especially for salties that are out on open water for long periods of time.

So, they had all kinds of stuff that had gone and had made it into a corner of the ship and had never gotten off. And, I guess, at a lot of ports, they're not near a scrapyards. So, they had no idea how to go about ever getting it off port. One guy had confessed that he was dangerously close to just throwing it all in the ocean. He said he would just get rid of it and that way no one would ever know where it went—it was just steel. He said, "There's probably lots of steel in the ocean." I said, "You're probably right, there is," but he thought if he could get some money for it--. They collected it, and collected it, and collected it until such time as they found a port that had a yard that was very close.

So, when they departed about a week or so later, he called me and said he was going to tell all his shipping buddies about Dutchak's Scrap Metal in Thunder Bay, and that any time a ship came to Thunder Bay to go to Dutchak's with scrap. I said, "Oh, great."

So, next year—that'll be this coming year, coming up this shipping season—we'll see how many Federal somethings come in with--. Because we have a lot of Federal, salties that start with the word Federal, and they're all from different parts, so we'll see how many come for scrap and from where these people come from. That was just one ship, so it should be interesting.

NP: You might also suggest to them that they rent a half-tonne for a half-day.

JH: Yes. [Laughing] That might be a little easier, but yes. That trolley, as they called it—the shopping cart—that was quite something to see. They had upwards of 400 pounds in this stupid shopping cart.

NP: So, what kind of money would they have made on something like that?

JH: Well, metals that we take, whether ferrous—which is magnetic steel—and non-ferrous—aluminums, brass, coppers, all that kind of stuff—it's all tied to commodities, and it's tied to the stock market. So, with oil taking a bit of a dive as it is currently now, it's down a little bit, but they also go up. Last year when those guys came in, it was the fall time, metals were very good. I think they walked out with anywhere from \$2-300 each time that they came in. So, not a significant amount, but over the course of three or four days they probably earned upwards of \$1000, which I guess they managed to use as a bit of a slush fund. They were able to blow that money, as opposed to having to put it back into a ship budget or something of that nature. It seemed like it was their tip thing to deal with. So, they got a lot of money.

NP: Almost like collecting pop cans.

JH: Almost like collecting pop cans. These guys had been collecting steel. Yes, like I say, they were from India, and apparently in India they didn't have some of these stores, they said. Like I said, it was quite an interesting experience to get into that culture a little bit, to really talk to these people about how they worked. Some of them were away from their families. The weirdest comment I got, and I can say it on tape because obviously I don't know the man from a hole in the ground—he's probably on the other side of the world right now—is he looked at a pair of large steel bolts. These things were quite large, they were probably about three feet long and about six inches in diameter, and they were large tubular-looking things. They were apparently the bolts that helped hold the gates on top of the large units in the ship.

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He commented to me and asked me if I thought they looked like missiles. And I said, “Uh, well, that wasn't my first thought, but now that you mention it, they kind of do look like missiles.” So, I thought, “Okay, you know, that's not the first thing--.” But I guess, something like that, it's just a different perception, right? He commented that he thought they were missiles for sure. And I said, “Okay. Well, we'll go with that, but we don't accept those, so try to keep those on the ship, and we'll just take all the steel and everything else.” Interesting. Different cultures.

NP: For historical purposes, describe where Dutchak's is in relation to the grain elevators.

JH: We are literally a stone's throw away from what was previously the P&H [Parrish & Heimbecker] Elevator. Right next to it sits what used to be Agricore United S house. Beyond that, UGG [United Grain Growers], and right next to that is Viterra A and B. I believe A is still one of the largest in Canada, or the world—I'm not sure—but I know it's a large elevator. So, we are directly--. There is a row of elevators right alongside of us, literally right next door to us. There is nothing between us and the elevators, and nothing between the elevators and the Lake Superior. So, we see all the ships come in and out. Not easily. The three elevators that we can see easiest are actually the three that are currently down in that little section—the P&H elevator, the UGG, and the Agricore S house.

Oddly enough, my neighbour was the electrician at P&H, so I got a lot of background information about what's gone on there as that elevator has recently become decommissioned. What's been taken out? What's been there? I've seen the recoverable material start to come into our space as well because that is now owned by Global Recycling, which is currently in the old Manitoba Pool elevator. We're working closely with all of them, and with the fact that they have that elevator or are working in that elevator, I see a lot. I talk to my neighbour as well, so I hear again about what he took out and some of the issues he had with a century-old elevator, the differences.

NP: And what is that person's name?

JH: My neighbour? That would be Wayne, would be his first name, and I'm not sure of his last name.

NP: Okay. Because he might be a good person to speak to.

JH: Yes. He was the electrician there for many, many, many years, and like he said, it was a duct-tape of an elevator—all held together by different pieces of this or that—the old P&H elevator. But he made it work. So, he'd probably have a lot of interesting stories about what he had to do to keep it going.

NP: Yeah, and I'm not sure that we've interviewed an electrician. Could you make contact with him? Maybe track down his--.

JH: Sure! Yeah, you know what I could do? I could talk to Wayne and indicate that I've been chatting with you about this and see—I've got to go over to him anyway, to talk about a different issue there—so, I could talk to him and see if he's interested. He doesn't say a lot, and he's--. You know, doesn't say a whole lot, but--.

NP: Yeah, and just mention to him that--.

JH: I could put you in contact or at least--.

NP: That it's just his story. It's not a test. [Laughs]

JH: Yes. Right, yes. I could make contact and see if he's interested if that's okay?

NP: Yeah, thank you. Appreciate that. Now, what kinds of things are--. You've mentioned the metal, salvageable from elevators, but it's also not very easy, a lot of the stuff is not very easy to get out.

JH: No, no.

NP: So, what kinds of things are salvaged from the elevators? Especially since you know, "Oh, this came from an elevator."

JH: Yes. What are salvageable from elevators that we see most often is a lot of pyro, which is explosion-proof, or fire-retardant. So, it's copper tubing, but it's filled with a white powder with little conduits in the centre, and it's basically blast-proof. I guess with grain dust, it's one of those things where you have to have a lot of blast-proof tubing and/or wiring, according to my boss. So, we see a lot of that.

We see a lot of aluminum conduit, which holds wire inside of it that goes to various areas. We see a lot of big electric motors—those are vital for every aspect of that elevator. We see a lot of those. We see transformers, big transformers. There's so much electrical-side stuff that goes on in an elevator that it ends up being a lot of aluminum conduit for wires. A lot of teck cable—small teck cable, medium, and large teck cable—which is basically three-conductor wire.

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Then the aluminum side of it, which is the conduits--. I've seen everything from old shovels to--. Whatever they can find, they'll grab. Then the steel side. Everything from rail pins to shackles and little hooks that would be a shelving that would come off walls. Anything they can find that isn't affixed to a wall normally is taken off first—rebar, a lot of reinforced things like that. So, they'll get rebar if they can, if it's accessible—often not, but there could be stocks of it somewhere. That's about it. So, it's a lot of high-value copper. There are brass connections and things like that as well. So, we'll see brass, we'll see copper, we will see a lot of transformers and electric motors, and then we'll see some aluminums, some basic aluminums.

NP: What are the most valuable things?

JH: Copper and brass by far, not even close. Whereas aluminum you might get anywhere from 55 to 65 cents a pound, copper you can get anywhere from \$2.50 to \$3.00 a pound. So, copper is where it's at. It's what people will risk their lives, more or less, to get. You see copper also has to be strung to whatever it's at—light fixtures, belts that are going back and forth on the top of the elevator. People will very nicely chop off what they can reach to hand-height, but beyond there it becomes a game of life and death when guys are scaling walls, crooked ladders, whatever they've got to do to get higher up to get this wire that's either fastened along the side of the wall or hooked through little brackets or whatever. It's not easy to get off. It's hard, but it's definitely very valuable, and it's everywhere.

NP: Is most of the salvaging that's done at the elevators, is most of it done by reputable salvagers? And do you know the difference from your side in receiving this stuff?

JH: I do. For instance, if someone like a--. It's public knowledge that, say, Global Recycling owns P&H. So we'll see Global come in with teck cable from P&H elevator. That's reputable recyclers, they're salvagers, that's their job. Their job is to work on taking part of that elevator down, or all of it. So, yes. I can tell reputable because we know--. Thunder Bay's a big small town. You know the demolition people that are supposed to be doing that.

Non-reputable salvagers are usually in there before the reputable ones even get in there. Non-reputable salvagers are peddlers, we call them, who end up just running in there knowing that it's no longer working and will strip bare whatever they can find using any sort of crude tools that they can. They're the ones who often employ tactics where, "Jeez, I hope that the power has been cut to this line. And if it hasn't, well, I'm going to find out when I cut it." Right? It's dangerous.

The people that are unproven are often without homes, vehicles, money. They are just trying to get their next meal and/or whatever else they determine is the most important thing to buy with whatever money they can get. They will do almost anything for it. They're hard to catch. They do it at middle of the night—you know, elevators, there's lots of places to hide. You're not going to get a lot of law enforcement crawling through there trying to find someone trying to grab a piece of teck cable. Even if you can say it was from there, it's hard to catch them in the act. Very, very difficult. They don't go in there with trucks and machines, it's just somebody in there, right? You don't know, and then all of a sudden, they sneak out, you hadn't seen them, and that's it. Unless there's working camera systems and/or a security house, like some of the other elevators have, if it's not staffed, you'd never know who's in there and who's not. You can close all the doors and bolt them, but there's other ways to get into an elevator.

So, yes. I'd say a large portion of it is non-reputable. In some cases, it may even be reputable, but we call non-reputable anything other than the companies that are contracted to demolish the elevator. Everybody else is considered non-reputable. There's very little we can do.

Very seldom is it ever reported, often because when an elevator is decommissioned a lot of the best and most prized components are taken out by the elevator company itself and is shipped to another elevator. For instance, with P&H, a lot of it according to the electrician went across town to Cargill. A lot of motors that were working, some of the--. He had stocks of teck cable, stuff that wasn't on the wall just stocks, reserves. That stuff doesn't sit in the elevator when it's gone. That stuff goes to a working elevator or to somebody's supply haven. What's left is just stuff that's afixed to the wall, bolted to walls, inside channels and irons, and things like this that are very, very difficult to get.

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So, a lot of the easy stuff is gone. Often, it's salvaged in a very reputable way by the company or the new company that gets in there immediately, but the peddlers will take whatever else they can find. And that can be extensive. That's a huge issue with decommissioned elevators and why it's not so easy to just get them up and running again in a couple years, is you can go in there, the heat's gone, everything's gone.

So, it's one thing to take away the supplies and stocks, but say that I've left in place fire-suppression systems—all these things that you need in an elevator for it to become up and running again—if you take away all the teck cable and everything freezes, and you cut power to all things that need power, to rewire an elevator is quite something different than going in and flipping on a switch. So, that's why, I guess, when there's been certain elevators that have been down, they've tried to be guarded, I guess, at some point in time to maintain their value. Whereas ones that aren't, very soon they become infested with both people, wildlife. It all adds to the cost of trying to restructure it, or rebirth it, get-it-going-again if ever that were the case.

Yes, they may make their money, but they do a lot of damage. They put themselves in danger. There's very little we can do about it. We buy from people unless we can prove that it's been from there. And again, even if it says P&H on it, there's nothing that I can do to say that this person didn't get it from somebody that works there, that he didn't go and was hired on behalf of that company. What we do is, as part of our scrapyards policy, is everybody that brings stuff in, we have to scan their driver's license. So, all of the information about that person is on file. If they don't have a driver's license and they can't give us ID, we cannot buy from them. That is a city bylaw.

There's no reason why somebody like the recycling company can't come in and say, "Look, I just lost 500 pounds of teck cable." I'll say, "Oh, was it this stuff here?" "Yes, that's what it was." Okay, we have a camera system. "When did that come in?" We've got cameras on the scale. We can see who it was. Often you can't get a good description from the people that you see. They've got a hood on or whatever. Their ID will be on file. Now, is it their ID? I don't know that either. Often, again, it's two people come in a van, and the person that's doing the deed and cashing in, they'll have the other person in the van on record, and that person has nothing to do with the person in the van.

For every measure we'll put in, they'll find a way around it. But we're making it more difficult than just anybody coming in with anything. So, it's not a perfect system, and there's always going to be theft. As long as metals are valuable there'll be theft, but we do what we can to try to eliminate it as much as possible. Like I said, peters off quite quickly when people go into an elevator and realize there's nothing they can get without bringing in machinery or stuff like that.

NP: Even though you just recently have been employed at Dutchak as the operations manager, you worked there--.

JH: For years.

NP: For years. So, when did you start working there?

JH: It was my first job when I started university. That was my very first summer job.

NP: Okay, so how far back can we go? [Laughs]

JH: I would say this would be--. Wow, yeah, oof.

NP: Ten years?

JH: I would say that I've probably worked there in some way, shape, or form, fulltime, parttime, casual, during the winters when I'm in school, probably this would be year 10.

NP: And have there been any changes? Even in the regulations you were just talking about, having to have a record of who brings what in, or safety issues. When you started talking about transformers and things, I was thinking, "What do transformers have that aren't so good?" PCBs, or was that old stuff?

JH: That was old stuff. Like ballasts have PCBs, the old ballasts and things like that have PCBs, but they're not worth much. The transformers are usually just steel and copper windings, so copper windings on steel. They're not very, to the best of my knowledge—and again I'm certainly not an expert on it—but to the best of my knowledge, transformers are not environmentally unfriendly. They can just be very large and hard to move. So, people try to cut the copper off them and bring in the copper windings, so to speak. If you've ever seen an electric motor and there's copper windings in it, a transformer is a massive version of that. Sometimes the windings are aluminum, well, they're not worth much, so people are trying to get a score. In terms of regulation changes, not much. It's just that theft has become more and more of an issue over the years. Theft has become more widespread.

NP: And why do you think that that is the case?

JH: Well, boy, that's probably a much larger underlying issue to everything from the abuse of narcotics, what narcotics causes in terms of the thirst for money, and probably the inability to hold a job, so that there's very little other options to get money. It could be demographics. That could be anything from the age of people that are here to the minorities or even majorities that are here—various underlying socioeconomic factors have, I think, contributed to theft. What's not to be understated as well is that over the years metal prices have gone up. It's become more valuable. When it's four or five cents a pound, it's really not worth it, but when it's a dollar or two dollars a pound, people can do that math and figure out how easy it is to do that.

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I think there's been a few trends here that have kind of led to that, not the least of which has been the increase in value of scrap as the world becomes more environmentally, I say, environmentally aware of mining and its effects—the cost of mining on everything from say even mining crude oil to make a lot of these products and things like that—recycling has become a much cooler and now feasible idea. As the third world ramps up production—everything from China and India—the need for recyclable products continues to grow. Hence supply and demand comes in, metals become more-- . And people find more now. Guys that were sitting on stuff that they were sitting on for a long time, they decided to cash out.

NP: Yes, you watch the market.

JH: Yes, we watch the market. We're directly tied to the market. Our prices change often weekly. Not by much, but, I mean, it does. Right now, for instance, where a tonne of steel last year was \$160, right now it's \$100. That's quite a significant difference.

NP: Wow, that is a difference.

JH: But when your gas used to be a dollar, whatever it was, then it went down to--. We simply followed oil. Oil dragged down all other commodities because oil is a big indicator in the economy, right?

NP: I'd like to follow up on a couple of things that you said. Don't let me forget to ask what you do with the scrap once you've got it. But I'm interested in sort of the socioeconomic situation. I don't know if it was a conversation that I had with you that led me to ask you to be interviewed for this project, but there seems to be an under-group—and not just locally—it's almost people travel, and they know, and they move into these abandoned industrial buildings, and then they--.

JH: Squatters. We call them squatters.

NP: Squatters, is that something you're familiar with?

JH: Yeah. We call them squatters. They're people that live in these buildings. They take up residence in anything that is vacant and use it for whatever purpose they need. Often, it's shelter, especially in a northern community like this where there is a lot of weather-dependent factors that can harm you if you're not careful. They're called squat--. I think they exist in almost every town, certainly here because we have a large number of—not a larger number but we have a lot of—industrial buildings that are vacant, not the least of which are elevators. They're big. They're near water. They're not normally frequented by a lot of people, and they're in industrial zones, so it's not like there's seven or eight houses right next to an elevator. No one's complaining. These people like to remain under the radar. They don't want to be noticed or seen. So places like elevators can certainly be a site where these people can take up residence. Yeah, that's certainly a valid “something” that we see.

NP: You mentioned the—what did you call them—peddlers. Do they change regularly, are some of them really long-term customers too?

JH: A lot of them are long term. The only time they really change is when they get nabbed. Then, all of a sudden, you don't see them anymore. They were there, they were there, they were there, they were there, and then, all of a sudden, they're gone. You know that normally means that they got held up by the authorities and probably couldn't provide the right answers or were caught in the act, which often is the case. So, we do have some that have been quite long term. We often get the ones that just start and stop, start--.

And there's a million different reasons why someone who shouldn't be taking from an elevator stops taking from an elevator. The supply dries up of what's there. They get caught by the authorities. They end up succumbing to perhaps an addiction or something

else that doesn't allow them to do that anymore. They move on. They're nabbed by somebody else. Often when you have no money, you're wanted by others for money that you couldn't pay.

There's a host of reasons why we don't see these people anymore, and that's okay because oftentimes they do bring unwanted—I wouldn't say unwanted—but they do bring unnecessary attention to our business. The police will visit if there is something that's reported. They'll have to do a report. It takes away our guys because we have to go through the report process, go through the cameras, try to figure out who it was. Find out at the end that there's nothing they can do, all for a few pounds of this or that. The police often don't like to do it. We don't like to do it. As long as people keep coming in--. We have gone as far as to ban certain people. We simply won't buy from them. If we hope that the other two or three scrapyards in the city also don't, they have nowhere to take their stuff. That's one way to stop a thief who's stealing material is they have nowhere to sell it. That's useless if you can't sell it anywhere.

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NP: In some instances too—and I don't know if it's in elevators, so maybe you can tell me—but you occasionally hear of situations where there have been big thefts of quite valuable scrap material. I wouldn't think these peddlers that have addiction problems are those people.

JH: Yes, yes. No, it's usually a concentrated effort by people who also need money, but they often get together. The reason I know this is because Dutchak's Scrap Metal had a very serious theft a few years ago—one that required a vehicle, equipment. We have a slab on grade type of storage facility, and they went through the wall.

It was an all-night adventure, took seven or eight hours to completely be done. So these guys had scoped out everything. They knew where our materials were. They knew how to get to them. They knew where our boxes--. They had to know against the wall on the other side where the boxes were, so they knew where to hit the wall. They went through the brick wall, cut a hole in a box of copper, and siphoned everything out through the box, through the wall, into a pick-up truck, and out. They got away with a better part of almost 2,500 pounds of copper, copper bare bright. On the open market, at that time, we were getting about \$4 a pound. That's almost \$10,000 of copper that they got away with.

They were caught. They were brought to justice. When you have something that's that large, it's a lot easier to get caught. A, if you're going to leave it in the city, they're going to give it somebody else. You simply call the other scrap yards and say, "Be on the lookout for a massive amount of bare bright." These guys can't hold it forever. Most of them don't have storage facilities. They need the money. Sure enough, within a few days you saw 1,000 pounds of it come somewhere else and boom, gone.

NP: So, were they local criminals?

JH: Yes, they were. Yes. We do have criminals that they do--. They can get fairly technical and fairly sophisticated with how they go about stealing, but that isn't to say that it's not in any other city as well. I certainly don't want to put down Thunder Bay as being, you know, we're all about thieves here. We just, as a scrapyard, we see it more than others would because the end result comes to us.

If someone's robbing a Mac's, we don't see any part of that. But if they're robbing a new residential property and cutting all the copper out of it before the thing is even built, we'll see it. It often comes to us. There's only two or three scrapyards here, so we tend to see a side of society that we wish we wouldn't. But, I mean, it's one of those things.

You could probably talk to somebody who works at an establishment that sells beer or wine, and they'd say the same thing. They see the worst of the worst, more than I ever would where I am. But it's just the clientele that we have. Regrettably, we are exposed to the side of the clientele that we wish we weren't. But it's a part of society. Again, it's spurred on by other things—the price of metals, addictions, homelessness, lack of work oftentimes. People will resort to whatever they have to do to get by, and so regrettably, we just look at it as something that we try to deal with as best we can, comply with all laws and regulations. Yes, because of the number of elevators that have gone down, this side, this underbelly, of scrap collecting and recycling has manifested itself in that industry, yes.

NP: One of the things that someone that I know really treasures from the elevators that were built in the early 1900s are some of the electrical fixtures, like the glass globes and such. Do people bother with that at the scrapyard? Or there's a different kind of market for that kind of thing?

JH: No. I've seen aluminum fixtures come in off of lights, but I have not--. They're usually quite thick cast. They're not like they are now in what you'd see in changeouts for fixtures. But the glass and stuff, regrettably, is usually all over the floors of the elevator. They don't really have too much of an eye for historical relevance. In they go, and usually they're carrying whatever they can carry as a person. So, anything that will not get them money is left behind, right down to if they pull wire out of the wall, they'll strip it onsite, and leave all of the casing or cabling behind, and just bring in the copper because they can't carry more than that, and they're not going to lug garbage around. So, everything.

[0:35:11]

I was into the Pool 3 elevator, and Doug and I came across what appeared to be a copper-wire processing plant, a squatter wire processing plant. He had everything there from a bench to empty casings and exacto knives—whatever he needed to get the copper out of the insulated packaging that it was in. So, they can get as elaborate as they can with the amount of tools that they've got, and there's nothing to say. I know this because I've talked to some of these guys, they will take their first bits of money that they get, and they'll buy tools to go in and get more. They'll buy cutters, they'll buy whatever they need to get stuff off the wall and cut it. They'll buy tools. They fancy themselves as serial entrepreneurs some of them, so. I mean, I can't really comment on their business plan or the viability of it, but they fancy themselves as quite the innovators sometimes. So, it's quite interesting to see.

But, yes, not a lot of historical relevance, not a lot of tools and things of that nature. More along the lines of what we call the guts of the elevator—all the wirings, and all the behind-the-scenes stuff that powers the cool-looking stuff, right? We won't get the light fixtures, but we'll get all the wiring that went to the light fixtures, and they'll cut it right at the fixture, A, because they can't get the fixture off of the ceiling. B, they can't get up there. But if they can get the wire off, and they can get it 60 feet further down, and they can yank it down—pull it down—they can get that off.

NP: They work hard.

JH: They work hard?

NP: They work hard at what they do.

JH: Oh, god, yes. I know how hard I work processing stuff with the best tools. To have no tools doing what they do? I'd lose my mind. I don't even know how they do it. It's harder work than what most people do at a job, and they get paid a lot less to do it. Much less than minimum wage when you consider what it takes to process it to get it to the spot they get it in. For them, anywhere from \$50 to \$80 a day is awesome, but that took them all night for \$50, you know what I mean?

NP: It must also be dangerous.

JH: Oh, extremely dangerous. Elevators are not inherently built for safety if you're attempting to get stuff off of an elevator that shouldn't be taken off. Yes. These guys don't use the stairs. Most often they'll use whatever they've got to do to get to places that you normally wouldn't want to get to or need to get to. Very dangerous. They are often not in a good state of mind. They're doing it in the middle of the night. They usually don't use bright spotlights because that kind of draws some attention to the elevator, especially one that isn't even working. So, these guys are using flashlights in an elevator that they don't have blueprints for, that

they have no idea how it works. It's old, there's kinks, quirks, and things that you should know about before you even go into it, much less go into it like they do.

Then they'll go off the beaten trail to get the stuff that's not easily accessible in the middle of the night with no tools. Certainly, you think of fall protection and things like that, being rigged and hoisted. Yeah, there's nothing. It's inherently dangerous and it has resulted in fatalities that we know of.

We know specifically of one peddler who went into one of the elevators and decided to scale one of the bin walls in an attempt to get some sort of wiring off of one of the bin walls. Made it all the way to the top of where he needed to go but fell. And fell straight down. I believe those elevator bins, they're just concrete. Down he went, and that was it. We only heard this from his son, who was assisting him. It was a family thing. Down he went from the top to the bottom. We only heard that he had passed because we hadn't seen him anymore. The son let us know, and he came in with something that, "Dad had been in an elevator and didn't make it out." So, that is a very grave risk that these guys take, and again, anything for money. They don't have any other options right now.

NP: So, what would they do in that case? How--.

JH: I don't know.

NP: Would the son, I mean, say, "Yes, I was in that elevator. My father died." Or just leave him there for somebody else to find? What--?

JH: It's probably something that the son would have taken the body away from the elevator and that's it. There would have been no money for funerals or anything like that. I don't think anything like emergency services would ever have been called. Again, you have to think of when these guys are doing it, where they're there, you know? It's not something where you can call the police to an elevator when this--. I mean, maybe at that point you do because life matters more than what you're doing. But if the person passed--. He fell a great distance apparently. He was most of the way up. I believe this was Pool 3. He was most of the way up one of the bins. That is a significant fall. I don't know how high those bins are, but certainly high enough to do damage to a person who is likely over the age of 50, in the middle of the night.

[0:40:16]

NP: Close to 100 feet if not higher.

JH: Yes. And he plummeted. That was it. I don't know how he managed it, but I can imagine that in the middle of the night, being up where you shouldn't have been, it's probably not that difficult to go down. So, down he went. That's not a mutually exclusive event. It happens often. If it doesn't happen in terms of death, injuries—grave injuries. Those are another reason why sometimes you just won't see these guys anymore. You don't know where they ever went. It's a sad story because they have no family, they just kind of disappear. They're just those guys that are--. They're there, and then they're not. They don't have ID. They don't have a lot of different things. They've got to get their friends to even allow them to get it sold. So, you don't even really know this person that was actually doing it, if they don't have ID, they're using one of their friends, no one ever really knows who that actual person that was orchestrating it. No one knows who they were. They're just, you know, they're just not there.

NP: Before we move on to talk about what happens to this stuff--. Because I think of it like a heart transplant or a kidney transplant—the kidney of one person goes on to another person. So, I'm thinking here of all these elevator parts. The concrete would get smashed up and end up as foundation for a new building, just wondering where the elevators' pieces end up going. But before moving on to that, any other stories about the people and the actual taking stuff out the elevators that we haven't covered that's come to mind?

JH: No, that's pretty much it. We've chatted a little bit about what causes people to do it, and why they're doing it, and who is doing it. Again, like I say, there's not one specific demographic. It's a mixture—young, old, both genders. We get both genders, literally. It's widespread. Now, I say widespread, it certainly is a minority of the population. I would say in terms of the population as a whole, this is a very small percentage of people. But they're grabbing whatever they can. They're doing it for the money. The elevators are accessible. They are, yeah, in terms of what they're taking--.

NP: I'm surprised that you said that there were females doing this.

JH: Yes.

NP: Would they be mainly the fronts for the business, do you think? Or are they actually--?

JH: No, they're often on their own. They are on their own. You see them and they're not with anybody ever, or if they are, they're just with someone who's there just to cash in on their behalf to put in an ID because they're always the constant if it's a different person, right? So, I would say it certainly is a male-dominated agenda, but there are females. We've seen it both, and we've seen young and old. Yeah, it's kind of sad. It's very sad, but it's something that we live with. It's something that is there. I can imagine you get similar stories going to, say, a methadone clinic. There's a side of that society that we wish didn't exist, but it does. They

probably wish it didn't—the people that are in it wish it didn't exist, but it does. They are not sure how to get help, so what they need to do is they need to fuel whatever it is that they need to fuel to move on, to keep going. They look at scrap as a very viable way. It's a simple, not complicated way to do it.

Like I say, big buildings with large systems that require--. You know, you go into a house, what are you going to find? Little bit of wiring, little bits of wiring, household wiring, but you're not going to get large, three conductor teck cable. You just don't have the power requirements you'd have in say an elevator. There's just more value in those, until you get about hand height, in which case, it's almost impossible to access the stuff. Hence the tales of death and injury. It happens, yes it does.

NP: Now, where does it go?

JH: Well, we are a global company, and by that I mean we ship everywhere. We've loaded everything from stuff going to southern Ontario to we've loaded sea containers going to China. We've shipped direct to China. We can ship to southern Ontario where it meets bigger yards that collaborate and then send to China. It goes to smelters that are here in Canada. For instance, the steel often goes to Sault Ste. Marie, which is SR Steel. It's melted down and made into rebar or a plate or structural beams. So, the materials that would come out of an elevator—our coppers, our brasses, our aluminums—are transported throughout Canada to different buyers in different provinces. It's transported into the US. It's also transported overseas at some points in times.

[0:45:06]

NP: When it is transported by all--. Like by train, car, ship?

JH: For us, because we do not have rail access, for us as Dutchak's Scrap Metal, at this time, we transport everything except for our steel via road. We load transport trailers, 53-foot trailers, and then they are shipped to different markets. Part of that is due to the fact that we don't have rail access, the other part is because we're so isolated. Oftentimes in larger communities, the smelter—the place that's making the materials—is not more than half an hour away from the scrapyards. In this case, our closest smelter is seven hours away in Sault Ste. Marie. We often have to package it and send it down to southern Ontario where it gets to larger yards. They get massive amounts of it, and then it goes to other parts of the country or the world. So, for us, trucking is our primary way of transporting.

When it comes to steel—and we do get steel from the elevators—we will barge it. We put it on a barge, and we float it down to Sault Ste. Marie right along Lake Superior. We did our first barge last year. It was a success. We'll probably do another one. Prior

to that we trucked it to Sault Ste. Marie or sold it to a shredder that we have here in the city. We do have one shredder, and that shredder then puts it on railcars and ships it to their steel yard.

NP: The barge doesn't power itself. So, what's it attached to?

JH: It has a tugboat.

NP: Oh, a tugboat? Okay.

JH: It's got a tugboat, and I took videos of it happening. It was pretty cool to see. Yes, this little tugboat powers this barge that has 85--. Well, there's the barge itself, and then it has 8,500 tonnes of steel on it, which is 17.5 million pounds. What it looks like once it gets out in the water is just one big blob, a big blob of steel, which is pretty much what it is—the barge is all steel and then there's steel on top of it. This little boat--. What they said about the barge is what they were worried about was calm waters. You can't really have a lot of issues--. They have issues with large waves as a barge. I guess it's not built for doing what a laker or saltie would. So, they have to wait for calm waters, they come in, they load, they float it down to the Soo, they unload, and that's their job.

NP: And is it a barge out of the Soo?

JH: It's a barge company that barges anything. So, they barged steel to the Soo for us, but I believe they work in the Great Lakes. I don't know if they work in all of the different lakes, or maybe just Lake Superior and the one next to it. I'm not sure. But this is their job. They just barge materials, whether it's rock, concrete, steel. Whatever the ships aren't taking, they're barging. All different types of things, so it's a neat thing to do. You see a lot of cool stuff out of Sault. Yes.

NP: There's life in the elevator stuff. It goes and it becomes something else somewhere.

JH: It goes. Yeah. The steel often becomes the reinforcing beams and plates and stuff that would go into new buildings. The copper and stuff like that, the brasses, are melted down to make new copper and brasses. So, something from P&H could be ultimately melted down and could power a home in Canada through, say, BX cable or small teck. Brass is the same thing. It could be somebody's faucet, literally someone's faucet in a bathroom if they're still made of brass. If not, then they're making other brass components.

A lot of stuff, a lot of the brasses, as household components become more plastics and different types of materials, we find a lot of the brass and copper still mainly only being used by the large utility companies like Hydro and stuff like that. So, you might say that the infrastructure from the elevator is going back into our infrastructure, into our transformers, our insulators that are sitting on Hydro poles—that kind of stuff—where brass is still needed a lot. Steel, it's in the cars. Generally, in our cars, in our appliances.

NP: Do you think that if we look at how the system works-- So, we have these elevators that got built a long time ago, and then they are mostly abandoned. Some were deliberately taken down, imploded, or smashed to bits. Is it an efficient system of having them disappear or having them go out of existence? Is it efficient? Can you think of any better ways of doing it?

JH: Than simply having them vanish?

NP: Well, vanish or-- Does it make a difference if a group like Jim's--

JH: Global?

NP: Global. Does it make a difference if he ends up dealing with the abandoned elevator versus someone like, I think, Jim Black was sort of notorious for buying up old elevators and getting whatever value he could out of them.

[0:50:35]

JH: That's the way it's been going now because there's value in scrap. Then, you know, a lot of an elevator is just concrete, so it just becomes fill, or it's ground up and sold and used as ingredients into new concrete and things like that. So, for now, people seem to be finding that the components of an elevator—its ferrous and non-ferrous metals, and then its concrete and rebar—are more valuable than either taking the elevator and creating a second life for it. I know that with Global Recycling, Jim has looked into alternate uses for the elevator, various different things. We've often heard of the major ones, right? Biomass and all this other kind of stuff, a pellet plant, and all this stuff. But in the end, he's finding that it's-- He found that he thinks it's going to be better off to try to sell the ingredients that built that elevator than as opposed to take the elevator in its current state, built, and utilize it.

For instance, the dock is in bad shape at P&H. So the deep-water dock is valuable, but perhaps not for offloading grain. It might be more valuable as a cargo offloading, or usage of something—building even space for people to live. He's looking at the land and the ingredients of the elevator as being more valuable than the elevator in its current state. Again, that elevator is an older one as well, so it does have some structural deficiencies according to the electrician I spoke with, and would be very, very difficult to

repair. To the best of my knowledge, having spoke to that electrician, he had said that they wanted to repair that elevator, but they could not get a reduction on their taxes, and hence the reason that they decided not to repair that elevator and simply move the stuff to Cargill and kind of go from there. The taxes are significant on those buildings.

I'd love to see these elevators recommissioned to do other things. It just so happens that with the way our economy is going and the emergence of some of the industries that are taking hold—to replace grain, to replace logging—don't require those types of structures. Healthcare, things like that, they need their own structures. Mining is often one that has been linked to something that might need some components of an elevator for offloading material across water bodies to other sources, but because of the stuff that's been on hold there, and again specialized stuff needed to offload ore, coal, whatever. So, people have been finding that these elevators--. Just what they do is they'd rather reuse the space for something that would be a little bit more what's in demand now.

NP: And it was built as a single-use, very efficient--.

JH: That's the thing! It was built as a great thing for getting grain cleaned and loaded, but unless we're cleaning grain and loading it, no one can really figure out what else to do with large bins that are open spaces, right? It works great for what it's being used for. But that's one thing about this industry is if it changes or if things change with how it's done, there's usually a lot of access stuff that's just left. A lot of space, you know. It's an interesting concept. Is it efficient? I don't know.

NP: I was in P&H after they shut it down, and it's amazing to me just how quickly something can look derelict. The machines, as you had said, had probably been cannibalized—taking what was useful for the company. But there's a lot of machinery still left in there, not workable machinery. So, do people go in with blow torches and--?

JH: Yes. They'll cut it all apart. They have to get it out, so they'll go in there with torches. They'll cut it up, take it out. They often will use machines if they can as well—shears, excavators—and they'll often engage in demolition in that nature as well. So, oftentimes if it can't be done with manpower, it'll be done with machines, but that means access for these machines. They've got to get into the space to be able to grab the machines, grab the steel, load it onto trucks, and then it obviously ends up at something like our place. Global Recycling is supposed to be giving Dutchak's Scrap Metal all of the scrap from that P&H elevator, so it'll be interesting to see what comes in.

[0:55:08]

This will be the first time that an elevator, start to finish--. As Jim tries to recover all of the metals out of it, what else would come out? I mean, we've already seen some teck cable and some high valuables, but I haven't really seen as much in terms of machines,

like you said, or things like that. Again, with P&H, I've spoken about it, I haven't been in there since it was shut down, so I don't know what's left. I know that a lot of the valuables are gone, but the electrician said valuables from a standpoint of like the stuff still works. Doesn't mean it's necessarily costly, and there's probably a lot of infrastructure still in that elevator. Yeah, so like I said, yeah, there's a lot of stuff in there, and it'll either be machine-taken-out or person-taken-out, or a mixture of both. It'll be an interesting thing to--. And like I said, they're directly right beside us, so.

NP: Yeah, convenient.

JH: Convenient, yes.

NP: Let me just check my questions here. This is a weird question, and you may not even have an answer, so I'll ask it anyway. But one of the questions that we do ask of the people who are in the grain industry more directly than the work you do is how do they feel that the work that they do contributes to Canada's success as a grain trader? It requires a little bit more imagination on your part to answer that question. How would you say that what you do contributes to Canada's economic success as a grain trader? Is there any connection?

JH: Well, for us, I mean, regrettably, it's the elevators coming down. It's them stopping existence and coming down that allows us to get what we've got to do, and kind of go from there. I guess the only lopsided connection I can make is that as we're taking down these older elevators, it comes as a result of collaboration between a lot of the grain companies. So, you may not have a P&H elevator there, but Cargill gets a little bit stronger. They have more equipment. They have more staff. They have more people. Agricore S house is not there, but Viterra apparently bought them and told them they couldn't put grain anywhere else, and now Viterra gets a lot to its elevator.

So, maybe by taking down these older elevators, maybe a lot would have died when it was all parted out to different companies. As they conglomerate, the companies that remain—Richardson's, Viterra—are stronger, better for Canada's grain trade, more efficient. They're getting more volume. And I'd rather see a few elevators go down than all of them go down. If P&H going down because it's 100 years old, there's so much history to it, it's such a neat elevator, but if it going down means that Cargill keeps going? So be it. If Agricore going down—I think the Agricore elevator is a beautiful elevator—if it goes down, but it means that one of the larger ones in Canada continues to run and gets all it needs to keep working? So be it. Whatever the market takes to be efficient, and I don't think there's quite the volume like there used to be—though we had a good year—there's going to be excess from this collaboration. But at the very least, because these guys are conglomeration and they're becoming larger entities, we still have some--. We're represented in Thunder Bay by some of the biggest companies, and that's cool.

NP: And I guess, just the fact that you're saying that it's recycling makes the fact that—is it fair to say—that the service you provide ends up with less waste?

JH: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

NP: So that there is some value in the elevators, so somebody will buy them.

JH: Well, what you have is because there is some value in the elevators, a demolition company will buy them. It would be really terrible if every company that was in an elevator knew that once they were done operating in that elevator, nobody was going to buy it, and they were going to have to pay taxes because even the city would never take it back. The companies at least know that, yes, these are single-use facilities. When we're done with it, it probably won't be used for anything else. But at least there is some residual value, and that requires a demolition company taking interest and buy it, which allows it to be taken down, which allows the city to reuse that land, which means that if ever there was another elevator built, the city wouldn't say no because they know that they'll be something at the end of that to allow it to go back to the way it was instead of having something that stays there forever and nobody wants to touch it. Ever.

NP: And you provide the market.

JH: We provide the market for the scrap, which is the primary value of a derelict elevator. It is the scrap. It is not the concrete. The concrete is used as fill, and that's great, but there will be more scrap value in an elevator than there will be any other ingredient other than the land. The land is obviously the biggest value an elevator has. It takes large swaths of land. Often great access to water, deep-water ports, which are awesome as well. But from an elevator standpoint itself, the building itself, the scrap materials that come out of it is what most demolition companies are buying. That's what they're buying it for.

That or the value of the machinery, but in the cases of a lot of these older elevators, the machinery isn't worth anything either. It's not. It's already been taken out by the company that was there before. So, they're in there to get what they can out of it, and that's their specialty. They would not buy that elevator if they had nowhere to sell that stuff. They wouldn't. They just wouldn't. So, we provide that outlet, which, if in some weird small way, contributes to collaboration and a company leaving an elevator knowing that it can get rid of an elevator, so it can move to this part here, then I guess in some small way you can say we're connected that way.

[1:01:05]

NP: And the final question. Do some historical artifacts ever make their way across your--?

JH: Well, like I said, I've seen like a grain shovel which I thought was kind of neat. I didn't keep it, regrettably, but it was around. I thought I saw it and then it was gone. Again, we don't get a lot of fixtures. It seems to be the actual just wiring and it seems--. This will be the first time where a full elevator is demolished according to Global Recycling, and they say they're going to bring everything that's of any value in it whatsoever to us. We might see something. I don't know how the stuff will come in.

Right now, NuTech Metals is giving us all of the old piping off of Viterra because Viterra is switching out a lot of their blowers on top of their elevators right now. Something along those lines. I don't know how familiar you are with Viterra terminal A. You're probably quite familiar. That's all those big blue silos at the top hanging off the elevator. They're swapping some of those out, so there's capital investment happening at Viterra terminal A, which is always good. Capital investment is good. We're getting all of the scrap.

But again, it's just it's basically galvanized piping. There's really nothing of significance to it other than that it's piping. We got some big almost funnel-type things that came from Viterra, but I don't know how old they looked. They looked quite old, but they looked like they would have been on the top of the elevators. Kind of those half-hopper type things, and they looked like those really old ones off the top of the elevators. They're putting up the new ones, so we got those in. But they were just thin steel, full of grain dust inside, and just older stuff like that. So, it's happening. We're seeing stuff, but I think we might get some artifacts with the P&H one.

NP: Watch for those nice glass globe light fixtures.

JH: Glass globe light fixtures. I will watch because that's something that they may have. If they take them down--.

NP: They do. I saw them. But they're way up there.

JH: Oh, you saw them?

NP: And, actually, Jim let me go in and said, "Is there anything that you want here?" But I thought, "Oh, that would be--. Yeah, I wouldn't mind having those light fixtures," because apparently there's a market for them. Plus, we thought that we might be able to use them if we ever get a centre going.

JH: Right. Interesting.

NP: But from a value perspective, just as a fundraiser.

JH: But they were up--?

NP: Yeah. Where light fixtures are in elevators. [Laughing]

JH: Yeah. Unreachable by most, right? So, it'll depend on how he proceeds with demolition and in terms if he can salvage them.

NP: Yes, exactly. Well, it'll be interesting.

JH: You never know.

NP: I should ask him to take some photographs as they do it.

JH: Yes. Well, we'll certainly see a lot from where we are as well. We're right there. So it's pretty neat.

NP: Well, thank you very much. I didn't think it would be an hour, but it has been an hour. It's been very informative and a slant on elevators down that no other person has been able to provide us. So thank you very much.

JH: Not a problem, thank you.

End of interview.